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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS
Department of East Asian Languages & Cultures

Women in Ambiguity: Fictitious Monogamy in *Genji monogatari*
by
Anita Fike

A thesis presented to
The Graduate School
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts

May 2017
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Anita Fike

Washington University in St. Louis

May 2017

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Women in Ambiguity: Fictitious Monogamy in *Genji monogatari*

by

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Master of Arts in Japanese

Washington University in St. Louis, 2017

Professor Jamie Newhard, Chair

The Heian classic tale *Genji monogatari* (c. early eleventh century) follows the amorous adventures of the Shining Prince Genji. After his death, the text continues to depict the romantic affairs of the next generation. Over the course of fifty-four chapters, an image of Heian-era romance comes to life, fraught with ambiguities surrounding romantic entanglements. The term “marriage” itself is contentious, as it is difficult to determine how the text interprets the marriage system and relationship practices at the time. The unclear stratification of women leaves many of the *monogatari*’s main female figures living in insecurity, where informal marriage seems to entail reliance on the husband’s feelings. An exploration of relationships in the text investigates curiously monogamous elements, namely the appeal of the concept, present within the text. Further, this thesis uncovers feelings of anxiety as they are filtered through the presence of *monogatari* within the story, which inspire women to lament the discrepancy between fairytale-like marriages and their own stressful realities.

1.1 Chapter One: Introduction

Written in the early part of the eleventh century, Murasaki Shikibu's work *Genji monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*) depicts the grand lives of the highest echelon of Heian aristocracy, predominantly in but also around the court at Heian-kyō, modern day Kyoto. The bulk of the story follows the titular character Genji, son of the emperor by a lower consort. Demoted to commoner so that he has to once again ascend the court ladder, the story loosely follows his eventual rise, while also covering his many relationships. Set at a time when polyamorous relationship behavior was normal, the main character conforms to this idea by having coexisting marriages and courtships.¹

However, there is a notable strain of thought in the text that contends with the assumption of polyamory—that is to say that the text has a curious strain of monogamous thought. Monogamy was not unheard of, at least for the general population. Based on what we know of Heian marriages, there are at least fictional examples of aristocrats who refused to marry a second wife, such as the male protagonist of *Ochikubo monogatari*. But more common according to historical accounts are men with multiple wives. Even within *Ochikubo* and *Genji*, there are passages indicating that the norm is to marry multiple women, meaning that the main couple of *Ochikubo* is an exception.

In *Genji*, there is no doubt that Genji has multiple affairs and that these activities are socially acceptable. What remains undiscussed and unexplored are elements of the text that

¹ While the argument could be made for using words like polygamy and polygyny, the inconclusive nature of martial versus courtship relations in the Heian period lead me to frame the discussion in a term that encapsulates all possible relationship, whether formalized or informal marriage or even other less fixed relationship types.

suggest a semblance of monogamous dedication to one person—if only solely in terms of emotion. It is in this way that the term will be used and defined for the duration of the essay. In addition, this essay aims to examine this phenomenon by focusing mostly on Genji's relationship with Murasaki, but also touching on men characterized for being the monogamous type, namely Yūgiri and the Eighth Prince. The Genji-Murasaki relationship is the longest and, as Genji's behavior seems to suggest, the most important—such that he attempts to create the illusion that Murasaki has no competition. To say the least, Genji wishes to give Murasaki the peace of mind that a monogamous relationship would grant. In addition, the relationship between female characters and the genre of *monogatari* itself will receive attention as a reflection of female thoughts on relationships in terms of the desirability of monogamy as a concept. Women look to fictional tales in general as a source of information and comfort. In the midst of their own drama concerning polyamorous relationships, *monogatari* offer solace in their representation of worlds where monogamy happens. Perhaps in a twist of irony, these fictitious depictions augment the emotional burdens of their reality.

By analyzing these aspects of the text, this essay will argue that the presence of monogamous elements indicates that the appeal of monogamy corresponds to dissatisfaction with the limited level of emotional stability for persons below the status of primary wife. Based on a close analysis of the text, the concept of devotion to one woman appeals to both men and women, although the text seems to reinforce for women the ultimate insufficiency of emotional dedication. This theme of dissatisfaction due to a lack of emotional stability unites the text, suggesting a thematic link that strengthens the connection between the main text and the Uji chapters. At the same time, this essay will address how the intratextual appearance of *monogatari* as a genre operates as an extension of these feelings. In this vein, the analysis

follows Haruo Shirane's comment on *Genji* as working within the genre of *monogatari* but also fighting against it (73). But in this case, I would like to give detail to this rebellion against the genre by demonstrating that *Genji* uses the insecurity of relationships to emphasize the futility of emotional fidelity as a function of its realistic depiction while simultaneously upholding the emotional value of monogamy.

2.1 Chapter Two: Heian Marriage and *Genji monogatari*

In order to understand and analyze the marriages and relationships that take place in *Genji monogatari* and the implications of these for the idea of emotional fidelity, a description of Heian marriages from a historical, legal, linguistic and literary perspective is in order. In doing this, I will attempt to organize the relationships of Genji and other principal characters, which will inform the following discussion on how to interpret strains of emotional dedication in terms of contemporary marital customs. This breakdown establishes two forms of marriage: formal and informal, with the latter predisposing women to considerably more emotional insecurity.

A discussion of Heian marriage practices should begin with a disclaimer: the following pertains only to aristocratic marriages. Even so, a discussion involving the polygynous practices of the Heian period perhaps only speaks to a very small portion of even the aristocratic population. A second disclaimer concerns the term “marriage.” Here, the term will be used loosely to describe relationships that garner social recognition as a union between a man and a woman.

In the debate over Heian marriage practices, a question about the most appropriate label persists. Often, this issue manifests in terms of whether or not Heian society is “one man, one wife” *ippu-issai* 一夫一妻 or “one man, many wives” *ippu-tasai* 一夫多妻. Another issue revolves around tagging *sei* 制 to the end, which would suggest that the practice constitutes a legally codified system (Kudō 6). Hu Jie argues that a “many wives” situation would need to establish that all wives are treated (at least in theory) relatively equally, although the first wife may garner particular attention. In this regard, a system that stratifies the wives does not

constitute “one man, many wives” (Hu 18). In seeing that mistresses seem to have some socially recognized standing, another option is to think of the practices as “one husband, one wife, many mistresses” *ippu-tasai-tashō* 一夫一妻多妾, which also reflects the aforementioned omission of *sei* to establish the difference between legal and social custom (Kudō 4).

In the case for multiple wives (referred to as the “theory of multiple wives” *tasaiseisetsu* 多妻制説), a journal by Kujō Kanezane 九条兼実 (1149-1207) (also known as Fujiwara no Kanezane 藤原兼実) is often used as supporting evidence (Kudō 12). However, the journal, entitled *Gyokuyō* 玉葉, actually contains a counter-case that raises a question about the official stance on the mourning of a mistress.¹ Essentially, the question is whether or not a man can mourn his mistress via wearing mourning robes when a child was born to the mistress (notably referred to as “wife-mistress” *saishō* 妻妾), but neither to the former wife (now divorced) nor the main wife (Kudō 13). The answer to Kanezane’s question is that a man can only mourn one wife, so he cannot wear mourning garb upon the death of a mistress, regardless of the situation with children (Kudō 14). Thus, as of the late Heian or early Kamakura, a decision like this suggests that there is still a legal difference between wives and mistresses. Based on this case, Kudō raises the point about the treatment of categorically different women. In terms of the law at the time, a man was only allowed to formally mourn one woman: his primary wife (*chakusai/tekisai* 嫡妻) (Kudō 14). This case raises the possibility of looking at the state of mourning as a means of determining the status of a woman as wife/mistress. In particular, the case of Murasaki provides an instance of mourning, which will be returned to later. Another instance that could be

¹ The journal dates from between the end of the Heian and the beginning of the subsequent Kamakura period, meaning that it postdates *Genji* by roughly a century.

examined in this way would be *Kagerō nikki*, but the diary ends before 980, when Fujiwara Kaneie's wife Fujiwara no Tokihime (d. 980) dies.

The legal status of wives, particularly of principal wives and the treatment of children rests in a gray area. Legally speaking, a man was allowed only one wife. Nara (710-794 CE) society had adopted Tang (618-907 CE) dynasty legal codes, which formed the Yōrō Code (718 CE) that was then inherited by the Heian. Based on this code, a few ideas about marriage can be understood, at least in documented form. The issue of enforcement remains, where there seems to be general a consensus that “the legal provisions of the code were not wholly representative of social realities” (McCullough 106). Masuda finds that it is hard to imagine that the laws were properly maintained given how the tradition of multiple wives continues for some time afterwards, and in the Nara period there was not much distinction between primary wives and mistresses (*shō* 妾) (Masuda 68). Kudō Shigenori also concedes that the code may not have necessarily been followed. However, he wonders if it would be possible to consider how a lack of recorded legal ramifications for bigamy does not necessarily mean that the code had no effect, which can be imagined if some marriages remained informal with no attempt to make illicit marriages legally recognized (Kudō 10).² A reminder that is relevant to this discussion, since it pertains largely to fiction, is that such depictions cannot be the basis for legal determinations (Kudō 25). All the same, these depictions are important in that they reflect an emotional response to a seemingly similar background (Kudō 52-3). In addition, lack of attempt to codify polygyny at the time supports the idea of a difference between formal (legal) and informal (social) marriage.

² The code does stipulate punishment for bigamy. A man must do penal labor for a year, while a woman gets caned (Kudō iii).

Clearly, the presence of a code does not mean it was effective, although the argument could perhaps be made that men had one legal wife in terms of their being only one *principal* wife. One may also imagine that having a code like this may influence inheritance and the recognition of heirs. To say the least, it is evident that sons of different women were eligible to the same promotion at court, such as the two sons by Fujiwara Kaneie's wives Tokihime and Michitsuna's mother (Masuda 89, McCullough 127).³ Based on *Genji monogatari*, it appears that even the son of a lower-ranking consort could, in theory, become heir apparent. Genji's nascent brilliance and the emperor's enduring passion for Genji's mother stir thoughts of replacing the son of the higher-ranking Kokiden consort and suggest that if he wanted, the emperor could supplant a son of distinguished birth with one whose roots are undeniably less so. Another example from *Genji* is how Genji's daughter by the Akashi Lady appears to be at absolutely no disadvantage due to her mother's provincial background. Having the daughter provisionally adopted by Murasaki and Genji's own high rank ensures that the girl can enter the court and rise to the rank of empress.

A question just as important to the legal side of marriage concerns social customs surrounding marriage at the time. Based on my own reading of *Genji*, there appears to be a consistent pattern of having marriages of unquestionable primacy being determined by public ceremony and the presence of authoritative in-laws (such as if the bride's father is the emperor or the Minister of the Left or Right). Scholars like Masuda question the notion of public ceremony, but there seems to be little in the way of evidence that would definitively settle questions about how primacy is determined, and moreover how it can be determined in a clear manner (Masuda 89). Other informal ceremonial acts seem in general to accompany marriage (or marriage-like)

³ This being said, the promotion happens to Michitaka when he is fifteen and Michitsuna when he is sixteen, which might actually suggest differentiation between the two.

practices at the time, such as the *mikayo no mochihi* 三日夜の餅, the eating of specially made rice cakes on the third consecutive night of sexual relations between a forming couple. The writing of poems during the morning after also seem to be a part of the process, noted in both *Kagerō* and *monogatari* such as *Genji* and *Ochikubo*. Another would be *tokoro arawashi* 露顕, the public revelation of affairs after the third night, where the union is celebrated with the acceptance of the son-in-law into the maternal home. Kudō, who upholds the idea of legal monogamy, states that these actions do not constitute marriage (Kudō iii). Given the presence of these events and the code, I agree that these practices do not substantiate a marriage legally. Rather, they create the informal bond of marriage that has social recognition. Thus, though we see these activities in the conjugal relations between Genji and Murasaki, the best label for their relationship would perhaps be informal marriage, where any sense of her primacy in relation to Genji is curbed by only holding the title informally (Kudō iv-v).

The order of marriages also appears to have questionable consequences for the primacy of a marriage. Rather, it is the woman's rank and the public ceremony that unequivocally determines the ranking of a wife (McCullough 128). The first wife is often the principal wife, but this is not always the case. For Genji, it can be determined based on insurmountable obligation that his principal wife early in the narrative is Aoi and the Third Princess in his later years. In between these marriages, Murasaki informally holds the position. Based on the secrecy involved in his marriage with Murasaki, this would suggest that it is the first publicly celebrated married pairing that would demark the principal wife. The marriage between Genji and Murasaki, while known to the staff of his estates, seems only be acknowledge publicly in a brief but also vague statement about the union receiving felicitous attention from others shortly after the new year that follows shortly after the consummation. ("The Sacred Tree" 194).

Another aspect to consider is the role of primary wives in relation to yielding political-economic benefit. Such benefit is geared towards both parties, in general, because of the union bringing together the wealth, property, and prestige owned by either party (Nickerson 445). These material assets seemed to remain separate because contrary to later practices, women retained the right to inherit property even after marrying, especially in situations where the wife's family provided the marital residence (McCullough 118-119). In the anthropological study *The View From Afar* (1983), Claude Levi-Strauss examines Heian marriage practices in part to investigate the general consensus about the nature and purpose of first-cousin marriages. While endogamy was not denounced and was quite common amongst the aristocracy, such marriages, he gathers, are in general discouraged in the sense that marriage with a first cousin can be "boring." Such seems to be the case for Genji's son Yūgiri and Kumoinokari; similar logic applies to Yūgiri when he seeks to marry off his daughters. Although in his youth he longs to marry his first cousin and childhood sweetheart Kumoinokari, her father Tō no Chūjō withholds his consent to the match due to lack of significant benefit. By this, it can be inferred that one's principal wife in particular should be a match that maximizes gain by creating new alliances (Levi-Strauss 74). The candidates for preferred primary marriages in the text (namely princesses) support this aspect of primary marriages.

Another issue is distinguishing marriage from courtship. Marriage in the Heian period does not come with a complete paper trail that can be followed to establish what relationships were legally or, moreover, socially considered marriage. At best, the validity of marriage (at least socially speaking) depends on public recognition, but gauging this characteristic for every marriage presents numerous knowledge gaps. A typical, socially recognized marriage was established by a couple spending three consecutive nights together having intercourse, complete

with specific rituals such as letter exchanges the morning after and the *mikayo no mochihi*. These social patterns can be seen in fiction such as *Genji* and *Ochikubo* while they also receive some attention in *Kagerō nikki*.⁴ As a result, informal marriage appears to be largely a private matter. Genji's marriage to Murasaki and Lady Ochikubo's marriage in *Ochikubo* reflect the private nature of some marriages, where there is no additional ceremony or public celebration. In *Genji*, Murasaki's father is not informed until well after the fact. Moreover, Murasaki's own serving women presumed that Murasaki was already having conjugal relations with Genji beforehand, revealing how informal marriages could be extremely secretive. In comparison, marriages such as Genji's to Aoi and his later one to the Third Princess and Yūgiri's to Kumoinokari involve public festivities at the household and no ambiguity.

How such marriages, or perhaps more broadly speaking, relationships end is perhaps only defined by a man ceasing to visit a woman. Or, if the woman removes herself and is no longer to be found by the man or becomes a nun, these actions could also suggest a divorce that is initiated by the woman. As Genji never leaves any woman (that we know of), it can be inferred that Genji never "divorces" or ends a relationship. Relationships that end by means other than death are instigated by women who opt for the holy life such as Fujitsubo, the Third Princess, and Ukifune, or by rare sheer force of will in the case of the Rokujō Lady. Inactive relationship possibilities such as Princess Asagao and Oborozukiyo similarly end with a pursuit of the religious life. Murasaki herself wishes to end her marriage through the religious life, but never receives permission from Genji. Viewed from this angle, we see the prominence of the religious life as a way for women to end marriage.

⁴ While for the most part details are glossed over in the diary, there is a mention of morning-after poems (Michitsuna's Mother 106).

Yet another and final consideration is the notion that around the time of *Genji*'s conception, the status of marriage may have been in flux. Masuda Shigeo sees the reign of Ichijō (r. 986-1011) as a point where there were evident changes to marriage, mostly as a result of the regent system (Masuda 66-7). Considering the idea of marriage in flux may support a further feeling of instability for women and the ambiguity seen above.

2.2 Case Study: Fujiwara no Kaneie (929-990)

As a concrete example that predates *Genji*, we look to a historical instance of multiple marriages. The case also stands out as one that comes with a second interpretation of the marriage thanks to the diary of Michitsuna's mother, which gives a personal look at a woman's experience of Heian marriage. Kaneie is said to have three wives: Tokihime, Michitsuna's mother (also referred to as Fujiwara no Tomoyasu's daughter) and the retired emperor Murakami's third daughter (Hu 156). For the sake of argument, Hu establishes Tokihime as principal wife based on how she is referred to as *kita no kata* in *Ōkagami* 大鏡 (c. late Heian, twelfth century) and how the two eventually live together (Hu 156). In addition, she interprets the author's reluctance to entertain Kaneie's marriage proposal as a result of him already having a wife of similar status with a son (Hu 157). At the same time, she rationalizes that the author's agreement to marry Kaneie involves knowing that it would be possible to usurp Tokihime's position. However, the author does not mention rank or Tokihime in the courtship phase, which makes it seem like these concerns were not part of her decision to deny him at first, at least as far as the diary is concerned (Hu 158). This interpretation forgets the presence of the mother, who is in favor of the union and also, along with her father, wields power of the decision as a parent. The eventual cohabitation of Tokihime and Kaneie (taking place about twenty years into their

marriage) suggests the turning point in the relationship between him, Tokihime and Michitsuna's mother, supporting the notion that primary wife can be determined long after a marriage has commenced. In addition, it is possible to see the results of the relationship as one based on Kaneie's feelings, but it is still possible to see the success of Tokihime's daughter in entering court as an imperial consort to the Reizei emperor as a cause (Hu 164-5, Masuda 89-90).

Another consideration for Kaneie's relationships comes from Masuda, who postulates that Tokihime may not be Kaneie's first wife. He suggests this based on the fact that she does not have their first child until he is in his mid-twenties, which suggests that there was another wife before her (Masuda 88). This assumption of the strangeness of the age at which the first child is born comes from the practice of marriage occurring around the coming of age ceremony, which would mean a marriage would have occurred in his early teens. He does recognize that it could take a while to have children, but since Tokihime had quite a few after the first, he thinks they would have been married maybe two to three years before Michitaka's birth, which would still mean that their marriage had been childless for a decade (Masuda 88-9). Given the subsequent births after Michitaka, it seems unlikely that fertility was an issue. To rectify this perceived problematic time, Masuda proposes that there may have been a wife prior to Tokihime, who was childless and died young (88-9). Thus, Tokihime would be recognized only socially as principal wife, meaning that the position is mutable, and there may have been a chance for Michitsuna's mother to assume the position (Masada 89). The theory has appeal, especially in substantiating why Michitsuna's mother's attitude towards Kaneie is so volatile. If we view her as someone with the hopes of being Kaneie's primary wife, then there is perhaps an additional reason for her increasingly drastic measures to get his attention. Such a case also raises ambiguities about the situation, such as whether informal marriages can achieve formal status. At

the same time, however, it may not be entirely unusually for a Heian man to marry in his twenties, which happens without comment in *Genji* in the cases of Kaoru and Niou.

Another element to Kaneie's life concerns his third (and apparently failed) marriage later in life. After Tokihime's death, there is a daughter of a previous emperor (Murakami's third daughter) that Kaneie makes overtures towards, but according to *Eiga monogatari*, the relationship quickly ended. Such a move suggests that for one thing, a marriage attempt can fail. For another, there is an echo with Genji, who also takes a princess for a wife later in life (and with moderate degree of success, given the circumstances) and his failed romances (Masuda 92).

The case of Kaneie serves as a moment where we can study the real manifestation of various aspects of Heian marriage. On the one hand, there is the evident notion that primacy could be determined after marriage—twenty years after, possibly. At the same time, the evident tension between Tokihime and Michitsuna's mother suggests the poignancy of emotional distress felt by women who are not a man's main wife. While even Tokihime struggles during the time when Kaneie courts the woman of the alley, she achieves security when moving in with Kaneie, a move that determines the "battle" between her and Michitsuna's mother. In this regard as well, the events of Kaneie's life such as we know them reflect aspects of *Genji*, particularly in the vein of depicting the emotion struggles of women who must solely rely on their husband's emotional attachment in order to feel secure. Given Michitsuna's mother's propensity to threaten leaving the world in attempts to secure his attention (and presumably also his affections), the intensity of insecurity becomes clear. The situation also gives hope that Murasaki could be principal wife, but as the position is filled by the Third Princess, we see that secondary status can be ambiguous yet permanent. Moreover, it is possible that Tokihime always had the principal position, making any attempts to change the status quo a frustrating exercise in futility.

There is also an interesting connection between *monogatari* and the diary, where the author writes that she produces the diary in response to a perceived fault in *monogatari*. According to her, fiction fails to capture the reality of marriage, which, based on the diary amounts to constant emotional turmoil. It is possible to see how this particular diary, composed before *Genji*, predicts the later conceptions of fiction sharing this theme of marital dissatisfaction.

2.3 The Language of Marriage and Courtship

Before delving into the body of the evidence, we must consider the language of Heian marriage and relationships as it has been used and make decisions about language with regards to this analysis. As can be inferred from the above, the terminology employed in literary works, let alone women and their relationships to men, does not seem to give a definitive answer about how conclusively or objectively one can determine whether women involved with men who already have principal wives are wives in their own right, or if they are something else. Words like mistress, consort, concubine or something as informal as lover come to mind. The vagueness of Classical Japanese often makes it difficult to pin down the definition of much of anything, let alone the positions of women. For example, at best it can be determined that a woman referred to by some appellation containing *no ue* の上 is a woman of higher rank, but the specific definition eludes our understanding.

The term more commonly pointed to is *kita no kata* 北の方. The term seems to designate the principal wife. And yet there are questions about the exact meaning of the term. In addition, there is the consideration that it is hard to imagine that *kita no kata* equates to principal wife (*chakusai* 嫡妻), especially given how you have someone like Michinaga, who supposedly

according to *Ōkagami* had two *kita no kata* (Masuda 105). To further complicate the notion of *kita no kata* is the case of Fujiwara no Saneyori 藤原実頼 (900-970) featured in the *Nihon kiriyaku* 日本記略 (dated between the late eleventh and twelfth century), in which a wife of his is referred to as *naka no kita no kata*, which seems to imply stratification of *kita no kata* (Masuda 69-70). This can lead to a question of whether there even is such a word used commonly to designate primary wife in the same way that *chakusai* does. From that point, one begins to wonder if a corresponding term existed at all, which raises the question of a conceptual understanding of primary wife. In other words, there seems to be lack of distinction made in the Japanese language at the time (*wago* 和語) (Masuda 69). It appears that the Japanese language did not structurally stratify women in a sufficient way that can be retrospectively understood as differentiating one type of wife or wife-like relation from another. Such an angle is interesting to consider when one can imagine that centuries after a legal code on marriage was imported that the Japanese language would have developed its own corresponding lexicon. Without such a connection, the case for the code being essentially unenforced garners support.

In terms of modern taxonomy, Japanese scholarship divides women into a variety of categories based on either terminology found in contemporary documents or retrospectively imposed based on modern words. To name a few, there are the terms wife (*tsuma* 妻, also read as *me*), mistresses (*shō* 妾), a person of romantic interest (*omoibito* 思ひ人), a place one visits (*kayoidokoro* 通ひ所); lover (*aijin* 愛人) also comes up in scholarship, but is a modern word, as is the use of *seisai* 正妻 to mean primary wife (Aoshima 15, Kudō 5).^{5,6}

⁵ Serving people *meshidō* 召人 also factor into these discussion as the serving women who receive amorous passes from men.

A question to then ask is how do characters in *Genji monogatari* refer to women in marital relations based on the above information. As the most salient example that will be discussed in this paper, we look to the names applied to Murasaki in particular. In general, there seems to be confusion in scholarship on how to refer to her, ranging from *tsuma* (wife) to *seisai taigū* 正妻待遇 (treated like a primary wife) (Hu 1). The *Kakaishō* 河海抄, an early Muromachi period commentary on *Genji*, interprets her appellation *tai no ue* as that of a mistress based on customary locations for different ranks of women within the household. However, it appears that a consistent practice of placement within the house determining a woman's position was not present.⁷ By this logic, the Murasaki's location within the home does not seem to match up as an immediate indicator that she is a mistress. Moreover, the text refers to Murasaki as *kita no kata* but only twice (Hu 13). By the code, however, Murasaki would legally speaking be a mistress. In labeling Murasaki, Kudō opts to refer to her as “wife,” but in hiragana (つま) so as to differentiate the term from the character 妻, which connects more with the idea of a concretely defined position. In his use, the word entails “husband-and-wife-like relations” (*fūfuteki kankei* 夫婦的關係), which I believe aptly captures the ambiguity present in the situation (Kudō 4). Moreover, I would agree with Kudō's use of *tsuma* for Murasaki, because it should be noted that the marriage with Murasaki is not consummated until Aoi is dead, which seems to be an indication that Genji does not want her to be a mistress/*shō* (Kudō 136).

And, true to the above determination of Murasaki's ambiguous status, we can look at the way in which her death is mourned as a further example of the degrees of vagueness. Based on

⁶ *Me* receives attention in Asako Aoshima's work, where, based on language in *Genji*, the word appears to connote wives of a lower rank (15). This same text also includes a more in-depth breakdown of the numerous words used to describe women in relationships with men.

⁷ In accordance with these practices, the mistress in theory sleeps in the *tai* 対 and the wife in the main part of the house (*shinden* 寝殿) (Hu 13).

the above information on mourning, it would stand to reason that Genji cannot change into mourning as he did for his first wife, Aoi. Contrary to this assumption, the text notes that Genji wears clothing *even darker* than that worn when Aoi passed (“The Rites” 721). Kudō interprets this moment as one that demonstrates Genji’s depth of feeling and the undeniably integral role that Murasaki played in life as the stepmother of the current empress. Interpreting the moment as one that would presumably be understood by the audience as extraneous (meaning that Genji is *not* mourning a principal wife) and beyond typical protocol, it is possible to see the moment as one that could not be criticized as a breach of conduct (Kudō 237-8). Also, it may be possible that because the Third Princess has become a nun that, by default, Murasaki is allowed such treatment as Genji’s primary wife, albeit informally so. The wearing of mourning does seem to be temporary, for there is notably no mention afterwards about Genji’s dress. Rather, the only mention pertains to her serving women at the beginning of “The Wizard” (723).

Due to the lack of a word that encapsulates the same degree of uncertainty, the Japanese word *wife** will be used in lieu of wife for women of Murasaki’s position to indicate to accommodate for ambiguity.

2.4 A Relationship Breakdown

As described above, there are many difficulties in trying to categorize and make lexical decisions appropriate to a discussion about Heian marriage. In terms of unequivocal marriages (defined as relationships that arguably constitute some form of socially recognized marriage) in *Genji*, they appear for each key character as follows (Note: principal wives are indicated via italics):

Genji: *Aoi*, Murasaki, the Akashi Lady and *Third Princess*

Yūgiri: *Kumoinokari*, Ochiba

Niou: *Rokunokimi*, Nakanokimi

Kaoru: *Second Princess*

For this paper, these relationships listed above will be treated as full, socially recognized marriages. Other relationships will be tentatively considered general romantic relationships. Without evidence from the text that other relationships comprised the same three-night marriage practice, labeling other relationships as “other” feels most appropriate. From this point, we move to delineating the emotional difference between three groups of relationships: primary marriages, informal secondary marriages together and non-marital romantic relationships.

2.5 Primary vs. Secondary Relationships

In the instance of Heian marriage from the male perspective, one’s primary marriage aims to produce socio-political gains, such as the marriage politics used by the Fujiwara to weave themselves into positions of power around the imperial line. What then, are the criteria of secondary relationships? Or, as they should probably be called, extra-primary marital relationships, because these relationships can form marriages, although not perhaps a publicly recognized one.

A general summary of secondary marriages can be found in Dorris Borgen’s work on Heian marriage practices: “Secondary marriages were much more likely than primary marriages to be formed as a result of individual male volition and female consent or compliance. They were noncontractual but publicly recognized relationships based on mutual self-interest” (Borgen 51).

In other words, secondary relationships are first and foremost noted for the choice involved. Choice is not completely absent in primary marriages. In *Genji*, Yūgiri's marriage to Kumoinokari is undeniably one of preference from both parties. The other primary marriages listed above in the previous section derive from political gain. But based on the possibility of choice that secondary relationships seem to automatically entail, one can see Haruo Shirane's point that marriage (particularly in the context of primary marriages) derived from love was not a concept (48). At the very least, it was not a consistent one or put into consideration when forming a primary marriage. Without love-like attachment in one's marriage, it seems almost inevitable that one would look outside that marriage for a relationship more emotionally charged.

Examples of primary marriages in *Genji* suggest general discontentment with primary wives—especially when the wife was not of one's choosing. Genji and his first wife Aoi appear to have a frigid relationship, one that scholars like Norma Field and Shirane have described as loveless as demonstrated by the fact that the relationship is devoid of poetry (Field 50, Shirane 51). The same goes for the Kokiden consort, who notably writes no poetry in the story. Niou and Kaoru also marry out of obligation rather than choice at the behest to their superiors, although these two have a “preexisting condition” as a result of their Uji adventures that seem to predispose them to seek romance outside their formal marriages.

The concept most closely associated with a man's extra-marital liaisons is *irogonomi* 色好. Loosely translated, the term refers to amorousness, participating in such activities as making romantic overtures and the general romantic pursuit of women. Although one may consider the term gender-neutral, due to the fact that the bulk of amorous activity falls upon the man, it seems applicable to, for this discussion, describe the term as it applies to men to characterize their

secondary relationships. Shin'ichirō Nakamura makes the general case for the cultural value of *irogonomi* by describing how extra-marital relations were considered a mark of civilization; to not be amorous was to be immature and uncultured (12). Nakamura associates the term with the high society of court, tracing its development into something based on a sense of romantic playfulness but also courtly elegance; this opinion is especially informed by Murasaki Shikibu's own diary (24, 28). A sense of adventure appears to be laced into the term. Arranged primary marriages appear to have an absolute lack of this, which makes the appeal of amorous activities all the more apparent. To exemplify the secondary status of women at the crossroads of amorousness and *Genji*, we again consider the position of Murasaki. In general, we can say she fits the requirements for a relationship based on emotional volition rather than obligation.

Above, I have attempted to construct an understanding of the Heian aristocracy that depicts the almost natural instinct for men to pursue extra-marital relationships. One's first marriage appears to be an emotional void as a given, leaving the husband no recourse but to seek romance elsewhere. At the same time, the polyamorous activity of the time seems to predispose women to insecurity, particularly when the woman is of a lower rank. That being said, the quality of single-minded attachment to one person (and sometimes even marrying that one person) does have a place within *Genji*. It is this unusual phenomenon that will be explored in the subsequent bulk of this paper.

3.1 Chapter Three:

Murasaki: Genji's "True Love"

The following section will cover Genji's relationships with Murasaki. In addition, other women will be included as points of reference to reinforce the differences in these relationships. This part aims to show that despite the normative promiscuity of men within the text, the idea of emotional dedication does bear great significance to polyamorous relationships in that it arguably provides a means of security. Or, that is as far as Genji's attitude on the matter suggests. The Genji-Murasaki relationship demonstrates long-term emotional investment in a relationship and an ideal union for the elite founded in romantic attachment. In examining this topic, evidence from the text will supply grounds for why scholar and *Genji* translator Royall Tyler asserts that Murasaki is Genji's "true love." Evidence does corroborate this statement to an extent, supporting the notion that their relationship is unique and an enduring investment for Genji, hence warranting special treatment. On its own terms in its own time, the relationship perhaps best demonstrates a case for long-term emotional reliability. From Genji's perspective, this is a fact of his life that never changes, but could be challenged from Murasaki's viewpoint, where claims to emotional dedication do not equate to reliability.

The depth of Genji's attachment to Murasaki has a long history in the text, beginning with his obsessive need to possess her after coming across her while convalescing in the mountains in "Lavender." Sometime roughly within a year after taking her in and housing her in his Nijō mansion, Genji begins making claims about dedicating himself to her and her alone. In the chapter "An Autumn Outing," Murasaki's nurse worries about her charge's future due to the

presence of Genji's wife Aoi. Not only that but "other affairs, indeed too many of them, occupied him as well. Might not the girl face difficult times as she grew into womanhood? Yet he did seem fond of her as of none of the others, and her future seemed secure" ("An Autumn Excursion" 137).¹ Granted, this is not Genji's perspective, but it seems clear to those around him that Murasaki holds a very specific place in Genji's life. To say the least, the nurse imagines that Genji will be reliable (JP: 頼もしげなり). This sentiment is worthy of note in relation to the fact that Genji is already married at the time with several other affairs in the wings and recent past, including his on-off relationship with Fujitsubo. The question that lingers after reading this passage is the one about Murasaki's future upon reaching adulthood. It is perhaps Murasaki's naiveté surrounding marriage with which the nurse concerns herself the most, as indicated by the fact that the nurse remains unaware that Murasaki and Genji do not partake in conjugal relations. But in assuming an established relationship, the nurse recognizes that despite the difficulties, Murasaki takes precedence.

Genji's intent to prioritize Murasaki appears again later in the same chapter. He returns to his Nijō mansion after a failed attempt to see Fujitsubo to find Murasaki openly displeased at his absence. He mends her mood by commencing a music lesson. Her ability to perfectly repeat that which she hears pleases him, inducing the following thought: "Yes...she was bright and amiable, everything he could have wished for" ("An Autumn Excursion" 142). His thoughts indicate high hopes for Murasaki, a thought that must clearly be tied into the fact that she is, in a sense, a product of his personal efforts. It is during this lesson that Genji inquires whether Murasaki misses him when he is away. When she nods, he assures her that he only visits Aoi because he

¹ "大殿いとやむごとなくておはし、ここかしこあまたかかづらひたまふをぞ、まことにおとなびたまはむほどは、むつかしきこともやとおぼえける。されど、かくとりわきたまへる御おぼえのほどは、いと頼もしげなりかし" ("Momiji no ga" 1.321).

does not want to insult her. However, he then adds, ““But when you are grown up, I will never leave you ever. It is because I am thinking of all the years we will be together that I want to be on good terms with her”” (“An Autumn Excursion” 142). If placating Aoi means Genji must visit her, his promise to never leave Murasaki sounds particularly empty, unless understood in the sense that he will never outright abandon her. However, he does state his intention to spend many years with Murasaki, which signifies long-term attachment by choice that clearly differentiates itself from his obligation to Aoi.

Another similar statement from Genji occurs in the “Heartvine” chapter following the death of Aoi. His means of breaking the news of Aoi’s death is to seemingly gloss over the details, merely informing her, “From now on you will never be rid of me. I am sure you will get very bored with me” (“Heartvine” 180).² Now, with Aoi’s death, it seems that his statement to never leave Murasaki gains truthfulness. Although the reader knows of Genji’s other entanglements (which, at this point, focus mostly on the Rokujō Lady’s lethal jealousy), to Murasaki he suggests a whole lifetime together—enough that she will at some point grow bored with him. However, it should be noted that “bored” maybe a loose translation of the original, where the use of *itohashiu* 厭はしう, which if interpreted closer to the literal definition would suggest that Genji fears Murasaki will grow not bored but displeased with him. If we think that Murasaki is bound to grow intolerant of Genji as a matter of who he is, this might suggest a confession that he cannot be true and that the relationship is informed by his inevitable amorous ways. But at the same time, we can interpret his words here as a representation of an intent to settle with one woman indefinitely.

² “今はと絶えなく見たてまつるべければ、厭はしうさへや思されむ” (“Aoi” 2.69)

To further the sentiment that the death of Aoi marks an affirmed stance of dedication to Murasaki, “[Genji] no longer had any enthusiasm for the careless night wanderings that had once kept him busy. Murasaki was much on his mind. She seemed peerless, the nearest he could imagine to his ideal” (“Heartvine” 180). His lack of enthusiasm may be attributable to the mourning process, but these thoughts may also speak to his newfound sense of freedom. Now, Genji no longer has a wife he must pay obligatory duty towards. If we interpret male promiscuity (which, as stated above, to an extent has no negative connotation in this context) as a rebellion against loveless arranged marriages, this moment means that romance and marriage can finally come together for him. Genji supposedly no longer needs the outlet of romantic adventures now that Aoi is gone. He is also free to indulge in Murasaki, who he claims here to be the closest to his ideal. Or so he thinks at that moment.³

Unfortunately, it does not appear that Murasaki and Genji have a mutual understanding of Genji’s intentions for her. Genji’s intentions, nonetheless, speak to his undeniable attraction to Murasaki. On the other side of the relationship, the narration indicates Murasaki’s inability to comprehend previous romantic overtures from Genji (“Heartvine” 180). However, it seems that even Genji was not entirely committed to the idea of being a married couple until the moment he decides to consummate the union. According to the text, “He had not seriously thought of her as a wife. Now he could not restrain himself. It would be a shock, of course” (“Heartvine” 180).⁴ In the original, the text describes their previous relationship was thus far based on *rautasa* らうたさ, which I would interpret in this context as their guardian-ward relationship, furthered by the

³ The notion of Genji’s idea of a perfect woman hinges on the undeniable fact that part of his attraction to Murasaki involves Genji’s inability to achieve a permanent relationship with his mother-substitute, Fujitsubo. Part of Murasaki’s appeal is the familial relationship between the two (aunt-niece).

⁴ 思し放ちたる年月こそ、たださる方のらうたさのみはありつれ、忍びがたくなりて、心苦しけれど (“Aoi” 2.70).

statement that he had not considered the passing years to be ones of a marriage. However, these feelings become unbearable (JP: 忍びがたくなりて). More importantly, there is also the understanding that Genji's next act will not be well received by Murasaki. Due to being younger, it seems reasonable that Murasaki does not understand the intended "end game" of her "adoption." A further discussion of this scene will occur in a discussion focusing on scholarly criticism on the relationship. Suffice it to say for now, the degree of intense emotion felt by Genji towards Murasaki grows increasingly stronger and more apparent. But at this moment, we also get a first glimpse at the one-sided nature of their relationship.

In further emphasizing the undeniable attraction, we look to his subsequent behavior. During the three-night process of the marriage ceremony, the text indicates that Genji's relationship with Murasaki is marked by the ability of his feelings to influence his actions. This sentiment manifests in the following passage:

"when [Genji] paid the most fleeting call on his father or put in a brief appearance at court, he would be impossibly restless, overcome with longing for the girl. Even to Genji himself it seemed excessive. He was sorry, but he did not wish to be separated from his bride even for a night. He had no wish to be with these others and let it seem that he was indisposed" ("Aoi" 182-3).

Genji's distant behavior surrounding his courtly duties become entangled with his undeniable desire to spend time with Murasaki. These feelings are strong enough to prevent him from acquitting his courtly obligations, an occurrence that happens solely with Murasaki in the text.⁵ On other occasions, his feelings for her cause him to break off his intent to go somewhere, a decision that pertains to work and, more importantly, going off on a search for romance. A

⁵ The moment in "The First Warbler" when Genji decides to stay with the Akashi Lady while making his rounds may suggest otherwise, but that decision then is a purely domestic matter, whereas the example here represents a decision visible at court.

similar sentiment can be found in Genji's reaction to finding out that one of his recent flames, Kokiden's sister Oborozukiyo, will soon be sent to court. Despite feeling remorseful over her transition to court, "he no longer had any wish to divide his attentions. Life was short, he would settle them upon one lady. He had aroused quite enough resentment for his lifetime" ("Aoi" 183). Although these thoughts do not seem to mean much retrospectively speaking, the sentiment present here indicates that he has settled on making Murasaki the only woman in his life. Aware that wanderings have caused various ladies to suffer (namely the Rokujō Lady and Aoi), Genji determines that it would be better to focus his attentions on the one who holds his attention most dearly: Murasaki.⁶ To say the least, Genji's relationship with Murasaki thus far contains a distinctive potency. Genji's feelings for Murasaki encourage behavioral changes in him, if even for just a temporary period. The power to alter behavior lends credence to the idea that their relationship is significant—perhaps to a degree where some would call this relationship one of "true love." As perhaps the embodiment of the ideal relationship of marriage informed by romance, this premise is promising.

True to this sentiment, between Genji's return from exile ("Akashi") and his marriage to the Third Princess ("New Herbs: Part One"), the text imbues a tentative sense of security into Murasaki's position, which seems to weather the "threats" that arise across these chapters (Genji's pursuit of Tamakazura and attempts to rekindle with Asagao and Oborozukiyo). After the installment of Tamakazura into Genji's grand Rokujō-in, the narrator establishes the following: "Murasaki may have had her small worries, but she lived in peace and security" ("The First Warbler" 409). Genji himself recognizes the futility in flings that crop up across these chapters. By extension, Murasaki may to some extent be just as aware. For example, Genji

⁶ Although it is not discussed here, it is apparent in the text that Aoi is aware of Genji's amorous activities.

considers how Tamakazura would have no proper place in his life because anyone would be considered a lesser lady compared to Murasaki (“The Wild Carnation” 445-6). Finally, in “The Typhoon” Genji informs us in conversation with Murasaki that she is not used to the kind of early morning partings that other women are (“The Typhoon” 460). In short, this period of their relationship suggests both stability and the singularity of their relationship.

Yet even at this time, there seem to be reasons for her to feel concerned, despite this being the moment where their relationship seems at its strongest. On the first night of the new year, Genji makes his rounds to his various ladies at the Rokujō-in, seemingly with no intent to stay with anyone other than Murasaki. However, when the Akashi Lady joins him in a room in her apartments, Genji changes his mind. The narrator reveals the events as follows: “He decided to spend the night with her... She was dear to him in a very special way, he thought somewhat uneasily. In Murasaki’s quarter he may have been the object of sterner reproaches than he had for himself” (“The First Warbler” 413). Acting with Murasaki’s part of the house in mind suggests the prominence of her in his mind, where his actions will be perceived as a slight not only by Murasaki and her women, but by Genji himself. This sentiment depicts a different kind of obligation to what we have seen in primary relationships, where Genji must concern himself with the woman’s father. Now, he contends with expectations for himself and the perceived emotional turmoil the event will cause for Murasaki.

Despite these developing cracks, thoughts on their relationship appear several times in the “New Herbs: Part One” chapter to seemingly reinforce the relationship’s uniqueness. Genji’s final marriage to the Third Princess comes to pass in this episode. This is a relationship that will be teased out later for the fact that it is often approached by scholars as the single moment where

Murasaki feels her position in Genji's life is most threatened. And yet for Genji, the moment speaks more to the reinforced strength of their relationship than a moment of danger.

After spending a worrisome night during the consummation phase of his marriage to the Third Princess, Genji returns the moment he can to see Murasaki. He slips into bed and finds her attempting to disguise her tears, a sight all too endearing for him. To this effect, the narrator reveals his thoughts: "Not even among ladies of the highest birth was there anyone quite like her [Murasaki]" ("New Herbs: Part One" 556). This thought is followed by a comparison to the Third Princess, a figure known to be extremely puerile and disappointing to Genji. Murasaki undeniably comes from a lower rank than the Third Princess. Although she has royal blood, she was both unrecognized by her father and without a mother. The fact that Genji treasures her so dearly derives clearly not from her rank. If anything, it might be the lack thereof that appeals to him based on the attraction of vulnerability. By this logic, one would safely assume that Murasaki should in fact not feel threatened if she can rely on Genji's supreme devotion to her. Around the same time, Genji tells his young daughter of the difficulty of finding the ideal companion. He tells her, "Yet when you are looking for someone to fill your whole life there are not many who seem right. For me there has been the lady in the east wing, the perfect partner in everything" ("New Herbs: Part One" 579).⁷ Genji emphasizes once again the special nature of Murasaki, depicting her in terms that suggest completion based on the English translation. The Japanese describes the choice as someone who will think to "look after and support 後見に思ひ" Genji. Finding such a person is rare (ありがたきわざになむ). Seidensticker perhaps does not sufficiently stress how Genji declares that there is only Murasaki, indicated by the "only *nomi* の

⁷ "わが後見に思ひ、まめまめしく選び思はむには、ありがたきわざになむ。ただまことに心の癖なくよきことは、この対をのみなむ" (Wakana: jō 4.130)

み。” Calling her the only one demonstrates that no one else compares, even after twenty years of being together.

The final thought of the chapter most pertinent here features a description of Genji's behavior towards Murasaki. Once again, the comparison is made in light of the Third Princess' intrusion into Genji's life. The narrator describes how “Genji paid her [Third Princess] due honor, but his love was reserved for Murasaki, in whom he could see no flaw” (“New Herbs: Part Two” 592). Genji performs essentially nothing more than his duty as a husband to the Third Princess, but without the emotional attachment that he keeps for Murasaki alone. Not only is she perfect to him, but unlike the Third Princess, attending to Murasaki does not derive from social obligation, but from the emotional bond they share. Thus, it seems that even late in their relationship, Murasaki maintains a special place to Genji, holding ownership over his feelings in a way that others do not. I would refrain from the usage of “true love” in this situation based on the vague, perhaps too modern connotation of the idea that Genji's romantic feelings are only true as they pertain to Murasaki. However, it is undeniable that Murasaki's position is unique, corroborated by Genji's thoughts. Moreover, the ability for their relationship to withstand time and new flames on Genji's part shows that emotional consistency does exist and can do so to a higher degree than for anyone else.

In summary, the case for the strength of their relationship seems irrefutable, at least in terms of how the Genji perceives the relationship. To say the least, the relationship stands out among the rest in terms of its duration and intensity of emotional attachment. It is also a relationship that is not defined by social so much as emotional obligation, further reinforcing the idea that Genji's affections as they pertain to Murasaki constitute some form of romantic

attachment. Thus, the nature of this relationship characterizes that of a secondary wife by fulfilling the criteria of volition and emotional obligation rather than social.

3.2 Relationship Critiques

All the above said, their relationship is not above reproach. Within the text itself, Genji's intentions are first perceived poorly by her attendants in "Lavender," who presume Genji's intentions from the start and find him disturbing. Scholarly critics have also taken the relationship to task. Shirane offers a view of the pursuit of Murasaki as an act of "romantic love" (107). The idea of an aristocrat going out of his way to take on a young girl with no backing does speak to non-political motives. Her position does nothing for him in comparison to his first marriage to Aoi and final marriage to the Third Princess. There is also the fact that doing so does demonstrate Genji's capacity to act on his will with a degree of dedication that spans their entire life together.

Even from the perspective of other women, we can see the prevalent opinion about Murasaki's importance to Genji. During the Miare festival activities, the text reports how other ladies from the Rokujō-in refuse to join Murasaki in going to the pre-Kamo festival because they think they will be seen as her servants ("Wisteria Leaves" 530). When the Suzaku emperor speaks with a nurse about a suitable choice for the Third Princess, the woman offers Genji as a dependable choice. Substantiating this claim with Genji's unswerving financial dedication to women he "collects," she digresses on the point of Murasaki: "But no man can distribute his affections indefinitely, and it would seem that there is one lady who dominates them. I should imagine, though I cannot be sure, that there are numbers of ladies who feel rather neglected as a result" ("New Herbs: Part One" 542). While she still contends that Murasaki would not pose a

threat to the Third Princess, her comments indicate an understanding of his attitude towards Murasaki that seems evident even from a distance. Equally optimistic are Yūgiri's thoughts, which reveal that he thinks Genji and Murasaki are a perfect couple ("The Typhoon" 459-60). Perhaps biased because of his own minor infatuation with Murasaki, Yūgiri's impression of their relationship nonetheless adds an element of inseparability, the notion that they were impossibly close.

At the same time, there is a darker side to their relationship that suggests their relationship is not entirely wholesome, reminiscent of the hesitations harbored by Murasaki's nurses. Their relationship demands inspection because it is extremely apparent that they each had very different ideas of the nature of their relationship. The text notes that on several occasions, Genji had attempted to make romantic passes at Murasaki. However, the young Murasaki remained oblivious, therefore never recognizing Genji's intention to wed her. Even when Shōnagon chastises Murasaki for her unbecoming behavior as a wife (though Murasaki is actually not Genji's wife at the time, the nurse does not know that), it does not seem that Murasaki grasps even the concept of being a wife—that is, the sexual nature of marriage. Bergen aptly describes Murasaki's marriage as at best an ambiguous agreement on Murasaki's part: "Genji's courtship of Murasaki begins with a *kaimami* that she was too young to understand and it concludes in a marriage to which she was never asked to consent" (Bergen 157). Murasaki's lack of understanding in this area makes Genji's move to consummate the marriage a contested point by commentators, who attempt to establish whether or not the act was consensual. Admittedly, Genji's thoughts on the matter prior to the omitted act support an interpretation that Genji understands that his actions will not be welcomed. He imagines that the act will be quite a "shock" to Murasaki, but he can no longer help himself.

At the same time, scholars like Margaret Childs assert, “He is often selfish and inconsiderate, but...ultimately, aggressive and manipulative as he sometimes is, he never coerces a woman to have sexual relations with him” (Childs “Vulnerability” 1062). A lack of force does suggest consensual relations, but this idea does sound strange in the context of their first night together. If Genji understands that Murasaki will be taken aback by the act, to what degree can we safely say that she agrees to it? While such questions arise with readers, a discussion of sexual relations as they pertain to feelings of shock and questionable degrees of consent are both beyond conclusive understandings. Under Genji’s charge, it should be noted that Murasaki has her best shot at a stable life, such that she is reminded by Genji of this later in their lives. This suggestion implies Murasaki’s lack of choice and ultimately the presence of coercion in their relationship, but that she undeniably benefits from her situation.

The above discussion does not aim to make a definitive claim on the nature of the consummation process of Genji and Murasaki’s marriage. The point of discussing this aspect of their lives in detail is to suggest the degree to which their relationship is one-sided. One does not doubt that Murasaki relies on Genji for many reasons, but one may perhaps doubt the extent to which she is attached to him as a function of romantic investment. We can imagine without much doubt that she is, instead, reliant on him due to lack of alternatives. But at the same time, a discussion that aims to use pivotal moments in their lives as a basis to assert that Murasaki is perhaps less invested in the relationship deserves further investigation. Royall Tyler offers, in his article “Marriage, Rank and Rape in *The Tale of Genji*” a perspective on the relationship that focuses on relationship dynamics that are perhaps counter-intuitive to a modern reader, but when thought through would explain the near non-consensual element of the relationship. He asserts that it is the absence of directly stated consent emphasizes Murasaki’s worth as an ideal woman.

If Murasaki were to have an understanding of the sexual component of marriage relations, Tyler claims that this would mean Murasaki already knows about sex, which would disrupt an image of her as pure (28).⁸ The romantic adventures that involve widows or court ladies suggest the irrelevance of sexual purity, so any appeal found in Murasaki seems singular to her case. To say the least, resistance can be thought of as playing into the “game” of Heian romance, whereby women must demonstrate restraint to create a real challenge for men, instead putting up a feigned show of resistance.

Another topic of discussion is the presence of children—or, the lack thereof—in Genji and Murasaki’s relationship. Field gives an analysis that determines how within the text, offspring seem very insignificant. To this effect, “if fictional heroes must not be interested in political self-aggrandizement, then it follows that they should not use their children toward such ends... It is only their foils (such as Tō no Chūjō) who procreate prolifically and are thus betrayed in their thirst for power” (Field 82). Thus, children seem to be a stand-in for a parent’s political ambitions. Genji does have children, and it should be noted that all three have high political stations to which they rise, especially in the case of the Reizei Emperor and the Akashi daughter, who becomes the empress. Even Genji’s adopted children such as Akikonomu rise to great heights. Therefore, one cannot say that Genji does not have political ambitions that are achieved by his children. But, it is true that he does not have many that do this, which creates a contrast between the elegant Genji and the rather laughable Tō no Chūjō, who goes on the hunt for any child of his that he can use for political gains. Genji’s ambitions, however, are notably inapplicable to Murasaki, who has no children of her own. Admittedly, she plays an integral role

⁸ There does not seem to be much evidence from the text about a woman’s desirability hinging on her lack of sexual knowledge. Women who have been married before and thus clearly know of sex such as Ochiba and the Rokujō Lady seem to still garner attention from men, including Genji himself.

as stepmother to raise the Akashi daughter to the level of empress, but remains detached enough to not feel possessive over her, returning guardianship to the Akashi Lady when the time is right. Returning the daughter reveals the intense emotional bond that formed between her and Murasaki. Murasaki does achieve some status in becoming the step-mother of the Akashi daughter, encapsulated in the fact that the transition marks her “promotion” to the rank of *kita no kata*, which is typically reserved for one’s principal wife (Shirane 54). However, ambiguity discussed earlier raises questions about whether or not the appellation constitutes irrefutable primacy.

In summary, the absence of children in the relationship means that Murasaki’s value is not limited to her ability to produce political tools for Genji. This would then, in turn, suggest that Genji’s attachment to her does not involve ulterior motives (Shirane 55). Their relationship is also obviously complex, where it is hard for a reader to understand whether or not Murasaki and Genji have the same level of attachment for one another. The case for Murasaki’s feelings is slightly more ambiguous, but the above analysis supports the overall impression that the text ultimately upholds their relationship as significant and singular to Genji. In a way, their relationship can be further interpreted as a case of romantic love in a marriage. Barring judgment on whether or not that means the relationship constitutes some form of “true love” in either a Heian or modern sense, a degree of specialness remains indisputable. It is this impression of the relationship that justifies referring to Murasaki as Genji’s wife*.

4.1 Chapter Four: The Monogamous Deception

The next aspect of the relationship that deserves attention is the presence of deceit in the Genji-Murasaki relationship. Simply put, this deception is geared towards enabling Murasaki to feel secure. To this effect, Genji actively attempts to prevent her from knowing about his affairs. Coupled with the earlier discussion of the singularity of their relationship, I will argue that the façade of emotional monogamy is Genji’s way to make Murasaki feel secure, but that this deception is ultimately ineffective. As a result, Murasaki’s experience informs the audience that the impression of emotional monogamy does not equate to emotional security for women of secondary marital status. This theme, developed first via Murasaki, is then carried and reinforced in later relationships.

First, it should be noted that Genji’s affairs are not actually secret from his lovers, Murasaki included. Evidence appears as early as “The Sacred Tree” chapter. Here, Genji comes to visit Murasaki at Nijō after a considerable absence. In an earlier poetry exchange between the two, she had made a reference pertaining to “reeds of autumn,” a reference that resurfaces in what appears to Genji’s thoughts as he wonders if “it was because she knew all about his errant ways that she had written of the ‘reeds of autumn’” (“The Sacred Tree” 201).¹ Her allusion, according to the footnote in the *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* version suggests that she knows of his wandering ways (NKBZ 2.118). Genji’s own thoughts suggest as much, although there is a chance he is projecting. Other women of the Rokujō-in appear to know as well, as described by

¹ “あいなき心のさまざま乱るるやしるからむ、 「色かはる」 とあり” (“Sakaki” 2.121); footnote in NKBZ, 118.

the narrator in the “Asagao” chapter, who know of Genji’s prowling ways and consider it to be part of his “defect.”²

Arguments can be made where life in the capital, due to its small size and the typical retinue that accompanies a nobleman, means that a man’s affairs wind up as public gossip very quickly. It is the quickness of the gossip vine that would allow the women to become aware of a man’s other amorous adventures. That being said, there is a degree of secrecy that remains involved, which suggests a desire to prevent other women from openly seeing a man wander for fear of repercussions or merely a social norm about the rituals of relationships. However, if a man’s inconstancy is a truly normative concept, then there is little reason for a man to need to make excuses. The tale definitely contains remarks about the pain brought on by polyamorous romance, such as the Kiritsubo Emperor’s warning to Genji about upsetting his lovers (in this case, the Rokujō Lady specifically) (“Heartvine” 158-9). An awareness of these issues appears again when Genji swears himself to Murasaki. Mentioned earlier in this essay, the content of his message then was to seal himself off from further entanglements, due to how life is too short to bear the weight of another’s resentment. And yet despite these two considerations, we see polyamorous activity and emotional suffering continue afterwards. True to this, Genji does initially make the choice to refrain from seeing the Akashi Lady because “he did not want to do anything that would make [Murasaki] unhappy, and he spent his nights alone” (“Akashi” 264). This attitude changes however, and Genji begins a concurrent relationship with the Akashi Lady while in exile.

Clearly Genji fits the model of a man who cannot restrict himself to one woman, but we see his attempts to convince Murasaki of her unrivaled position. The first instance of Genji

² “「いでや。御すき心の古りがたきぞあたたら御瑕なめる。軽々しきことも出で来なむ」 ” (“Asagao” 2.481)

himself revealing to Murasaki his other romantic adventures takes place in the “Akashi” chapter. After arriving back in the capital, part of his subsequent conversation with Murasaki entails the revelation of his courtship while in exile with the Akashi Lady. The narrator relates the following sequence: “He told Murasaki about the other lady. A pensive, dreamy look passed over his face, and she whispered, as if to dismiss the matter: ‘For myself I do not worry.’” (“Akashi” 269). Evidently pleased with Murasaki’s “gentle reproof,” he becomes “unable to take his eyes from her now that he had her before him, he could not think how he had survived so many months and years without her. All the old bitterness came back” (“Akashi” 269). Genji’s honesty on the matter stands out in contrast to aspects of the other relationship that are left under wraps, such as the Akashi Lady’s pregnancy. Given the prophecy surrounding Genji and his children, the daughter cannot be hidden if she is to fulfill the prophecy by becoming empress. Therefore, Murasaki, as the manager of Genji’s household affairs, must be aware of the situation.³

However, there is the possibility (and it has been argued by others) that, on top of how that the child is too consequential to hide, the relationship is too inconsequential to keep hiding. This means to say that the Akashi Lady’s social status means that she is reasonably unqualified to be a social rival for Murasaki. If, as scholars like Field, Tyler and Shirane contend, it is only the possible threat of being outranked by a new woman that stirs unpleasant feelings in women, it would be a moment like this that supports such a view. It would, anyway, explain what seems to be the genuine lack of care on Murasaki’s part. Considering how Murasaki only feigns outward acceptance of the Third Princess when with Genji contrary to her actual worries, an interpretation that revolves around perceived threat as a function of rank sounds reasonable but not entirely true.

In actuality, it comes to light that Murasaki may not consider herself fully above threat when it comes even to the Akashi Lady, whom she should have no reason to fear in this regard. In “Channel Buoys,” Genji informs Murasaki about how he plans to bring the Akashi Lady and his daughter by her to the capital to live there. He tells her not to be jealous, but Murasaki asks him how to be jealous—implying she does not know how to be jealous (“Channel Buoys” 276). This moment appears to be a sarcastic one on Murasaki’s part, since it is not too long after this conversation that the narrative reveals her true feelings on the matter. Her feelings manifest as anger, where it seems to her that “it did not seem right that he should have allowed himself even a playful glance at another woman. If he had his ways, she would have hers” followed by composing a poem suggesting that she foresees herself dying before him (“Channel Buoys” 277). A surprisingly vindictive statement from the woman Genji purports as his ideal woman, her thoughts clearly demonstrate displeasure with Genji—anger, even. Up until this point, the Akashi Lady could have been accepted as a temporary partner whose sole purpose was to while away Genji’s time in exile. Introducing her as permanent means that Genji officially has gone back on all his aforementioned intent to limit himself to Murasaki. Moreover, the statement foreshadows Murasaki’s death as a result of this development. Combined with the fact that just prior to the beginning of her final illness, she and Genji discuss his string of relationships, it may be that Murasaki died of a broken heart. Upon realizing that she never was or could have been his only woman, she seeks solace in faith as her health wanes. In the immediate context of the moment, we can see how Murasaki personally rejects the polyamorous norm.

The curious aspect, then, is the relationships that Genji chooses not to reveal to Murasaki. In fact, these instances are most curious for their obvious degree of obfuscation, which suggests even Genji’s preference for a monogamous image for their relationship. To an extent, this even

applies to the Akashi Lady. In the very same chapter that the affair is revealed, Genji receives a letter from the Akashi Lady. After continuously rereading the letter and sighing, Murasaki catches on to his behavior and comments, “The distant boat more distant” (“Channel Buoys” 278). Genji responds by reprimanding her for overreacting and partially shows the letter to Murasaki: “He let her see only the address. The hand would have done honor to the proudest lady at court” (“Channel Buoys” 278). Showing Murasaki the letter may imply that Genji wishes Murasaki to understand the Akashi Lady’s value based on her handwriting. A refined hand will demonstrate her aesthetic achievement. Not showing the inside of the letter, however, suggests that he does not want Murasaki to see the possible depth of their attachment that the content of the correspondence would reveal.

Later, in “The Wind in the Pines,” Genji finds that he cannot stand prolonged separation from the Akashi Lady, who at the moment is living out in Oi. He goes to see her, but leaves an untruthful note to Murasaki to explain his absence as a matter of “business in Katsura” with regard to a chapel he patronizes there: (“The Wind in the Pines” 323). His message says nothing of his true intent. Instead, he obfuscates his purpose by directing her attention to the Buddhist chapel, creating a façade that does not involve seeing the Akashi Lady. In truth, Murasaki can piece together his real intentions. But, this moment is the first instance of Genji purposely disguising his plans to see another woman. When she attempts to point out his wandering ways at this time, Genji chides her for “being difficult,” defending himself by saying that she is “in a small minority...for the whole world agrees that I have mended my ways” (“The Wind in the Pines” 323). The narrator and Murasaki (not to mention the reader) know otherwise about Genji’s supposed conversion from romantic wanderer to a dedicated man. There is no truth to his statement, but evidently the notion that Genji has given up romantic pursuits exists at court. This

idea is part of what I would call Genji's veneer, which attempts to establish Genji as a man dedicated emotionally to Murasaki.

A similar moment occurs at the chapter's conclusion. Genji returns from the visit to find Murasaki glum, clearly focused on Genji's visit to the Akashi Lady. However, this time he does not chide her, but instead reassures her and reminds her of the special places she holds with him ("The Wind in the Pines" 330). Perhaps Genji imagines that Murasaki is merely upset at his absence and not particularly fixed on the Akashi Lady. That being said, he seems very much aware of her feigned indifference to letters from the Akashi lady, but directs attention to the Akashi daughter rather than the mother, as though trying to imply that his concern focuses on duty to the daughter rather than attraction to the mother.

Not too long after the arrival of Tamakazura, we notice another incident where Genji conceals his romantic wanderings. On the night of the new year he decides to spend the night with the Akashi Lady, but recognizes that doing so will cause the other women to be jealous, especially Murasaki. When he returns to Murasaki, he fabricates a lie about the night, telling her, "I dozed off, and there I was sleeping like a baby, and no one woke me" ("The First Warbler" 413). She clearly disregards his excuses, feigning sleep. Genji's attempt to brush off the incident as an accident attempts to mend the image that he is most loyal first and foremost to Murasaki. He cannot admit to staying for any other reason, for it would suggest that he is attracted to the Akashi Lady.

The chapter "The Morning Glory" features the first of what Royall Tyler, in his article "I am I: Genji and Murasaki," calls Murasaki's "crises," meaning times where Murasaki feels most threatened by Genji's other lovers. The chapter features Genji's failed romance with a cousin of

his who has just become available after returning from the position of Priestess of Kamo, Princess Asagao. Murasaki is not privy to this affair's happenings. In fact, she does not know about it until gossip reaches her ears: "The rumor presently reached Murasaki, who at first told herself that he would not dream of keeping such a secret from her. Then, watching him closely, she could not dismiss the evidences which she found of restlessness. So he was serious about something which he had treated as a joke" ("The Morning Glory" 352).⁴ There does not seem to be much evidence of what sort of "joke" (JP: 戯れ) was being put up at Princess Asagao's expense, but the passage indicates both Murasaki's prior obliviousness and her current state of disbelief. Moreover, she knows Genji after having been with him for more than ten years and can identify behavioral signs to substantiate her claims. The same chapter also features a segment where Genji takes note that Murasaki is unhappy. Initially he attributes her displeasure to the fact that he is away so much for business-related reasons. However, he soon amends his analysis, instead focusing on how it might be his correspondence with Asagao that displeases her. He chastises her about it, telling her, "I have sought to intimidate her with what might be taken for love notes. Life is dull for her, it would seem, and sometimes she has answered" ("The Morning Glory" 357). Genji's spin on the situation suggests play, that nothing he does with Asagao is serious. Any romantic overture Murasaki could imagine amounts to nothing but misunderstanding, according to him.

The deception continues the very same day. Later, on that snowy evening, Genji begins to discuss memories of Fujitsubo, prompted by a discussion about winter and the memory of when a mountain of snow was made in her honor. Genji carefully describes his relationship with

⁴対の上は伝へ聞きたまひて、しばしは、さりとも、さやうならむこともあらば隔てては思したらじ、と思しけれど、うちつけに目とどめきこえたまふに、御気色はども例ならずあくがれたるも心憂く、まめまめしく思しなるらむことを、つれなく戯れに言ひなしたまひけんよと ("Asagao" 2.478).

Fujitsubo as one where he “was kept at a distance, of course...but during her years at court she was good enough to take me into her confidence. In my turn I looked to her for advice” (“The Morning Glory” 357). Genji continues to praise Fujitsubo’s subtle and passive nature, but makes no mention of his romantic interest in her. Moreover, there is never an indication that Murasaki knows about Reizei, meaning secrecy has perhaps always been imbedded in their relationship. Genji then compares Fujitsubo and Asagao to stress the latter’s coldness. He then continues his comparison chain by comparing Asagao to Oborozukiyo, who represents the woman of the highest level of elegance. He laments having had such a wild youth, though he considers his to be “so much tamer than most” (“The Morning Glory” 358). Finally, he excuses his behavior towards the Akashi Lady by relating it to her charm that gives exception to her low rank, and ends with most dependable relationship he has, which is with Hanachirusato. Following this speech, however, comes a poem from Murasaki: “The water is stilled among the frozen rocks./ A clear moon moves into the western sky” (“The Morning Glory” 359).⁵ Translations note that the water is Murasaki and Genji is the moon. Based on how the water is frozen still while the moon is clear and moves, the poem indicates that Murasaki is stagnant, while Genji is free. He continues to roam about while Murasaki is forced to settle. Given Genji’s prior listing of women without necessarily touching on his romantic attachments to them, one can hardly imagine Murasaki ignoring how the speech implicates Genji as someone whose romantic loyalties drift. In a sense, he gives himself up here.

The text reveals Murasaki’s obliviousness to some affairs, such as old ones like Yūgao. After deciding that he needs to install Yūgao’s daughter (Tamakazura) somewhere in his Rokujō-in abode, he reveals the story to her so that they can discuss where to put Tamakazura.

⁵ “こほりとち石間の水はゆきなやみそらすむ月のかげぞながる” (“Asagao” 2.494).

Murasaki's responds by "chid[ing] him for having kept it so long a secret" ("The Jeweled Chaplet" 403). Granted, the relationship happened before Murasaki and Genji even met, and her death was quite traumatic, but from Murasaki's perspective they should be close enough to know of these sorts of incidents. This instance thus marks another moment in their lives where Genji has concealed his romantic adventures from Murasaki. This one in particular may be more of a case of trauma that Genji only faces when Tamakazura re-enters the picture, but it is one that all the same corroborates a consistent habit of hiding affairs from Murasaki.

The final twist to tackle is Genji's marriage to the Third Princess. One quickly notices that Genji actively makes the decision to postpone telling Murasaki about the matter. Some festivities take place between the Genji and Suzaku when the deal is made. Afterwards, Genji considers what the move means for Murasaki. The narrator tells us that "Murasaki had heard vague rumors, but she had told herself that it could not be true" ("New Herbs: Part One" 549). Clearly after all the above and a few other affairs of lesser mention, Murasaki longs for there to be an end to Genji's amorous tendencies. Genji himself wonders how Murasaki will receive the news. Believing himself that the marriage will do nothing but increase his feelings for Murasaki, he withholds the information until the next morning, posing it as a matter of obligation to the Suzaku emperor. Scholars such as Tyler have examined the marriage to the Third Princess as one built on political maneuvering, given the Third Princess' position, which represents the highest marriage possible for a commoner ("I am I" 436). This aspect of the marriage is undeniable, but I would like to also point out that Genji himself expresses interest in the Third Princess, encapsulated in the narrator's revelation of Genji's feelings of interest (JP: ゆかしき御ありさ

ま) (“Wakan: jō” 4.47).⁶ Interest leads to attempted romantic adventure, meaning that Genji’s motivations may be tangled in both amorous and political inclinations.

In the same chapter, we see a resurgence of Genji’s actively deceitful ways when he lies about visiting one of his Nijō-in ladies. Really, he plans on attempting to see his old flame Oborozukiyo. The narrator describes how “the disastrous conclusion to their affair had made it impossible for Genji to forget her. He wanted very much to see her again” (“New Herbs: Part One” 560). Given how their affair was ruinous before—marking the full turning point for Kokiden (Oborozukiyo’s sister) against Genji, which led to his self-imposed exile—a degree of secrecy seems somewhat justified. Genji appeals to Oborozukiyo’s attendant Chūnagon via Chūnagon’s brother, claiming that because both of them are much older than they were before that a meeting could be enacted in secrecy (“New Herbs: Part One” 560). Genji lies to Murasaki, saying that he intends to visit Suetsumuhana. This information does not fully compute with Murasaki, who sees that Genji seems “improbably nervous about visiting a lady who had never meant a great deal to him” (“New Herbs: Part One” 560). Genji establishes an alibi about seeing someone that Murasaki would not find a threat—as in, someone in whom Genji has no romantic interest. However, that is not the case with Oborozukiyo. But in Genji’s mind, he must protect Murasaki from feeling threatened to ensure that on one hand, she does not recognize that another affair is taking place, and on the other, that she feels her position secure all the same.

It is not long after this visit to Oborozukiyo that Genji reveals the affair to Murasaki. He returns to Rokujō to find Murasaki giving him nothing but silence—not even a hint of her suspicions that Genji lied to her. Genji grows frustrated with her, asking himself if “she no

⁶ “御心の中にも、さすがにゆかしき御ありさまなれば” (“Wakan: jō” 4.47).

longer care[d] what he did” (“New Herbs: Part One” 562). Genji appears to believe that having affairs amplifies his feelings for Murasaki. This may be true to the extent that if Genji thinks her incomparable, finding again and again that women cannot match Murasaki affirms this belief. However, this process also rests on Murasaki being aware of his shenanigans, as indicated by his indignation at her feigned ignorance. He then divulges a little of what happened with his meeting. When she comes to near tears over it, he chastises her and “it would seem, the whole story came forth” (“New Herbs: Part One” 562). The text does not relay what reaction comes from this discussion, but it is interesting to see Genji’s actions as an attempt to reconcile his reoccurring flames with the perennial flame for Murasaki. Clearly unable to prevent himself from returning to old flames when the opportunity arises, Genji treats them as instances that prove his even greater affection for Murasaki. When she does not seem to notice this, Genji makes the choice to reveal the affair, presumably with the intent of using it to prove his ever greater feelings for her.

Perhaps realizing that this way of going about affairs does nothing to strengthen his relationship with Murasaki, he makes a great show of the affair’s end. The final letter is one that he deems to show “there could be no doubt that this was the end of the affair” (“New Herbs: Part Two” 628). Oborozukiyo’s intentions to become a nun after this emphasize the finality of the affair, meaning that she will forevermore be inaccessible in a romantic capacity. Showing Murasaki this note, then, is the only way for Genji to show that a relationship has fully ended. Genji also notes at this time that Asagao, too, also has become a nun, the first mention to readers of the event. These oblique moments go to demonstrate, according to Genji’s logic, reasons for Murasaki to feel secure. He is open when it is most conducive to their relationship and secretive when openness is most inconvenient.

Murasaki's own thoughts regarding Genji's antics demonstrate that, later in their relationship, she becomes increasingly aware that Genji's attempts to placate her do not give her security. After the retired Suzaku emperor acts through his son to ensure a promotion to Princess of the Second Rank for the Third Princess, the narrative shifts to Murasaki. In addition, not too long prior to this, the "New Herbs: Part Two" chapter tells us that she has begun to request being allowed to become a nun. In this moment of her life, the narrator reveals her thoughts concerning the long-term viability of her supposedly immutably and incontestably strong connection with Genji:

"Murasaki looked about her and saw how everyone seemed to be moving ahead, and asked herself whether she would always have a monopoly on Genji's affections. No, she would grow old and he would weary of her. She wanted to anticipate the inevitable by leaving the world. She kept these thoughts to herself, not wanting to nag or seem insistent. She did not resent the fact that Genji divided his time evenly between her and the Third Princess. The emperor himself worried about his sister and would have been upset by any suggestion that she was being neglected. Yet Murasaki could not help thinking that her worst fears were coming true" ("New Herbs: Part Two" 597).

Given her ambiguous position, Murasaki would not be able to demand a majority of Genji's time, for that would speak negatively about not only Genji if he acquiesced, but herself, which would go against her resolution to remain amicable to the situation to spite her stepmother.⁷ These thoughts reveal that an inclination towards the religious life seems to be spurred by a foreboding feeling of future augmentations to her insecurities. Part of the insecurity derives from her clear lack of rank, indicated by seeing others "moving ahead" and finding herself stagnant. No indisputable, rank-based obligation ties Genji to her—not even a formalized marriage. Seeing

⁷ These thoughts of Murasaki seem to suggest that her display of indifference and compliance with Genji's new marriage is in part motivated by her relationship with her stepmother: "Murasaki was determined that she would not complain or give any hint of resentment. She knew that neither her wishes nor her advice would have made any difference. She did not want the world to think that she had been crushed by what had to come. There was her sharp-tongued stepmother, so quick to blame and gloat—she even held Murasaki responsible for the curious solution to the Tamakazura problem. She was certain to gloat over this, and to say that Murasaki deserved exactly what had come to her" ("New Leaves: Part One" 550).

these facts draws attention to what she lacks: immutable security that only a well-defined position would give her.

It is interesting, though, to note that it is not until the incident with Princess Asagao that Murasaki seems to fully understand that marriage, in her situation, involves contending with the other women Genji involves himself with. “So this [Genji leaving as he pleased and being not too honest about it], thought Murasaki, was marriage. She had been too confident” (“The Morning Glory” 353). Consideration of this particular plot point in the story has led to the suggestion that the reintroduction of Asagao is intended to demonstrate the difference between her and Murasaki. Asagao is someone with all the credentials to marry Genji, which then serves as a reminder to Murasaki about the fragility of her position (Kudō 197). In a more extreme interpretation that extends into his marriage to the Third Princess, we could imagine that Murasaki Shikibu has Murasaki realize that she never was his wife because Genji left himself available to be remarried (Kudō 209). If we think of Genji as having left himself available to the possibility of marrying the highest wife possible (a princess), then Murasaki’s concerns about the incident with Asagao may indicate a reminder that their marriage is purely informal, thus subject to being usurped by another. Thus, legally speaking, marriage to a princess like Asagao would make obvious the fact that he and Murasaki were never formally married (Kudō 198).

These thoughts are echoed again several chapters later, when Genji comments on the rumors going on about his son’s precarious pursuit of Ochiba. The events inspire pity in him for the women involved. The rumors also prompt him to discuss his plans for leaving the world, which are consumed with concern for what will become of Murasaki afterwards. Her thoughts on the matter follow:

“It was not kind of him, she thought, flushing, to have plans for leaving her. Such a difficult, constricted life as a woman was required to live! Moving things, amusing things, she must pretend to be unaffected by them. With whom was she to share the pleasure and beguile the tedium of this fleeting world? Since it chose to look upon women as useless, unfeeling creatures, should it not pity the fathers who went to such trouble rearing them? Like the mute prince who was always appearing in sad parables, a woman should be sensitive but silent. The balance was certainly very difficult to maintain — and the little girl in her care, Genji’s granddaughter, must face the same difficulties” (“Evening Mist” 699).

Bemoaning the condition of her life, Murasaki feels trapped. Moreover, the selfishness that Genji claims to find her requests to become a nun reappears in his own desires, where evidently the only one allowed to make decisions about leaving is Genji. These thoughts then project more broadly onto life as a woman, which seems to be filled with isolation, double standards and confining gender roles. In combination with the above thoughts about her concerns about her relationship with Genji, it appears that we can see her longing to depart from the world as an effort to separate herself from a world that gives her naught but worries and insecurity. The absence of choices becomes increasingly clear, as does her awareness that her precarious position relies on nothing more than Genji’s affections.

In summary, the relationship between Genji and Murasaki is undeniably complex, torn between undeniable statements of deep feeling and Genji’s fallacies, which he knows will hurt her yet he continues on in spite of. Over the course of their relationship, Genji creates an image that enforces either emotional devotion to Murasaki and Murasaki alone, or, by denying her knowledge of his affairs, the impression that Genji considers Murasaki to be the only woman of any great consequence in his life. Those women mentioned but of little consequence to the Genji-Murasaki relationship (most notably Hanachirusato and Suetsumuhana) only persist in Genji's life as platonic relationships with women who financially depend on him. But as

developments in Murasaki's reactions and thoughts appear later in life, the impression does not console her. In fact, the consecutive events only contribute to her increasing anxieties. Her position thus describes that of a secondary wife coming to terms with the chronic ambiguity of her marriage, whereby the only hope for stability lies in the religious life.

5.1 Chapter Five:

Cases of *Mamebito*: Yūgiri and the Eighth Prince

To the extent that other relationships build onto similar themes that appear in the Genji-Murasaki relationship, we now look at two characters who, contrary to Genji, have a reputation for reliability in romance and also receive the description of *mamebito* まめ人 (a serious person).¹ This term appears to indicate seriousness in the sense that the man does not demonstrate a predilection for amorous activities, at times with the result of partially fitting a definition of monogamous in a strict one-man-one-woman sense. These characters address the same concerns about a woman's position found in the Murasaki-Genji relationship. The relationships between these men and their respective wives stress the emotional burden that is laid upon women whose positions are not secure because of their secondary nature.

5.2 Yūgiri

Yūgiri's character seems to have contradictory aspects, much like his father. On the one hand, he seems to be known for his seriousness and dedication, such that in his later years, Niou finds him unsettlingly so (although this may be due to Niou's personal lack of seriousness) ("Beneath the Oak" 799). When the Suzaku emperor speaks to his daughter's nurse about Yūgiri as a possible candidate for the Third Princess's hand, he praises Yūgiri from an academic standpoint, citing his diligence. The nurse concurs that Yūgiri is undeniably reliable in that

¹ Other characters called *mamebito* include Hige-kuro and Kaoru (Field 125). These other two will not appear in this paper, but these men could perhaps as a whole receive attention in terms of the depiction of *mamebito* in *Genji* or across the genre.

regard, but puts forth his unswerving dedication to his wife Kuminokari as a reason why he would not make a suitable husband for the princess (“New Herbs: Part One” 541). When the Suzaku emperor brings the proposal to Genji’s attention, Genji too makes mention of his son being “serious, with the person of his affections determined” (JP: まめだちて、思ふ人定まりて).² And yet despite these characteristics, he too falls prey to the amorous ways that had his father constantly on the prowl for most of his life.

But first, a baseline of sorts should be established with regards to this “monogamous” man. In totality, it seems that Yūgiri is not single-minded enough that he has no thoughts for other women. And yet at the same time, he seems particularly drawn to Kumoinokari, such that our understanding of Yūgiri seems to revolve around his singular, unbreakable attachment to Kumoinokari.

When they are young, Yūgiri and Kumoinokari seem set on being childhood sweethearts, such that Kumoinokari refuses to accommodate her father’s wishes to send her to court (“The Wild Carnation” 447). Their intense relationship, however, is not without pitfalls at this stage, a result of Tō no Chūjō’s desire to force the two to seek other proposals. For example, during the period where Yūgiri is denied access to Kumoinokari, we see the birth of his apparent crush on Murasaki. After catching a glimpse of her during the intense storm in “The Typhoon”, the face of Murasaki is capable of pushing out thoughts of Kumoinokari (“The Typhoon” 460). These feelings for Murasaki seem to linger long into his life, appearing again roughly a decade later during the musical performance that happens in “New Herbs: Part Two.” Yūgiri longs to look inside the curtains at Murasaki in particular. At the same time, however, his thoughts reveal that

² “いといたくまめだちて、思ふ人定まりてにぞあめれば” (“Wakana: jō” 4.40). In other words, he is man who has “settled.”

he perhaps regrets having been passed over in the matter of the Third Princess. Thoughts of Murasaki proceed and follow those concerning the Third Princess, shifting to end with how “he was a model of prudence and sobriety and would not have dreamed of doing anything unseemly” (“New Herbs: Part Two” 603). As indicated by these mixed feelings, Yūgiri is not immune to crushes and thoughts about hypothetical alternatives such as the Third Princess. However, it should be noted that these thoughts do not produce actions. If anything, it seems that his feelings towards Murasaki seem to be develop into something akin to respect than infatuation.³

Prior to giving his consent to having Yūgiri marry Kumoinokari, Tō no Chūjō considers the young man’s track record, as it were, meaning his behavior during the period of denial. Yūgiri has not eagerly asserted himself upon hearing that he will have her, purely out of spite for her serving women that have mocked him, but “he showed that he was still interested by not being even slightly interested in other ladies” (“A Branch of Plum” 520). Moreover, “for Yūgiri, the thought of taking another wife was not admissible” (“A Branch of Plum” 521). At this crucial turning point, however, there are mentions of flings, but that these episodes that occurred in the interim reportedly have no meaning according to the narrator (“Wisteria Leaves” 529). While Tō no Chūjō may lament having “lost” by having to retract his decision, “[Yūgiri’s] extraordinary fidelity over the years made it difficult to hold grudges” (“Wisteria Leaves” 529). In other words, Yūgiri’s display of emotional dedication wins him his childhood love and commendation from others.

³ Yūgiri’s thoughts at the concert suggest as much: “He could have no possible designs on Murasaki. She had through the years been a remote and lofty symbol of all that was admirable. He only wished that he had some way of showing, some disinterested, gentlemanly way, how very high was his regard for her” (“New Herbs: Part Two” 603).

Judged by his peers to be a pillar of reliability, one would imagine that he is solely dedicated to his wife once they are married. Such a marriage could be described as satisfactory, where the two participants have had no intent to marry anyone else. And yet, there seems to be a seed of discontent sown into their relationship, which is revealed in the course of the aforementioned music concert. After the concert, Yūgiri returns home to his wife, but reveals in his thoughts that in terms of musical accomplishment, his wife is lacking. Without musical talent, her main moments of interest derive from “a fit of temper or jealousy” (“New Herbs: Part Two” 606). In comparison to Genji’s ménage of talented women, Yūgiri finds that while he settled with his childhood sweetheart, a woman of cultured taste who seems to compose adequate poetry, her lack of musical experience makes her less interesting. But at the same time, their relationship seems stable, albeit boring.

But what of Koremitsu’s daughter, the Gosechi dancer? It is a case like hers that brings Yūgiri’s contradictions to the fore. Whereas the Murasaki infatuation produces no “unseemly” action, the case of the Gosechi dancer does the opposite. Her character comes to our attention initially in “The Maiden,” when Yūgiri, frustrated by being denied access to Kumoinokari, catches a glimpse of Koremitsu’s daughter. Finding a strong resemblance to Kumoinokari, he feels immediately drawn to her, grabbing her sleeve (“The Maiden” 375). Nothing comes from the moment other than immediate confusion for her at his identity and an intense but seemingly momentary infatuation resulting in a few correspondences.

The next mention of her comes five years later at the time of Yūgiri’s marriage to Kumoinokari. At this time, the chapter ends with a rumor that Yūgiri still sees Koremitsu’s daughter (“Wisteria Leaves” 531). These appear to be more than just rumors, for there is a sudden mention in “New Herbs: Part Two” that a son of Yūgiri by Koremitsu’s daughter has

been put into the care of Hanachirusato (“New Herbs: Part Two” 597). Similarly, at the end of “Evening Mist,” it appears that over the course of approximately ten years of marriage, the daughter of Koremitsu has given birth to several children by Yūgiri. Their relationship, however, seems to be inconsequential, at least as far as the narrator is concerned. The narrator depicts Koremitsu’s daughter as someone who “had been the sole secret object of Yūgiri’s attentions in the days when Kumoinokari was refusing him. Though he had turned away from her after his marriage, she had borne several of his children” (“Evening Mist” 711).⁴ Based on the ordering of the children, the relations with Koremitsu’s daughter have to be concurrent with his marriage to Kumoinokari. How then, do we understand the narrator’s lack of concern over the relationship? “Turning away” appears to be a more concrete interpretation of the original, which seems to suggest that he merely grows cold towards her and visits infrequently. A way to imagine the situation is that visits to Koremitsu’s daughter may be during times where he does not have sexual access to Kumoinokari (ranging from pregnancy to menstruation, which may be times of abstinence).⁵ If so, then their continued relationship may not have emotional content, although there is the undeniable factor that commenced the relationship to begin with: her resemblance to Kumoinokari. The resemblance suggests that she is a mere substitute for Kumoinokari. Given the text’s lack of concern for the relationship, I am inclined to momentarily concur with the narrator’s decision to give the relationship little emotional weight. As a result, the relationship

⁴ “この、昔御中絶えのほどには、この内侍のみこそ、人知れぬものに思ひとめたまへりしか、事あらためて後は、いとたまさかに、つれなくなりまさりたまうつつ、さすがに君達はあまたになりにつけり
“ (“Yūgiri” 4.489).

⁵ To say the least, there appears to be a pattern of using of defilement to avoid obligations. As to what constitutes defilement, this is largely unclear, but it is at times described as a “monthly defilement” for women, such as in “Boat Upon the Waters” when Ukon makes the excuse to cancel a pilgrimage to Ishiyama (982-3). The excuse also seems to be made by men. Defilement related to pregnancy also appears in “The Drake Fly” in relation to Ukifune’s step-sister’s pregnancy (1026). In totality, this point is speculative at best, but hopes at best to provide a plausible explanation for why the narrator seems to give no substance to the relationship while also addressing continued sexual relations that result in children.

also does not seem to be one that makes us question where Kumoinokari stands with Yūgiri from his point of view.⁶

Yūgiri has yet another, more prominent lapse that does raise substantial questions about his married life: Princess Ochiba. The second daughter of the Suzaku emperor and the widow of Kashiwagi, Yūgiri becomes quickly infatuated with her following his friend's death in "The Oak Tree" as he makes initially obligatory visits to her and her mother. After one particular visit, Yūgiri comes home to Kumoinokari, his thoughts on Ochiba. Her response to his late return home is not welcoming, which lead to him wishing his upset wife would be more pleasant to him ("The Flute" 662-3). To himself, Yūgiri asserts that "all through the years he had given not the smallest cause for jealousy" ("The Flute" 663). Reflecting on his marriage reveals Yūgiri's lack of emotional extramarital affairs. For one thing, this seems to further discount the idea that his Koremitsu's daughter constitutes an emotional affair. At the same time, these thoughts reinforce how, ten years into their marriage, he has remained faithful emotionally (although not so physically).

The status quo of the marriage changes, however, in "Evening Mist," when Yūgiri's behavior at the chapter's commencement suggests that he has an image of propriety to maintain, but that this image is also of use to him: "Making full use of his name for probity and keeping to himself the fact that he thought the Second Princess very interesting, Yūgiri let it seem to the world that he was only being faithful to an old friendship" ("Evening Mist" 676). These feelings, however, mix with the impression "that the situation was a little ridiculous" ("Evening Mist" 676). The concurrent thoughts of absurdity and care for image coat the entire affair of Yūgiri

⁶ From Kumoinokari's perspective, however, she seems to have borne some resentment towards Koremitsu's daughter ("Evening Mist" 711).

pursuing Ochiba. A mixture of undeniably strong emotions does drive Yūgiri, but Yūgiri's thoughts reveal that consideration for his reputation also heavily inform his pursuit of Ochiba.

When Ochiba tries to persuade Yūgiri to leave Ono (where she and her mother are staying to have rites performed for her mother), Yūgiri thinks: "He felt sorry for her and ashamed of himself, that having so distinguished himself in her service and her mother's he should suddenly take advantage of her and propose a rather different sort of relationship. Yet he would look very silly if he were to bow and withdraw." ("The Evening Mist" 683). In short, Yūgiri seems to have put himself in a socially difficult position. For once acting on amorous thoughts, Yūgiri finds that his pride and social image would be tarnished by the humiliation derived from a failed adventure. And yet at the same time, he comprehends the difficult situation he has put Ochiba in, where suddenly a platonic relationship started over commiseration over the death of Kashiwagi is subject to change. As he leaves immediately after these thoughts, he considers how "these nocturnal wanderings were novel and exciting, but they were very disturbing too" ("Evening Mist" 683). In a way, this adventure appears to be incongruous with Yūgiri's character for multiple reasons. The case of Koremitsu's daughter aside, it appears that Yūgiri has never had thoughts for anyone else to the extent that he would act on them, thus fulfilling the requirements for a monogamous character type. The issue with Ochiba is that she stirs his interest, but the interest he feels is not without severe hesitations. It may be possible that these events are meant to be amusing, for we see a *mamebito* acting like his amorous father, but because this role does not fit him, it does not go as planned in the slightest. Even Yūgiri himself reports that he found "that there was something wrong with a man who could lose his senses over a woman, and here he was doing it himself. How strange it was, and how extremely painful. He tried to shake himself back into sanity, but without success" ("Evening Mist" 699). A lack of

control permeates the events of the pursuit. In addition to the cognitive dissonance, Yūgiri cannot seem to reconcile his feelings in any way other than pressing forward to protect his reputation.

In an argument with Kumoinokari, Yūgiri attempts to rationalize his behavior in terms of his sudden desire for romantic adventure and his reputation for seriousness, tossing off his pretense of absolute faithfulness for the following:

“You may be right. But there is one matter of which you seem to be unaware, that this sort of thing happens all the time. What is unique, I suspect, is the case of a man who reaches a certain station in life and continues to be unwaveringly faithful to one lady. You have heard of henpecking, perhaps? People always seem to find it very funny. And I should point out that the wife of so stodgy a man tends not to seem very exciting herself. Think how her reputation rises, how the wrinkles go away, how interesting and amusing life is, when she is first among a multitude of ladies” (“Evening Mist” 688).

A few things can be gleaned from this passage. One: affairs like these are commonplace; two: monogamy is singular, but also seems to be amusing because it assumes that the wife has henpecked the husband, which in turn makes a man a joke to his peers; three: a woman should feel that her worth is best made evident when she can win out against others in a battle of affections. None of these items win Kumoinokari’s blessing for the adventure. While emphasizing the uniqueness of Yūgiri’s attitude thus far, there appears to have been an unmentioned element of mockery that accompanies this reputation.⁷ No indication of this atmosphere bothering Yūgiri comes up before this moment during the marriage, suggesting that it only matters when he seeks to persuade his wife.

⁷ Near the end of the chapter, Yūgiri also begins to feel pity for his wife, to the extent that he can when under the influence of desire. At this time, he also says to her, “I remember all the years when I thought of no one but you, and your father would not have me. Thanks to him the whole world was laughing at me. But I persevered and bore the unbearable, and refused all the other young ladies who were offered to me. I remember how my friends all laughed. Not even a woman was expected to be so constant and steadfast, they all said. And indeed I can see that my solemn devotion must have been rather funny” (“Evening Mist” 706). Once again, the notion that his behavior was laughable comes to light.

Furthermore, after seeing Yūgiri's superficially blasé attitude towards the letter from Ochiba's mother and his trips to Ono, Kumoinokari's situation looks bleak. The narrator tells us,

“Kumoinokari was very unhappy indeed. He seemed to have lost his head completely. Perhaps he had been observing the ladies at Rokujō, long used to this sort of thing, and had concluded that she was worse than uninteresting. Well, it might be that his dissatisfaction should be directed at himself. Life might have been better for her if he had been a Genji. Everyone seemed to agree that she was married to a model of decorum and that her marriage had been ordained by the happiest fates. And was it to end in scandal?” (“Evening Mist” 698).

Once again, the concern about Kumoinokari's lack of intense artistic background resurfaces. The link to Genji's collection of accomplished women receives a reference, making it appear as though Yūgiri's actions have a direct instigating factor: the influence of seeing his father's talented cohort of women. But what is of particular interest is the notion that she may have been happier if Yūgiri were like Genji. Perhaps if she were used to such a situation, she would be more “interesting,” as it were. In that respect, maybe there is reason to be envious of Murasaki. However, given the above analysis of Murasaki, it seems that even someone like Murasaki faces lifelong struggles with security, which culminate in an intense desire to leave the world. From the reader's perspective, this would be particularly obvious. Finally, the thought about her marriage to “a model of decorum” suggests that prior to this moment, her marriage was perhaps a point of pride. Attributing this opinion to other people suggests that as far as she knows, their marriage, contrary to the ridicule Yūgiri claims to experience, is thought of highly by others.

As to how this scenario plays out, we look to how the relationship tangle is “resolved.” Ochiba refuses Yūgiri at every turn even after her mother's untimely death. However, due to similar social pressures mentioned before, Yūgiri cannot abandon her and has her moved from

Ono to a home at Ichijō. When she continues to rebuff him, Yūgiri continues with a plan “to make it appear that he had established residence at Ichijō” (“Evening Mist” 708). In other words, Yūgiri creates the impression of a marriage, but without any mention of the marriage being actually consummated. As a result of this move, however, Kumoinokari returns to her father. This decision perhaps means that, despite what Ivan Morris says about Hige-kuro’s first wife being the only one who refuses to share, that Kumoinokari also refuses to share her husband (Morris 239).

To continue monitoring the aftermath, we look to how this relationship appears after Genji’s death. “His Perfumed Highness” features the revelation that Ochiba remains childless by this point of the story a decade later, and no children are ever mentioned (741). In this way, there appears to be a possibility that the marriage was never consummated. Granted, Ochiba may be infertile (since she also never has children with Kashiwagi), but an absence of children does seem to support a theory that, true to the establishment of their “marriage” as merely a façade that in reality, the marriage remained as such. During the pursuit, Yūgiri did tell her several times that he would not do anything she did not want, lending credence to the idea of a chaste marriage. The aftermath of the situation also depicts Yūgiri dividing his time between the Rokujō-in where he moves Ochiba and Sanjō where Kumoinokari lives (“His Perfumed Highness” 736).

Further, in “The Ivy,” the Akashi Empress tries to advise Niou to accept a marriage proposal from Yūgiri for his daughter. In that particular conversation, part of her comments are translated thus by Seidensticker: “Ordinary people are expected to be satisfied with one wife, I suppose, but even with them—look at my brother himself, such a model of propriety, and sill

able to manage two wives without offending anyone” (“The Ivy” 889).⁸ While I would agree that the empress’ point is that Niou should be able to manage multiple women, my question would be whether or not the empress means to suggest that both Kumoinokari and Ochiba are both fully recognized wives. The words she uses to describe “two wives” is *konata kanata* こなたかなた, which seems to merely suggest that there are two directions he must go back and forth between (Rokujō/Ochiba and Sanjō/Kumoinokari). Given the public recognition of the Yūgiri-Kuminokari relationship and the rank of Ochiba, what is the status of Ochiba? Does merely establishing residence with Ochiba back in “Evening Mist” constitute a full marriage? Without children, it is hard to tell if her position (a princess of a previous emperor but also a widow) would garner any sort of equal or preferred treatment to Kumoinokari’s. The absence of obligation coming from the presence of the Suzaku emperor (which we see frequently in the Third Princess’ marriage to Genji) also makes the marriage seem less certain in terms of obvious power dynamics than previous marriages.

Consequentially, the point I hope to make here is to raise the question of whether or not at this stage in life Yūgiri is formally married to two women. Without favoring one woman over the other by dividing his time equally, he seems to be avoiding making a distinction between the two of them. And, as I said before, there is no paternal pressure or other obvious indication of the kind of obligation we see in primary marriages. At the same time, the situation means that he does not necessarily have a primary residence between the two. The attitude of these women towards the situation is not revealed, but evidently from the outside, the situation does not suggest a volatile one. At the same time, however, these two women clearly do not live together,

⁸ “ただ人こそ、ひと事に定まりぬれば、また心を分けんことも難げなめれ、それだに、かの大臣の、まめだちながらこなたかなたうらやみなくともてなして” (Murasaki “Yadorigi” 381).

meaning Yūgiri has not achieved a mutual understanding that would allow both to live like the women of Genji's Rokujō-in did.⁹ There is also a consideration to be made for the secrecy involved in the incipient stages of the Ochiba affair. Contrary to the public display of the marriage between Genji and the Third Princess, nothing seems public about the establishment of the Yūgiri-Ochiba "marriage." Perhaps as a widow, she cannot be married with all the pomp and circumstance that her younger sister was, which thus suggests that she cannot be primary. But as a princess and out of respect for her position and his own image, Yūgiri treats her and Kuminokari equally as though Ochiba too were his wife*, at least as far as the surface suggests.

It is with the above analysis that I wish to draw attention to what can be interpreted as Kumoinokari's refusal to be treated as a secondary wife. For a long time, their monogamous, stable marriage was a source of happiness for her. The introduction of a rival for her husband's affections changes the situation, prompting her to leave and perhaps never return such that a full-time marriage could be maintained. At the same time, an element of falsehood in the establishment of the relationship as a marriage suggests that it may be purely for image's sake long after its inception. In doing so, Yūgiri could protect his public reputation and that of Ochiba.

5.3 The Eighth Prince

The Eighth Prince, a younger brother of Genji who appears for the first time in the Uji chapters ("The Lady at the Bridge"), seems to repeat the pattern of Yūgiri in the sense that,

⁹ An alternative theory would be that Kumoinokari owns the Sanjō residence. If she owns it, then it would perhaps be insulting to move another woman into the home. In comparison, Genji's Rokujō-in represents a neolocal residence where the issue of moving a woman into the house of another would not appear. The narrative, however, does not provide enough details to pass proper judgment.

initially portrayed as a monogamous type, a break occurs when we are introduced to his amorous side. However, of interest here are the effects of this second relationship on Ukifune's mother. As a result of her relationship with him, Ukifune's mother concludes that the only acceptable marriage is a monogamous one (at least until she is charmed by the glamour of court).

The initial description of the Eighth Prince is of someone who failed to succeed at court, but he and his wife have a relationship described as one that rarely happens between husband and wife. As the narrator describes, "His wife, the daughter of a former minister, had fits of bleakest depression at the thought of her parents and their plans for her, now of course in ruins. Her consolation was that she and her husband were close as husbands and wives seldom are. Their confidence in each other was complete" ("Lady at the Bridge" 775). The strength of their union lasts even after the mother's death, when, contrary to how it would be completely acceptable to do so, the Eighth Prince ignores even the appeals of his maids to seek a new wife and refuses to remarry ("The Lady at the Bridge" 777). Monogamy seems to inform his feelings about his deceased wife, such that he envies mallards he sees out in the yard, which are known to mate for life ("The Lady at the Bridge" 777).

With regard to his daughters and Kaoru, the Eighth Prince considers Kaoru, yet another *mamebito* type, to be the ideal son-in-law: "Kaoru was exactly what he hoped a son-in-law might be, but Kaoru seemed rather wanting in amorous urges. How could he think of handing his daughters over to trifling young men of the sort the world seemed to produce these days?" ("Beneath the Oak" 801). Perhaps only inadvertently describing someone like Niou as undesirable, the Eighth Prince sees the serious Kaoru as the preferable choice of man to entrust one of his daughters to. He perhaps esteems his experience with his wife as the kind of relationship that his daughters should aspire towards. Whether this means strict monogamy or

merely responsibly amorous is unclear, but based on his own happy marriage, it is possible to imagine he means for his daughters to have monogamous husbands.

After the father and Oigimi's death, however, we come to learn in "The Ivy" that despite remaining unmarried after he was made a widower that the Eighth Prince did not completely abstain from further relationships. Nakanokimi initially informs Kaoru of the existence of her younger half-sister, Ukifune. She describes the mother of Ukifune as someone "with whom her father had kept secret company" ("The Ivy" 916). Whether this means that the relationship was concurrent with the wife is not clear at the moment, but based on Bennokimi's later contribution of further information, it appears that the relationship was with a serving woman after the death of the mother ("The Ivy" 920). The secrecy may mean it was merely kept secret from the daughters, who would imaginably be torn to know of their father seeking the company of another woman after having loved their mother so dearly.

The result of turning away Ukifune's mother when she becomes pregnant, however, shapes Ukifune's mother when it comes to men. When Ukifune is grown and her mother works on arranging a marriage for her, she tells her daughter that

"The only man you can trust is the man who is willing to make do with one wife. I know that well enough from my own experience. The prince at Uji was a fine, sensitive gentleman, but he treated me as if I were less than human. I can't tell you how much I suffered. The governor is a complete boor and not at all good-looking, but the years have gone quietly by because he has been faithful to me" ("The Eastern Cottage" 943)

It is possible to think that Ukifune's mother considered herself the Eighth Prince's second wife; at the very least, she considers herself deserving of better treatment. If the Eighth Prince could not stand to tarnish the memory of his wife by either having another relationship or remarrying, then it appears that the mother of Oigimi and Nakanokimi was, in layman's terms, the love of his

life, of which there can be no replacement. Based on being the woman who was cast out, Ukifune's mother may be especially bitter towards the Eighth Prince. But what is most important for this discussion is her assertion that a woman does best when she finds a man who will settle down with only one woman. Despite her husband not being the best of men (and he surely is not after rearranging Ukifune's future marriage for his own biological daughter), the wife herself has never had to worry about her own position. Their marriage appears to represent a tradeoff. In giving up romance, Ukifune's mother receives emotional security. This image of marriage reflects Yūgiri and Kumoinokari's, where they are content, but perhaps a little bored due to Kumoinokari's lack of artistic talents.

All the above said, Ukifune's mother becomes enamored at the sight of Kaoru and Niou, seemingly seduced by the sparkle of life in the capital. At first, though, she maintains her previous described position. In conversation with Nakanokimi about the fate of Oigimi, Nakanokimi comments that it is painful to imagine what could have been but never was, how Kaoru would have made Oigimi happy with his seriousness. Ukifune's mother reminds her, however, that if Oigimi had married Kaoru, she, like Nakanokimi, would now have "the world laughing at [them]" ("The Eastern Cottage" 948). Evidently, the mother perceives that the Kaoru's position makes him like Niou, which is true in that he too succumbs to pressures to marry out of obligation. Invariably, this situation puts women like Oigimi and Nakanokimi in an immediately secondary position, which is something to lament.

Whether or not Kaoru would have refused to marry anyone else if Oigimi had died is entirely conjectural. Kaoru does differ from Niou, however, in behavior such that it may be possible to imagine that he would be passed over for marriage to a princess much like Yūgiri had been in the case of the Third Princess. This language, though, of women being made a

laughingstock, seems to derive from their inability to be primary wives. Despite being princesses (albeit of a lower rank), who are expected to marry well or stay unwed, the outcomes for these women speaks to the fragile state of secondary women. It appears men like Niou, Kaoru, and even Genji must “save” their primary marriage for someone suitable. The alternative is to see that there is always a possibility to marry up, which displaces previous marriages with lower-ranking women. Given the secrecy involved in Niou’s amorous activity and marriage to Nakanokimi at Uji, I would propose that the marriage was secondary to begin with, which leaves him open to marry higher. All the same, the effect of the Eighth Prince on Ukifune’s mother gives us a look at marriage as in flux for women of lower status, who arguably are only secondary at best to begin with. The suffering of Nakanokimi at seeing her husband marry Rokunokimi and traipse off to Uji in pursuit of Ukifune must surely reinforce a previously seen theme, where women of uncertain but to say the least secondary relationship status are bound to suffer.

6.1 Chapter Six: *Monogatari* in *Genji*

Thus far, this discussion of *Genji* has focused on monogamous strains of thought within the context of relationships that occur within the text. As will be discussed in this section, the perspective of women and their reading of *monogatari* give us a different but equally invaluable perspective. The text portrays men as invariably falling prey to inconstancy regardless of how dedicated they may seem (or mean to be) to one woman. While emotional undependability associated with male characters may be merely a dramatic device, it seems consistent with the cultural norms surrounding amorous activity. For women, however, there is a desire for emotional stability, as demonstrated by their reactions to *monogatari*. In this way, it seems appropriate for translators of the text like Edward Seidensticker to translate *mukashi monogatari* (lit. tales of old) as “old romances.” It seems that these texts arguably represent an imaginative experience for women that both expands their horizons vicariously and serve as a reference point between female suffering in the reality of a male-centered polyamorous society and the fantasy of a stable, perhaps even strictly monogamous marriage.

These “old romances” (or as they will be referred to in this paper, *monogatari*) are mostly stories that exist today in only small fragments or not at all. However, there are a few from the Heian period that have survived to the present day, including *Genji monogatari*. Others include earlier fictional works like *Taketori monogatari* (*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*), *Utsubo monogatari* (*The Tale of the Hollow Tree*), and *Ochikubo monogatari* (*The Tale of Lady Ochikubo*). Contemporaries to *Genji* include the eleventh-century texts *Sagoromo monogatari*,

Hanamatsu chūnagon monogatari, and *Yowa no nezame*.¹ Variations of the genre also exist, including episodic works focusing on poetry such as *Ise monogatari* (*The Tales of Ise*) and *Yamato monogatari* (*Tales of the Yamato*). Historical *monogatari* preserve information about the aristocracy and the imperial line. There are two major works in this category, *Eiga monogatari* (*Story of Splendor*) and *Ōkagami* (*The Great Mirror*). Authorship for these works remains mostly unknown, but there are candidates for many. These guesses suggest that earlier works, such as *Ochikubo*, were written by men (Whitehouse 277-9). For the fictional works, the ones left revolve around romance, supporting an interpretation that the fictional side of the genre was geared towards romance. For example, the plot of *Ochikubo monogatari* follows the romance between a maltreated daughter of a minister and her rescue and marriage to a politically skyrocketing young man of impeccable character and his subsequent revenge plot on the stepmother who tortured the story's heroine. *Sumiyoshi monogatari* is a tale referenced in Heian literature (including *Genji*), but is a work that unfortunately does not survive except in second-hand fragments about plot such as those found in *Genji*. Based on mentions in various tales, it is possible to reconstruct the general plot or facets of these stories, which also indicate that these non-extant texts seemed to focus largely on romance (the formation of emotional attachments between a man and a woman).

The way in which the text and its characters reflect on *monogatari* suggest not only the importance of fiction, but the fact that tales were instrumental to women for their understanding of their world—or, as may seem more relevant, a metaphor through which to see how their world does not cater to their needs. In addition to serving as entertainment, guidebooks to romance and

¹ Some of these texts are only partially extant. In general, though, it seems that they have a predisposition for tragedy, which perhaps correlates with a general shift in the genre towards stories similar to *Genji*. In fact, *Sagoromo* relies heavily on *Genji* to the point of borrowing text from it (D'Etcheverry 155).

resources on life, *monogatari* texts also represent an alternative reality that appeals to women. The appeal of *monogatari* is their portrayal of the possibility for (and subsequent denial of) a romantic, monogamous relationship even amongst the aristocracy, where the polygynous practices of the day (as well as female displeasure) were normative.

The “Fireflies” chapter of the text contains the quintessential passage directly addressing *monogatari*, which defends the genre as an impression of reality. In the chapter, Tamakazura senses that Genji wishes to impose himself upon her as a potential suitor, although he at the same time orchestrates interactions with the suitor, Prince Hotaru. Shortly afterward, the key passage opens with Genji finding the ladies of the Rokujō-in preoccupied with illustrated *monogatari*. He proceeds to comment on their preoccupation to Tamakazura. It is here that the famous *monogatari-ron*—theory on *monogatari* in reference to their importance and their place—begins, voiced by Genji as he vacillates between disparaging and praising *monogatari* (or perhaps merely acknowledging their value).² He describes the “clutter of pictures and manuscripts” as a “nuisance,” criticizing how

“women seem to be have been born to be cheerfully deceived. They know perfectly well that in all these old stories there is scarcely a shred of truth, and yet they are captured and made sport of by the whole range of trivialities and go on scribbling them down, quite unaware that in these warm rains their hair is all dank and knotted” (“Fireflies” 437).

His critical remarks offer a bleak picture of women who are so enamored with *monogatari* that they neglect their appearance, as demonstrated by the scribbler with unkempt hair. The blasphemous nature of fiction also appears here, hinging on a woman’s propensity to be duped by lies. This notion of weakness may, as I would like to argue shortly after this, actually be

² The idea of this passage as a direct comment from the author about *monogatari* has appeared in scholarly examinations of this passage, especially in Norinaga’s understanding of it (Norinaga 436). At the very least, the passage represents a meta-commentary on the genre, ironically placed within the genre.

indicative of a willing rejection of reality due to how it disparages aristocratic women romantically. However, from Genji's perspective, one could characterize immersion as foolishness.

Genji transitions into a counterargument with a smile. He asks,

“What would we do if there were not these old romances to relieve our boredom? But amid all the fabrications I must admit that I do find real emotions and plausible chains of events. We can be quite aware of the frivolity and the idleness and still be moved. We have to feel a little sorry for a charming princess in the depths of gloom. Sometimes a series of absurd and grotesque incidents which we know to be quite improbable holds our interest, and afterwards we must blush that it was so. Yet even then we can see what it was that held us. Sometimes I stand and listen to the stories they read to my daughter, and I think to myself that there certainly are good talkers in the world. I think that these yarns must come from people much practiced in lying. But perhaps that is not the whole of the story?” (“Fireflies” 437).

In short, Genji offers the emotional gambit through which fiction can appeal to a reader. Granted, the premise of fiction as a pack of lies lingers in the background, but he introduces the potential for *monogatari* to be an emotional exercise. The emphasis appears to be on the entertainment aspect of fiction. One feels for the damsel in distress and may react to situations that may even seem realistic. Thus, we see an acknowledgment of both the genre's emotional appeal and its degree of realism.

It is this segment of the discussion that corresponds with the famous *Genji* commentary “The Tale of Genji: A Little Jeweled Comb” by the Edo period scholar Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801). He too contends that, for Genji, *monogatari* (tales) are ultimately of value to while away free time (Norinaga 437). In addition, he describes how

“since tales generally depict events of this world and the various thoughts and deeds of human beings, in reading them one naturally gains a good knowledge of life and comes to

understand better the deeds of people and the workings of their emotions. This is the principal aim of those who read tales” (Norinaga 433).

Norinaga’s commentary speaks directly to the value of *monogatari* as a means of exploring emotions and human motivation. So, while fiction naturally has elements of fabrication, that aspect does not completely detract from the fact that fiction allows for readers to experience the lives of others, hence providing a learning opportunity. Emotional experience is critical for Heian women, who cannot wander freely about like men to seek out romance. Thus, fiction represents the vicarious option of gaining experience without ever having to go anywhere.

Part of Genji’s speech on the topic includes a particular warning that pertains to the current situation of his ladies: that of the evil stepmother. This specific example demonstrates one real conceptual threat that *monogatari* pose. While the upcoming passage indicates that the trope of the evil stepmother was widely pervasive, the claim cannot be retrospectively substantiated in the Heian context due to lack of extant texts.³ So, when later in the discussion Genji warns Murasaki about the dangers of reading tales to the Akashi daughter (who is currently in Murasaki’s care), his thoughts on the matter stand out. The narrator reveals how “wicked stepmothers are of course standard fare for the romancers, and he did not want them poisoning relations between Murasaki and the child” (“Fireflies” 439).⁴ Thus, Genji hints at the concern that *monogatari* offer an interpretation of reality that can inspire readers. In this case, this would mean that reading about the potential to be cruel to a stepchild may negatively shape the relationship between the Akashi daughter and Murasaki.

³ There is the case of *Ochikubo monogatari*, where an evil stepmother attempts to thwart the female protagonist’s romance by having an old man defile her, prompting rescue by the male protagonist.

⁴ “継母の腹きたなき昔物語も多かるを、心見えに心づきなしと思せば” (“Hotaru” 3.216).

In addition, because the prophecy from early in the text stated that Genji's daughter would become empress, Genji would be reasonably concerned with ensuring that his daughter can be a perfect partner for the future emperor. To prepare for this role, she would need to have no expectation of being able to monopolize the emperor's affection, even as the empress. Similarly, in raising this concern, another can be brought to the fore: that of the possibility of women envisioning a life free from the intricate bonds that trap unwilling women in polyamorous relationships.

To this effect, Genji even says directly to Murasaki towards the end of the episode, "You [Murasaki] must not read love stories to her [Akashi daughter]. I doubt that clandestine affairs would arouse her unduly, but we would not want her to think them commonplace" ("Fireflies" 438). While erring on the side of reason that reading such stories will not immediately taint the Akashi daughter, Genji's expression of concern arises from the fear of wishing for a different reality. Coupled with the narrator noting that Genji carefully selects the works that are read to the Akashi daughter, there seems to be an undercurrent about the power of ideas and the imagination.

An interesting note on this topic is how Genji, while warning Murasaki about the dangers of tales, wonders, "What would Tamakazura have made of the difference between his remarks to her and those to Murasaki?" ("Fireflies" 438). The question raises the possibility that Genji is being hypocritical. He tells one woman to be wary of the ideas within *monogatari*, presumably because such ideas may poison relationships. But at the same time, he extols the emotional experience gained through *monogatari* to Tamakazura. Field remarks that these concerns speak to his intent to romance Tamakazura, thereby "reducing fiction to an instrument of seduction" (Field 132). In contrast, *monogatari* are feared in the context of Murasaki and the Akashi daughter for one of two possible reasons. First, there is the obvious one revolving around the

possibility of tainting their stepmother-stepdaughter relationship. The second is subtler, but hints at the idea of seeing romance within the texts, in turn wishing such romances to be real. Or, the idea of clandestine affairs reminds Genji of his affair with Oborozukiyo, someone destined for the emperor that marks the officially recognized transgression that forces Genji into exile. Using the discussion in “Fireflies” for a variety of purposes demonstrates that there is no one true purpose for the creation or consumption of such works, but it is by teasing out several interpretations that we can imagine the value that these works have for, in particular, their female audience. The idea of *monogatari* as an exercise in “what if” for women that leads to wistfully imagining monogamy; this in turn ties into how female characters turn to *monogatari* as a source of comfort. The expressed anti-*monogatari* sentiment of Michitsuna’s mother suggests that she writes against this fantasy (Mostow 305). And, based on the theme of dissatisfaction in *Genji*, perhaps this text as well speaks out against the romances found in *monogatari*. But even as it does so, the emotional appeal and value imbued into these stories remains.

The “Fireflies” chapter, as previously mentioned, features Tamakazura attempting to deal with suitors and the impression that Genji, too, wishes to count himself among them despite Tamakazura’s rejection of his advances. Under the pressure of this romantic entanglement, it is interesting to see that the narrator indicates that “Tamakazura was the most avid reader of all. She quite lost herself in pictures and stories and would spend whole days with them” (Murasaki “Fireflies” 436-7). This behavior initially suggests an escapist approach to her situation. What better way to ignore one’s current problems than to delve into those of fictional others? But her activity also appears to have had other motivations as well. Her readings allow her to come

“upon all sorts of interesting and shocking incidents (she could not be sure whether they were true or not), but she found little that resembled her own unfortunate career. There was

The Tale of Sumiyoshi, popular in its day, of course, and still well thought of. She compared the plight of the heroine, within the hairbreadth of being taken by the chief accountant, with her own escape from the Higo person” (“Fireflies” 437).

Tamakazura’s exploration of *monogatari* indeed begins with an element of entertainment, and a note about the veracity of fiction. In part, the confusion in trying to tell whether fiction depicts reality plays into Genji’s declaration that women are easily beguiled. But what perhaps is more important to note is that she appears to be looking to *monogatari* for a comparison to her own situation. Her affinity for the rescuing of a character in *The Tale of Sumiyoshi* by relating it to her own narrow escape from a suitor in the provinces further implies that she looks to the stories for, at minimum and in the words of Norinaga “solace in their melancholy” (Norinaga 435).⁵ A feature of this escape into fiction is the search for a shared experience so that one will not feel alone. Because of this relationship between readers and fiction, one wonders if *Genji* sets a new example for women to look towards, one that allows them to empathize with their fictional counterparts rather than solely seeing fiction as a fantasy of what women do not have in reality.

Norma Field also puts forth a similar interpretation, noting how “without any worthy advisers, Tamakazura turns to fiction, a characteristic recourse for women even, and especially, in Heian Japan, where it was publicly held to be fit for their consumption alone” (Field 130). Murasaki Shikibu’s own diary suggests that she herself looked to *monogatari* for comfort.⁶ Genji’s position on *monogatari* does not address a contemporary opinion that these stories are for women alone.⁷ He seems to pay attention at least to when a story is being read, and he must

⁵ *The Tale of Sumiyoshi* is a text that is not extant in its Heian form. Only a medieval revised version exists.

⁶ “I was merely amusing myself with fictions, finding solace for my idleness in foolish words” (*Murasaki Shikibu nikki* 34).

⁷ Field cites the *Sambo Ekotoba*, a mid-Heian collection of *setsuwa*, which in the preface states “that fictional tales are: but for the amusement of women. They flourish in greater profusion than the grasses upon the wooded graves of old, they are as numerous as the grains of sand upon the rocky strand, to creatures that lack the gift of speech they

certainly know enough about *monogatari* in order to be involved in selecting those deemed most appropriate and have a fairly extensive conversation with Tamakazura about them. However, Genji makes no mention of how they affect him personally, but rather how they entertain and affect the women around him. But, to associate the consumption of these *monogatari* by and for women lends to the idea that they must have a particular charm that is singular to a female audience. Or, to the say the least, these stories must have a female audience in mind in order to be successful. In the case of Tamakazura, Field offers that “Tamakazura seeks more than diversion. She is in deadly earnest (even working up a sweat, as we shall see), wanting to comprehend her own peculiar life by finding one similar to it in fiction” (Field 129). It should be noted that the usage of writing to navigate life is not limited to women. Richard Bowring notes that even “Reizei looked in history books for the kind of precedent he was seeking: the women search the catalogues of fiction” (Bowring 41). While historical narratives are considered at least in part to be nonfiction, to look for some record of life in search of a precedent appears to be a normal behavior for characters of *Genji*. Reizei notably searches the catalogues of history to find a situation similar to his own, where he finds later in life that his father was not the emperor, but Genji. It is the case of women, however, that deserves attention in this essay. The emotional responses of women to their relationships with men indicate consistent dissatisfaction. In looking at fiction, women can sympathize with other women while at the same time imagine a less fraught situation. Put differently, it is a preference for the fictional world that enables women to imagine a better situation. It is perhaps a painful irony then that this imagined state potentially does nothing more than augments one’s dissatisfaction.

give words: to insentient objects they impart emotions... Their words flow forth unchecked as the flotsam upon the sea; they are not rooted in truth” (Field 130)

As Murasaki and Genji's pseudo-monogamous relationship was the centerpiece of the earlier section, it is worth exploring Murasaki's relationship with *monogatari* further as an example. As previously mentioned, it appears that Genji is aware of the possibility that these stories can be the inspiration for ideas contrary to tacit acceptance of Heian courtship and marriage practices. The "New Herbs: Part One" chapter relates that Murasaki has her ladies read stories to her while Genji was with the Third Princess, and from reading them wonders why it is not so that men settle down with one woman:

"In the old stories that were supposed to tell what went on in the world, there were men with amorous ways and women who had affairs with them, but it seemed to be the rule that in the end the man settled down with one woman. Why should Murasaki herself live in such uncertainty? No doubt, as Genji had said, she had been unusually fortunate. But were the ache and the scarcely endurable sense of deprivation to be with her to the end?" ("New Herbs: Part Two" 609).

Having spent her life dealing with the delusion of emotional stability with Genji, it has never been a question that Murasaki knows the truth. Coupled with her impression that men are invariably inconstant, it seems that she has lived her entire life up until this point in a state of increasing unease. Looking at *monogatari* offered her a window into a different life, one where men do not continue to meander from woman to woman. For her, there was theoretically a point where Genji became too old to continue seeking out new wives. But with the introduction of the Third Princess, the certainty that she was at least the top of Genji's priorities disappears, despite Genji's insistence that she is "the one." Hence, Murasaki questions why she should live in ambiguity. The inclusion about her "fortunate" situation is at best an attempt to placate her concerns by reminding her of the financial comfort she experiences thanks to him. Perhaps in a way Genji's reminder intends to also remind Murasaki of his devotion, but as her thoughts

suggest, financial security is not completely satisfying. In other words, Murasaki hints that Genji should not have to persuade her to feel secure.

With these thoughts on her mind, Murasaki becomes deathly ill immediately afterwards, set never to fully recover until her eventual death. With this progression in mind, perhaps it was contemplating the futility of her desire for security that caused her so much stress that her health declines. Her illness already contains discontentment in the form of Genji denying her religious inclinations. In a way, her longing to be a nun at the end of her life may be the only recourse she can imagine in which she can escape Genji and the emotional turmoil he puts her through. My reading of the situation concurs with Shirane's: that Murasaki's desire to become a nun is motivated by "an acute awareness of the impermanence of marriage and the inconstancy of the opposite sex" (Shirane 111). To realize that she has and will always be denied security means that, with no other viable option, that the religious life is all that is left. In addition, the religious life in the context of Buddhism means a repudiation of all worldly ties. Murasaki seems to have sufficient cause to understand the futility of worldly relations. This relationship is significant in how Murasaki contemplates *monogatari* prior to the onset of the illness, which suggests that these stories serve to offer both consolation and a reference point for one's misery. Compared to the stories that stand out to Murasaki, her own story offers no substantial comfort.

Another instance of reference to *monogatari* occurs when the story focuses on Nakanokimi, which may initially appear to be a counter example. While at first enamored with Niou's ardent romance and accepting to be his wife, the introduction of his principal wife, Rokunokimi, puts Nakanokimi in a difficult situation emotionally. Suddenly no longer the sole object of Niou's affections, Nakanokimi recalls her reaction to previous reading fiction. While doing so, the narrator informs us that "she [Nakanokimi] had wondered, reading old romances,

why women were always fretting at such length over these little problems. They had seemed very remote. Now she saw that the pain could be real” (“The Ivy” 902). The emotional exploration previous garnered from *monogatari* seemed to Nakanokimi like the fiction it is. The interesting aspect of this case is that her moment of enlightenment involves acknowledging the reality of a woman’s suffering. In a way, it may be possible to imagine that Nakanokimi had previously imagined the suffering of characters in emotionally fraught romantic situations as dramatic devices, hence not necessarily a reality. Realizing that she cannot capitalize on Niou’s attentions and affections, Nakanokimi learns that a reality for women is the threat of being in a polygynous marriage and losing one’s emotional security. In contrast with what Murasaki’s thoughts tell us, Nakanokimi’s experience may suggest that polygynous marriages (or the threat of one) had a notable presence, such as in *Utsuho monogatari* and *Taketori monogatari*. This would not be an incorrect assumption based on evidence from a male character in *Ochikubo monogatari*, who states his intent to have multiple wives (245). Or, it may be that she read about the fretting of women who were concerned about losing their husband in such a way. Without many extant *monogatari* or specific names given in the passage, it is hard to say for sure. But either way, in the case of worrying about losing a man’s affections, the “happy ending” of keeping the man would be ideal. Based on Murasaki’s thoughts, it seems that many *monogatari* ultimately feature a monogamous ending, which is desirable.

In summary, it appears that *monogatari* offer a glimpse at a life of emotional security, which at times translates into a direct acknowledgment of a desire for at the very least emotionally, but perhaps also sexually monogamous relationships. This interpretation of female expectations stands in contrast with that of male characters in “The Broom Tree” chapter.

Typified as romantic adventures, the activities of men in terms of romance do suggest perhaps a

rebellion against the marriage system, where a man's wife is most likely not his choice. To romance multiple women is to exercise one's freedom and to taste the aesthetic offerings of each potential partner. For women, however, these practices leave women in a state of uncertainty and anxiety, especially in the case of secondary wives*. Seen through the lens of *monogatari*, there appears to be an affinity for the fictional world, distinguished from reality by a tendency to portray men that, in some cases eventually settle down with one woman. The result is an impression of emotional security that is coveted by women, but a concern for men like Genji.

7.1 Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This thesis draws an interpretation of *Genji* that places a particular emphasis on the concept of monogamy. Within the text, it appears both distant and imaginary. And yet this far off idea hangs in the minds of female characters, who lament the lack of emotional stability in their lives. Genji, despite his inability to truly maintain a committed enough relationship to satisfy Murasaki, endeavors to create the image of one, knowing that polyamorous behavior leads to jealousy and resentment. Similar thoughts seem to inform the behavior of Kumoinokari and Ukifune's mother. Women of the story, facing these difficulties as a result of being in ambiguously defined marriages with men, at times turn to *monogatari*, a source of comfort and entertainment that seems to highlight and defend the desire for the concept of one-man-one-woman relations. The conclusions drawn here cannot make a claim regarding a preference for monogamy in Heian aristocratic society at large. Perhaps more than a preference, it is merely the appeal of the idea that we see playing out in fiction that also contains meta-commentary on fiction itself.

That being said, this analysis has hopefully yielded a new angle from which to envision how the concept of monogamy may not have been alien and for some may even be desirable. The feelings and experience of these women seem to stress the implausibility of fictional predecessors. What these earlier text leave behind, however, is an impression of a genre that at times depicts monogamy. In contrast, *Genji* stands as perhaps an anti-*monogatari* entity, or at least one that is modified to portray more realistically the trials and tribulations of women subjected to secondary marriages. The difficulty of Heian marriage practices is the inherent

ambiguity, which perhaps might be as obvious to us as it was to women at the time. Based on women's writings, it seems that this atmosphere of ambiguity leaves women at an emotional disadvantage and primed to enjoy stories that comfort via fantasy. With *Genji*, we receive a fictional depiction of this phenomenon, only with the twist that now the text itself can serve as a source of commiseration rather than mere consolation.

This analysis does not seek to make claims that what women want within the text is monogamy as we think of it today. At the very least, there is evident dissatisfaction with current social practices, suggesting that these practices are normative only as far as male participants are concerned. For women of ambiguous position, these feelings are augmented by a realization that position relies solely on the man's private sense of emotional obligation towards woman. In this situation, we see women seeking comfort in fiction, which seems to in part present the comfort of men settling for one woman. This emotional response to the social environment of the Heian period and predilection to feel an affinity for fictitious accounts of monogamy adds a complex angle to viewing life in the Heian vis-à-vis *Genji*. The relationship entanglements reflect our understanding of the period as a male-centered polyamorous society. However, we can find dissatisfaction in the emotional responses of women. Hardly anyone in *Genji* is satisfied, arguably. Feelings of dissatisfaction augment those of nostalgia and sit at the crux of one's decision to leave the world. The case for women of middle rank serves as an ideal device for conveying the gendered theme of dissatisfaction, where the convoluted system of conjugal relations predisposes women to long all the more for security. The meaning of fictitious monogamy becomes symbolic in this situation, a referent for women to compare their own lives to. As a text that appears to in part aim to realistically depict Heian life, the text draws a

connection between the reading habits of women at this time and their emotional response to their circumstances.

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