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**LADY MURASAKI SHIKIBU'S *THE TALE OF GENJI*:  
SEARCH FOR THE MOTHER**

THE TALE OF GENJI (*GENJI MONOGATARI*), the greatest of all Japanese novels, is believed to have been written by a court lady, Murasaki Shikibu, who lived from ca. 978 to 1016. This spectacular work more than re-creates human personalities of the ultrarefined and aristocratic world of the Heian dynasty (794-1192), offering insights into political, religious, social, aesthetic, and cultural vistas as well as personalities; it also invites readers into the very heart of the woman's world.

Little is known of Murasaki Shikibu's life. Even her name remains a mystery: Murasaki is derived from a root, "gromwell," used for medical purposes and for the extraction of a purplish dye (Field 161) and Shikibu combines "Bureau of Ceremonial," an office held by her father, and a nickname (Bowring 5). Murasaki is also the name of the heroine in *The Tale of Genji*. Although Murasaki belonged to a junior branch of the important Fujiwara family, which included poets and scholars, she was considered to be at only the second level of the court aristocracy. Evidence leads historians to believe that Murasaki followed her father to the provinces of Echizen when he began his governorship there in 996. She undoubtedly returned to the capital shortly before her marriage, in 998, to Fujiwara no Nobutaka, a considerably older man who already had several wives. Some scholars are at odds as to whether her marriage was a happy one. Her daughter, Daini no Sammi, a future poet of note, was born in 999. After becoming widowed in 1001, Murasaki began writing *The Tale of Genji*. She entered the employ of Chancellor Michinaga in the service of his daughter, the future Empress Shoshi or Akiko. Her seemingly intense attachment to Shoshi, whose love of learning was great, may account for Murasaki's unusual knowledge of ceremonies and institutions at the Kyoto court. Nowhere has it been determined how long Murasaki remained at court nor when she died (Aston 92-3). It is clear, nevertheless, that at court she greatly deepened her understanding of people and of the cultural and esthetic code of society. Her descriptions of the intricate religious ceremonies, the elegant processes of courtship, the complexities of the marriage system, and her disquisitions on the arts reveal a unique understanding of the Heian world.

Women of the Heian aristocracy lived, both physically and psychologically, in a *world within*. They were denied permission to speak directly to men except for their husbands, parents, or the closest of kin, and refused an education except when related to comportment, manners, religion, and the arts. One may wonder, then, how a woman like Murasaki Shikibu succeeded in writing her monumental work. Although many answers have been proffered, none is conclusive.

The events in *The Tale of Genji* span seventy-five years and are set approximately three-quarters of a century before Murasaki's time, during the reigns of Emperor Daigo (897-930) and his son, Emperor Murakami (946-967). The hero of the first forty-one chapters—"the Shining Prince Genji"—was the son of a politically ineffective reigning emperor. This section of the novel deals with Genji's many loves, the greatest of which was Lady Murasaki. So intricate were the politics of marriage and the bonds tying one member of the imperial family to another that Murasaki's employer, Fujiwara no Michinaga (966-1027) was at once the brother-in-law to two emperors, uncle to another, uncle and father-in-law to yet another, and grandfather to two more. The intensity of the power struggle waged by Michinaga to obtain his lofty position required extreme astuteness in manipulating courtly life. Because conspiracies, intrigues, and the purest of loves were the rule of the day in *The Tale of Genji*, is it any wonder that passion reigned and that spirit possession was the means of gaining one's goal?

According to Buddhist doctrine, happiness and salvation are the products of inwardness and not dependent upon transitory exterior phenomena. Life on earth, therefore, with all of its passions, is the product of imperfection and sorrow. Only through detachment and the annihilation of desire can one experience redemption and "perpetual enlightenment" (nirvana). Such a discipline allows the individual to transcend the material world and experience timelessness and transcendence. It also encourages the expression of compressed feelings through symbols such as a word, a color, a design, a brush stroke, a mood, an impulse, a gesture, or a facial expression.

For the Buddhist, passion or desire of any kind—love, rage, jealousy—is the antithesis of self-discipline, control, detachment, and objectivity. To succumb to passion, therefore, is a sinful act, and, according to karmic law, the culprit is subject to retribution: he must bear the burden of negative reincarnations. Whatever the worldly joy experienced, it is viewed as illusion; whatever the love, be it between adults or between parents and children, it is considered inimical to detachment. Although some passionate relationships depicted in *The Tale of Genji* seem irresponsible and irreconcilable with Buddhist doctrine, in certain cases they may be viewed as

learning devices: instruments on an earthly plane causing protagonists to alter their focus, thereby experiencing a modicum of enlightenment.

The sophisticated, tasteful, and discriminating mood and manner in which Lady Murasaki spins her complex tale permits innumerable discussions revolving about a hierarchy of values associated with beauty, love, and political and religious obligations (Miner 15-16).

Prince Genji's love experience revolves to a great extent around his unconscious search for a mother figure. His real mother, Lady Kiritsubo, died when he was but three. Her rank being lower than that of the Emperor's chief wife and his other favorites, Lady Kiritsubo became the target of intrigue and psychological torture. Growing increasingly unhappy, Lady Kiritsubo wasted away and died. Disconsolate over his loss, the Emperor sought a surrogate Lady-in-Perpetual-Attendance who would treat him with the same warmth, tenderness, and profound love as Lady Kiritsubo had done, but he was unable to find a replacement for several years. After meeting Fujitsubo ("Wisteria Tub"), a lady of high rank whom everyone tried to please, the Emperor, stunned by her strong resemblance to Lady Kiritsubo, transferred all his affection to her.

Genji was too young to remember his own mother; but when he was told that Fujitsubo, five years his senior, looked like Kiritsubo, he conceived an instantaneous passion for this surrogate mother, whose "fleeting beauty took its hold upon his thoughts." According to protocol, as long as Genji was under twelve, he had free access to the women's quarters and so he could be with Fujitsubo as much as he wished. Once initiated into manhood, however, he was barred from those precincts. Deprived of his mother figure—his love object—Genji conjured up ways of approaching this beautiful, entrancing, gentle power. Deeply frustrating was the fact that his coming of age forced him into marriage with Lady Aoi, a Fujiwara, whom he considered an obstacle separating him from his beloved.

Genji was so deeply and passionately taken with Fujitsubo that there were moments when the mere sound of her voice, even from a distance, "dimly blending with the sound of zithern or flute," could calm his intense emotions. Aware of Genji's dangerous and obsessive passion for her, Lady Fujitsubo, on the rare occasions when they saw or spoke with each another, "met him with a stern and sorrowful countenance," adding "great coldness and disdain" to her otherwise tender and gracious demeanor. Rather than turn away from her, however, Genji only fell more deeply in love and even discovered a way of insinuating himself into her quarters one evening. Despite her firm resolve to repel him, Lady Fujitsubo yielded, allowing him to spend the night with her. Following their sexual encounter, which is only alluded to in Lady Mura-

saki's narrative, Genji whispered his poem to her—"would that we might vanish forever into the dream we dreamed tonight!" Tormented with guilt, she responded with a metaphor revealing the depth of her error and the terror of the punishment that might be meted out to her should her secret become known: "Though I were to hide in the darkness of eternal sleep, yet would my shame run through the world from tongue to tongue." Convinced that her ruin was imminent, Lady Fujitsubo grew melancholy, her tangled feelings replete with secret foreboding. Genji also dreaded the possibility that his father, the Emperor, might discover his sinful act—all the more probable since the outcome of that one night of lovemaking led to the birth of a son, Reizei.

Fujitsubo's passion for Genji never abated, but the sin of the Heir Apparent's birth weighed heavily upon the two. She was convinced "that a day of disastrous reckoning might still be at hand." If her secret were kept, however, she would have "escaped more lightly than her *karma* in any degree warranted." Only after the Emperor's death could this highly moral and dignified woman come to terms with her sin: she took her vows, became a Buddhist nun, and spent the rest of her days in prayer, penance, and meditation.

When Reizei became Emperor, Fujitsubo's character suddenly altered, at least on the surface. She began planning and scheming for a marriage that would assure her son's continuous reign. The arrangement of such an alliance necessitated her meeting with Genji, but since she had already taken vows to become a nun, there was no longer any danger of involvement with him. So strong was her feeling of righteousness in her *way* that, upon meeting Genji, rather than adhere to protocol, she took the liberty of speaking to him directly and without another person in the room. Having once succeeded in arranging for her son's marriage, Fujitsubo, a daughter and consort of emperors, and Genji's substitute mother-figure, died at the age of thirty-seven. Only now, but still in veiled terms, does she reveal her unalterable love for Genji.

Much had happened in the last years for which she had cause to be grateful to him, and she had often meant to tell him how sensible she was of his kindness. And there was another matter of which she had meant for some time to speak . . . to the Emperor himself. She was sorry she had never . . . Here her voice became inaudible, and tears for a while prevented him from making a reply.

Because Fujitsubo was not Genji's real mother, his sexual relationship with her, from a Westerner's point of view, was not considered incestuous. For the Japanese, however, it represented a sinful act: a violation of imperial succession. No longer a moral problem, except with regard to

the Buddhist interdiction of extreme desire, it had become a political crime since Genji's, and not his father's son, would become Emperor.

Genji's irrational, obsessive passion for Fujitsubo, however, reveals a double psychological need: for a childhood he had lost or perhaps had never really known and for a relationship with a feminine principle (*anima*, or the unconscious image of woman) given to a child by the mother. When a young boy experiences his own mother as a nourishing force in his life, he learns how to deal with her and the problems emerging from their relationship in the world of reality. From three years of age until Fujitsubo's arrival, Genji had been divested of that positive and loving force; thus he floundered, never learning to face his many obligations in the world. When, therefore, Fujitsubo, an impersonal surrogate maternal figure entered his life, he projected all of his emotional needs onto her, and she became for him a larger-than-life archetypal figure (Jacobi 26).

That a son sometimes desires a personal mother sexually, suffering the psychic consequences of his act, does not apply to Genji, because we are not dealing with a blood tie. Since, however, Lady Kiritsubo had died when he was but three, his yearning for warmth, security, and understanding had been replaced by an overwhelming sense of loss, absence, and divestiture. When Fujitsubo entered his father's household, she both filled that void within him and became the symbol of the ideal mother: a universal human and transpersonal power, alone able to fulfill his deepest yearning. Unconsciously he was seeking to recapture the paradisiacal state of childhood—that state of unconsciousness in which sheltering, nurturing, and loving are given lavishly without any demands upon the child, and no sense of commitment or responsibility is elicited from him in return. Genji's psychologically regressive attitude may explain, in part, many of his licit and illicit love relationships. Never did he overcome his primordial passion for Fujitsubo, the archetypal mother; never did he succeed in liberating himself from the impress of this inaccessible fantasy figure. Had he done so, he might have been able to transfer his energy onto another woman and live as a psychologically independent soul in the world of reality.

Other factors concerning Genji's passion for Fujitsubo are also significant. That he fathers a son who will succeed to the throne under the title of Emperor Ryozen may be his way of dealing with an unconscious rage resulting from an act committed by his pusillanimous father when he was a child. At the time, he had been told that a Korean soothsayer had warned the Emperor that if Genji were to inherit the throne, "confusion and sorrow would attend his [father's] reign." Genji was then removed from succession to the throne. One wonders whether this prognostication had

been the only reason for the Emperor's decisive act. Probably it was not. Lady Kokiden, the Emperor's first wife, jealous of both Kiritsubo and Fujitsubo and their descendents, had most certainly worked behind the scenes to convince her husband to make Genji a commoner. In that way, her own son would inherit the throne (Field 29). Although Genji knew he was his father's favorite, making him a cuckold was his lethal manner of dealing with what he must have unconsciously considered an unconscionable act by a tyrannical, weak father. That he cringed lest the Emperor discover his sinful secret is also normal for a hero attempting to punish one who had so deeply hurt him.

Genji's relationship with Lady Murasaki, considered ideal because of its apolitical nature, was also psychologically mother oriented. The mature Murasaki was, of course, a paradigm of the nourishing, beneficial, loving mother type; but when she first met Genji at the age of seven (he was the same age when he first saw Fujitsubo, she already represented a preconscious component of the future mother figure. Even as a child, Murasaki was the incarnation of the helpful and delightful anima image which had been forever lost to Genji and which he attempted to resurrect in each of the women with whom he fell in love.

The little girl who was to be known as Murasaki, the granddaughter of an unidentified "previous emperor" and the child of a mother who had prematurely died, is being brought up in the mountains of Kitayama by her grandmother, a nun. (Since the introduction of Tendai and Shingon sects to Japan, esoteric Buddhists who enjoyed living in close contact with nature built their monasteries in natural surroundings.) Genji met the little girl on his way to the region to seek a cure from a holy man for his recurring fevers. He was instantly entranced by her simple, spontaneous ways, and even by her petulance toward her playmate, Inu, for having let her sparrow out of the clothes basket. Never had Genji been exposed to such direct, impulsive behavior. Genji obviously saw her as a helpful, consoling, warm, and loving force in his life: "He would dearly love to have her always near him, to be able to turn to her at any moment for comfort and distraction, as once he had turned to the lady in the Palace"—a reference to Fujitsubo. Thus did he conflate the older mother figure with the one to be. Aroused by the child, both psychologically and sexually, Genji reflected on this alluring and fascinating object:

Never had he seen a child like this. What an astonishing creature she would grow into! Her hair, thick and wavy, stood out fanwise about her head. She was very flushed and her lips were trembling. . . . Her features were very exquisite; but it was above all the way her hair grew, in cloudy masses over her temples, but thrust back in

childish fashion from her forehead, that struck him as marvellously beautiful. As he watched her and wondered what she would be like when she grew up it suddenly occurred to him that she bore no small resemblance to one whom he had loved with all his being [her aunt Fujitsubo] and at the resemblance he secretly wept.

Despite the difficulties that might arise with regard to protocol, Genji decided then and there, that he would adopt her when the proper moment presented itself.

Viewed archetypally, the pure, virginal little girl is perfect fare for the sophisticated hero. She is ready to be plucked from her mountain habitat and violated by her prince charming. Genji, however, is anything but valiant and heroic. On the contrary, he is the perfect paradigm of the anti-hero, the uncommitted *puer*, yielding to his desires and seeking to gratify his sexual drives. This outwardly sensitive but irresponsible man has no understanding of the needs of others, nor is he imbued with a sense of morality. Flittering about like a butterfly, Genji alights here and there on a most beautiful flower and sucks up its nectar only to fly to another court beauty moments later.

The appropriate moment for Genji to take the fearful, shy, *grieving* child to his residence (Nijo-in) occurs after the death of Murasaki's grandmother. Worried that her father, Prince Hyobukyo, might interfere with his plan to adopt the girl, Genji has her kidnapped and brought to his home. Fearful of Genji's household and its luxurious surroundings at first, the child is soon taken by Genji's persuasive ways, his charm, and his beautiful garden. As a girl who had been brought up in the country, she responds lovingly to nature's various personalities: its unmanicured forested or mountainous land, its highly stylized forms, as manifested in Genji's Japanese garden, with its artificial lake and island in the center, its two miniature hills, its rocks arranged in linear fashion, and its fine white sand spread in even designs on the earth, reflecting both the beauty of moonlight and the brilliant fiery rays of the sun (Morris 45).

As she picked her way among the trees and along the side of the lake, and gazed with delight upon the frosty flowerbeds that glittered gay as a picture, while a many-coloured throng of unknown people passed constantly in and out of the house, she began to think that this was a very nice place indeed.

Outwardly thoughtful when it suited his ends, Genji provides Murasaki with playmates and toys, and even lessons in music and calligraphy. Since in Heian times calligraphy was revered not only as an art but as a sign of one's breeding and character, Murasaki spent long hours perfecting the elegance of her handwriting.

As Murasaki begins to know Genji better, she reacts lovingly to the man whom she looks upon as her "new father." Seated on his lap, she holds long conversations and plays all sorts of games with him. No longer shy, she is friendly in a childishly naive and utterly disarming way. The utterly restrained Genji becomes increasingly attracted to her. He writes the following poem to Murasaki—"Too long have we deferred this new emprise, who night by night will now have lain with a shift between"—and still he waits. Only after the death of his first wife, Aoi, does he sexually initiate Murasaki, now fourteen. Not knowing what to expect, the child is so surprised, hurt, and humiliated by his comportment that she turns her head aside, shyly and naively, thereby tantalizing him still further. The following day she refuses to see or to even look at Genji, burying herself instead "more deeply than ever under the bedclothes." So smitten with her is he, so sexually aroused by her withdrawal from his embrace and by her rebuffs, that he spends the entire day with her hoping to win back her confidence.

The understated, subtle prelude to Genji's sexual act is only alluded to in the narrative. Never described in detail, it heightens the mood of sensuality and mystery:

The little girl was at first terribly frightened. She did not know what he was going to do with her and shuddered violently. Even the feel of his delicate, cool skin when he drew her to him, gave her goose-flesh. He saw this; but none the less he began gently and carefully to remove her outer garments, and laid her down. Then, though he knew quite well that she was still frightened of him, he began talking to her softly and tenderly. . . .

That Genji was not only physically drawn to her, but also saw this mother/child as a positive, reassuring, and bountiful force in his life, increases his rapture. Time and again he marvels at her character, which forever radiates amiability and generosity: "The beauty of her disposition was indeed quite out of the common. The idea that so perfect a nature was in his hands, to train and cultivate as he thought best, was very attractive to Genji." Nothing of Murasaki's charm and beauty escapes Genji's eye. That object of extreme desire—her glistening black hair—must be trimmed for her to be stylish. Genji takes up his knife, begins the ritual cutting, reciting the appropriate prayer accompanying the ceremony. After this symbolic act of violation, he notes: "What a lot of it there is! I wonder how much longer it would have grown."

After an absence from home Genji returns, only to notice after pulling up the little "curtain-of-honor"—psychologically, another act of violation on his part—that Murasaki has not only grown and filled out, but



that her once countrified clothes have been replaced by exquisitely elegant ones enhancing her natural beauty. As he observes her "in profile with the lamplight falling upon her face, he realized with delight that she was becoming the very image of her whom from the beginning he had loved best." His reference here to Fujitsubo, the mother figure, suggests that the child had now assumed this same role for him.

In Murasaki, Genji unconsciously felt the presence of that beloved resurrected mother for whom he always longed. When Genji

saw how astonishingly the one resembled the other, he fancied that all the while Murasaki had but served as a substitute or eidolon of the lady who denied him her love . . . he wondered whether, if they were side by side, he should be able to tell them apart.

Genji's search for the personal or archetypal Mother in the child Murasaki may also be understood as an unconscious attempt on his part to seek out life anew—in all of its beautiful excitement. Through the innocence, purity, and cleanliness of the little girl—those pristine qualities inherent in an infant breaking out of the womb—Genji, too, would be born anew. Whether such an unconscious projection would have positive or negative ramifications is another question.

To be under the spell or dominion of any force, be it a mother figure or other, is to risk enslavement to a single power, which paves the way to regression and stagnation. Be it Fujitsubo, the little Murasaki, or the host of other women who enter Genji's life, he will forever be attempting—unconsciously to be sure—to fill the void within him. That devouring, mesmerizing power that he seeks lies not in the women he courts, but is deeply embedded within his own psyche and can, therefore, never be satiated. Only by facing the loss of a mother figure and coming to terms with it will its power over him diminish. Unable to accomplish such a feat, Genji remains its slave, thereby inviting a destruction that in his case prevents his psychological growth. Emotional maturity can never be his.

Genji tells Murasaki that he will marry her, and he does, in accordance with Heian protocol: Genji spends three nights with Murasaki and has small rice cakes ('third-night cakes') placed in her room, symbolizing the physical and religious binding of matrimonial ties. (The rice-cakes represent Izanagi and Izanami, that is, humanity's Shintoist progenitors.) However, and well Genji knew this, because the ritual had been so unceremoniously undertaken and because Murasaki's mother had been of low rank, she could never aspire to become a legitimate consort, and would remain at best only a chief concubine.

Murasaki, the child bride, was described as "unworldly" and reacted negatively to Genji's first sexual encounter, thus serving to tantalize him

still further. This suggests his psychological need to relive the archetypal struggle of the man trying to tame the wild animal (his own instinctual realm). Thus Genji enjoys the final play with even greater glee. Despite the fact that sexual relations in Japan begin at an early age for the girl, Genji's rational decision of adopting Murasaki when she was but a child had been motivated not by altruism but by a strong instinctual urge. It may be suggested, then, that he was responsible, covertly at first, then overtly, for violating her innocence. That he took her to live with him in his Nijo-in residence inherited from his mother rather than on another estate where he kept his other women, is also symptomatic of the unconscious fusion of the mother/daughter image he projects on her. He makes love first to the child, then to the adult.

Despite Genji's claim that he loves Murasaki more than anyone else, she is merely his property to dispose as he wishes. Unlike Fujitsubo, to whom Murasaki is related and whom she resembles, she is neither politically nor socially well placed; her presence instills neither respect nor fear in Genji. Nor does she bear him a son, as Aoi had done, or a daughter, as the Akashi Lady would do in the future. Although she is intellectually and artistically very beautiful and talented, Heian society will not allow her to climb the social ladder (Field 173). In this regard, Murasaki is Genji's mirror image, since he cannot aspire to emperorhood, his father having demoted him to commoner status.

Although happy on the surface, Murasaki's life with Genji is fraught with difficulties. His philanderings are many and his absence of three years in self-exile on Suma island, where he undergoes purification rituals to wipe away his sins, are deeply painful. In keeping with custom, she has some outlet through conveyance of her loneliness and despair in poetry: "Could my death pay to hold you back, how gladly would I purchase a single moment of delay." Again, in a letter she depicts her tears and loneliness: "Look at the sleeves of the fisherfolk who trail salt-water tubs along the shore: you will not find them wetter than mine were on the night you put out to sea." Grief-stricken, Murasaki spends much time in religious devotions, praying for her beloved's speedy return. When next she sees Genji, she confesses the long days of suffering and isolation that she experienced, remonstrating with him for not having sent her the pictures he had painted during his stay at Suma. How comforted she would have felt in their presence. "Better had it been for me when I was alone to look at pictures of the realms where fishers dwell, than stare at nothing, as I did all day long!"

In a poem assuring her of his undying love, Genji stems momentarily Murasaki's well-grounded jealousy toward her many rivals. Her answer, nevertheless, is somewhat ironic: "On the bright mirror of these waters I

see stretched out the cloudless years love holds for us in garden." Despite the fact that Genji was to live with Murasaki longer than he would with anyone else, she lived in dread of the day he would tire of her and cast her away.

Genji rarely took Murasaki's anxiety concerning his philanderings seriously. That he considered her anger and pain a mark of childish petulance downgraded her even more markedly. Only those traits in her personality that served his purpose and fulfilled his image of the ideal mother did he admire: integrity, intelligence, warmth, tenderness, and beauty. He also revealed his confidence in her administrative capabilities and in her maturity before his departure for Suma, when he entrusted the most important task of running his large household to her. In turn, she proved herself to be a committed and capable administrator. Perhaps even more of a compliment was his entrusting the childless Murasaki the raising and educating of his daughter by the Akashi Lady. Although jealous of the child's mother, Murasaki was delighted to accept the enormous responsibility of guiding and teaching the future empress. Her success in this endeavor earned her accolades when her ward, known later as the Akashi Princess, received great admiration in the court of the Crown Prince.

When, however, Genji informed Murasaki that for reasons of state he would marry Nyosan, known as the Third Princess, she repressed her reactions, as was the custom, remaining seemingly unperturbed. Her feelings of utter despair were conveyed in the following poem: "Is autumn near to be as to those leafy hills, that even while I watch them grow less green?" The reference to autumn (*aki*) not only indicates the fleeting nature of time, but "less green" suggests being tired or fatigued. Was Genji tiring of her now that she was growing old? Despite circumstantial appearances, he tried to assuage her anxiety by pointing to the political motivations for his marriage. Furthermore, he kept reiterating that although he had been living with her for many years, she was increasingly more exciting to him as a mature woman than when she was young. She knew just how to provide him with an element of "surprise," astounding him both intellectually and artistically, in her poems, her ways, her dress, "her clothes scented with the subtlest and most delicious perfumes, her whole person ever more radiant this year than last year, today than yesterday." Although the emotional cost of dissimulating her hurt was great, Murasaki forced herself to be strong to the point of helping her husband dress and perfuming his clothes for his impending marriage and for the first three nights to be spent with his new bride.

With aching heart, Murasaki watched Genji leave their quarters to go to the Third Princess's room. Her only consolation now was the thought that life is short and that she would take her vows to become a nun. On

that particular night, however, she could not sleep. The wind was howling, a storm rose, and she felt "awkward and lopsided as she tried to arrange herself in bed." First she had visions of Genji away at Suma, then she saw herself dead. So profound was her distress that it elicited a parapsychological event: she found her way into Genji's dream. At the very same moment Genji, lying with the Third princess, also had "a terrifying vision of her [Murasaki]." He "woke up with a start and hearing the cock crow" left in the dead of night, treading on snow, to go to Murasaki's room, desperately anxious for her welfare. Upon pulling back Murasaki's coverlets, he found her head hidden in the sleeve of her dress, wet with tears. The extreme tenderness of his affection at this moment, although comforting, did not allay her torment. She turned from him in sorrow.

Murasaki's dream being experienced simultaneously by Genji is an example of a synchronistic event. To explain such an acausal phenomenon psychologically, C. G. Jung suggests that there is a "middle region" in each individual's being that borders on both conscious and unconscious realms. Because they overlap, the one may be regarded to a certain extent as feeding the other. It may be said that during certain stressful circumstances the threshold of consciousness is diminished, and elements in the form of archetypal images within the collective unconscious (the deepest layer within the psyche) rise spontaneously into the rational sphere. The diffused and intuitive knowledge recorded in Genji's dream, then, had reached out into the empirical realm and was read or interpreted by him, thereby giving utterances to his own deepest concerns. Otherwise stated, one might suggest that when the eyes are closed during sleep, the inner eye conveys its truths in the world of dream, thus symbolically opening one's eyes (Jacobi 62; Franz 166).

Was this synchronistic experience to be interpreted as a premonition of Murasaki's death? That Genji, fearing the worst, went to her room in the middle of the night indicates how seriously he took his dream. By way of explanation, one may propose that there is something within the collective unconscious that may be described as an "*a priori* knowledge or an 'immediacy' of events which lacks any causal basis," but comes to the fore whenever its help is needed to rectify an imbalance (C. G. Jung, "Synchronicity," par 818; Jacobi, 63). By already expressing his concern over Murasaki's advanced years (she was thirty-seven, Fujitsubo's age when she died), Genji was unconsciously obsessed with the possibility of losing her. Genji may have also felt pangs of guilt for having married the Third Princess, while knowing the pain that he was inflicting on Murasaki. Perhaps he himself was unaware of the underlying motivations of his act.

Murasaki no longer cares about the world, nor does she expend her energy struggling to retain Genji's attention. Slowly, and perhaps unconsciously, she is preparing to withdraw from life. Increasingly detached from earthly illusions, she asks Genji for permission to take her vows, which he refuses. He will not be deprived of his mother figure, the one person who has always seen to *his* well-being before her own, who looks after him and loves him in all ways. Murasaki's desire to take vows is in keeping with her personality. From her earliest days, she had revealed a natural inclination for religion. Brought up in a mountain retreat by her grandmother, a nun, and her granduncle, a bishop, she was familiar with incense, rituals, and rosaries. When Genji first took her to his palace, the Nijo-in, then moved her into his newly renovated domain, the sumptuous Rokujo-in (the land having been given to him by Lady Rokujo), Murasaki reacted to her new environs with pleasure. To her he gave the metaphoric name "Lady Spring" and the garden located in the Southeast section of the mansion associated with the spring season, which she considered an earthly replica of the Pure Land paradise of the Amida Buddha.

The Spring Garden, with its great orchards of fruit trees at the moment far excelled the rest, and even behind her screens-of-state Murasaki breathed an atmosphere that was heavily laden with the scent of plum-blossom. Indeed the place was a Heaven upon earth; but a Heaven adapted to human requirements by the addition of numerous comforts and amenities.

Gardens in Heian times were arranged to arouse emotions or to foster poetic associations (Joan Stanley Baker 79). Seasonal identifications suggest cyclicity: the passage of time in the linear sphere, but also its suspension, its continuous and methodical repetition in a transpersonal dimension. Murasaki's garden put her also in touch with transcendent spheres.

Seeing that his beloved Murasaki is now growing sick, Genji takes her away from Rokujo-in, back to the Nijo-in where he had first brought her as a child and where she had remained throughout her adolescence. Nijo-in, let us recall, had belonged to Genji's dead mother and had been administered by Murasaki during Genji's three-year absence at Suma. Recovering somewhat from her illness in this comforting atmosphere, Murasaki again asks Genji for permission to take her vows, which is again refused. Unable to comprehend his reasons, she may have wondered whether some sin of hers was retarding her spiritual evolution. To assuage her turmoil, she plans a religious ceremony that was deeply meaningful in Heian times: the Hoke Hakko. During its unfolding, the

Buddha's sacred Lotus Sutra, which promises salvation to both men and women, is recited continuously during four or five days. The devout Murasaki had had occasion throughout her years with Genji to have a thousand copies of the Lotus Sutra made. The very process of the writing of this sacred work was, it was believed, helpful in creating a karmic relation between mortal and transpersonal spheres. The Sutras, along with the robes that had been created after Murasaki's own design for the ministrants, she now gave as offerings to the temple.

On the day of the religious ceremony, nature seemed to be working in harmony with Murasaki, responding empathetically to her deeply felt spiritual experience. The trees were blossoming and the weather was mild, as if paradise had installed itself on earth. As she listened intently to the recitation of the holy *Woodman's Song*, its images and lines depicting Buddha's death (Sakyamuni), she wondered whether it was not also a prelude to her own: "Though in life no prize awaits me, yet am I sad to know the firewood is burnt out and soon the flame will sink." Spring turned into summer, and with autumn Murasaki's slow decline became evident. The Akashi Empress, once the little Princess whom Murasaki had brought up from infancy and loved so deeply, had left the Palace to come to stay with her beloved surrogate mother. Genji was also present. More than pleased at the sight of Murasaki sitting up, he was convinced she was regaining her strength, but he was living an illusion, once again putting his needs before her own. Fearing the anguish awaiting him, she pronounces an acrostic poem: "Hopes then the dewdrop upon the wind-swept grasses of the heath to build a safe abode?"

As the Ashashi Princess held her hands, the dying Murasaki faded away "like a dewdrop from the grass." Genji was consumed with guilt, not because he had wrought havoc with Murasaki's life but because he had not allowed her, before her death, to fulfil her desperate wish to take orders. Yet, even here, the *puer aeternus* rationalizes, taking the easy way out: unwilling to accept the blame for his egotism, he maintains that he had not realized how swift her end would be. Beautiful in death, Murasaki's lifeless being seems to be marked with the purity of childhood.

Her hair lay spread across the pillows, loose, but not tangled or disorderly, in a great mass, against which in the strong lamplight her face shone with a dazzling whiteness. Never, thought Genji, had her beauty seemed so flawless as now, when the eye could rest upon it undistracted by any ripple of sound or motion.

Murasaki's cremation took place the day after she died, on the fifteenth day of the Eighth Month.

Genji's tears came swiftly. Realizing that his beauty, talent, position had not raised him above his peers, nor had they brought him contentment, he understood perhaps for the first time that loneliness would now be his lot.

And then as though Buddha feared that even now he might harbour some remnant of trust in life and its joys, loss upon loss was visited upon him, from all of which he had in the end recovered. But now at last this greatest of imaginable sorrows had indeed effected what all previous afflictions had failed to achieve.

Not long after Murasaki's demise, Genji, deprived of zest for life, takes his vows and later dies. The *puer aeternus* spent his life searching for an all-encompassing and ideal mother figure. He had found her in the gentle and loving Murasaki, who accepted his childlike ways, his hurts, and his perversion of her worth.

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