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**PERFORMING PRAYER, SAVING *GENJI*,  
AND IDOLIZING MURASAKI SHIKIBU:  
*GENJI KUYŌ* IN NŌ AND JŌRURI<sup>1</sup>**

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**Introduction**

The *Murasaki Shikibu daraku ron* [lit. “Story of Murasaki Shikibu’s Fall] tells that after her death Murasaki Shikibu (d. ca. 1014) was cast to hell.<sup>2</sup> The earliest reference is found in *Genji ipponkyō* [Sutra for Genji] (ca. 1166), which recounts a Buddhist *kuyō* (dedicatory rite) performed on her behalf, with the reasoning that the Heian author had been condemned to eternal suffering in hell for writing *Genji monogatari* [The Tale of Genji] (ca. 1008). Though *Genji ipponkyō* makes no explicit claim to the efficacy of the *kuyō*, its performance is presumably successful and saves the *Genji* author. In such a case the earliest extant utterance of the Murasaki-in-hell story is coupled with her subsequent salvation, and the *Genji* author, though damned, is also to be saved.<sup>3</sup> It may be more accurate, then, to say that the *Murasaki Shikibu daraku ron* is about Murasaki Shikibu’s deliverance, rather than her fall (*daraku*).

Through the medieval period and beyond, various sources recounted the execution of *kuyō* rites conducted for *The Tale of Genji*’s author, often initiated and sponsored by women.<sup>4</sup> Such stories of *Genji kuyō*

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<sup>1</sup> Author’s Note: I thank those who commented on earlier versions of this paper, in particular D. Max Moerman, Hauro Shirane, and Rebecca Copeland.

<sup>2</sup> This is also phrased as *Murasaki Shikibu dagoku/dajigoku ron/setsu* (legend/story of Murasaki Shikibu in hell). In such stories her spirit is either in hell or unable to attain salvation.

<sup>3</sup> This notion of the already saved is reminiscent of the discourse on female salvation. For example, Hōnen (Genkū, 1133–1212), credited with founding the *Jōdokyō* (Pure Land sect), declared the inherent sin of being female but also provided the *nenbutsu* chant as a way to get to the Pure Land. Thus, women are “always already saved.” In the case of *Genji kuyō*, Murasaki being female only aggravates her sin of writing *Genji*.

<sup>4</sup> *Genji kuyō* appear to have been conducted primarily by women until the late fifteenth-century. On the role of women and the development of *Genji*

underscore a preoccupation with notions of *mōgo* (falsehoods) and *kigo* (spurious phrases) and anxieties regarding the production and consumption of fiction, particularly those that display ambiguous morals like *The Tale of Genji*.<sup>5</sup> These texts can together be called *Genji kuyō tan*, or stories of prayers for *Genji*.<sup>6</sup>

This paper discusses dramatizations of *Genji kuyō* by focusing on the seventeenth-century *jōruri bunraku* play *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō* [Ishiyama Temple in Ōmi Province: Genji kuyō] (1676), popularly attributed – though likely erroneously so – to the famed playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1725). I situate the *jōruri* within the long tradition of *Genji kuyō tan*, particularly as it relates to the fifteenth-century *nō* play *Genji kuyō*, to trace the varied portrayals of Murasaki Shikibu.<sup>7</sup> Unlike the *nō* and earlier *Genji kuyō* texts, *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō* has not hitherto received much scholarly attention, but the text manifests a crucial development in *Genji kuyō tan* and the discourse on Murasaki Shikibu. Despite its reliance on the *Genji kuyō* convention that originated alongside the Murasaki-in-hell narrative, in the *jōruri* the *Genji* author is

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*kuyō* especially as *sōshi* narratives, see Koida Tomoko, *Hotoke to onna no Muromachi: monogatari sōshi ron* (Tokyo: Kazama shoin, 2008): 333–354.

<sup>5</sup> *Mōgo* and *kigo* are two of the Buddhist ten evils (*jūaku*). For discussions and translations of various texts that address *Genji kuyō*, rendered ‘Genji obsequies,’ see *Reading The Tale of Genji: Sources from the First Millennium*, eds. Thomas Harper and Haruo Shirane (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015): 177–206.

<sup>6</sup> The phrase *Genji kuyō tan* is first used by Toku’e Gensei, “Kokuseki ruishobon ‘Genji kuyō sōshi’ o megurite,” *Biburia* 64 (1976), 17. On the development of the Murasaki-in-hell legend and *Genji kuyō*, see Ii Haruki, *Genji monogatari no densetu* (Tokyo: Shōwa shuppan, 1976): 151–212. As of 2010, there are at least 201 sources dealing with *Genji kuyō* archived at the *Kokuritsu kokubungaku kenkyū shiryōkan* [National Institute of Japanese Literature]. Watanabe Shujun, “‘Genji kuyō’ no Tendai,” *Eizan gakuin kenkyū kiyō* 32 (2010), 10–12.

<sup>7</sup> This is the first of a series of *jōruri* and *kabuki* that have some basis on *Genji kuyō tan*. I do not include later texts here because they depart heavily from earlier *kuyō*. For a discussion, see Shirakata Masaru, “Genji monogatari to jōruri,” *Genji monogatari no tankyū* 4, ed. Genji monogatari kenkyūkai (Tokyo: Kazama shobō, 1979): 179–196.

made into a woman writer who – far from having fallen to hell – is a faultless figure.

### Early *Genji kuyō tan*

Though *tsukuri monogatari* (fictional tales) were considered to violate Buddhist precepts forbidding falsehoods and specious words long before Murasaki Shikibu's time, it was during the *inseiki* (cloistered emperor period, 1086–1185) that there arose an increased anxiety – fueled in part by general political and social insecurities of the age – that such tales were sinful.<sup>8</sup> Thus it is no coincidence that the *Genji ipponkyō* was composed at this time.<sup>9</sup> Attributed to Tendai priest Chōken (1126–1203), founder of the Agui temple and its line of sermonic orators,<sup>10</sup> *Genji ipponkyō* [Sutra for Genji] (ca. 1166) is a *hyōbyaku*, or a declaration outlining the purpose of a Buddhist service.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Sanbō'e (kotoba)* [(Words Amended to the) Illustration of the Three Jewels] (ca. 984) calls *monogatari* lies which should be avoided: “do not let your heart get caught up even briefly in these tangled roots of evil, these forests of words.” Edward Kamen's translation in *The Three Jewels: A Study and Translation of Minamoto Tamenori's Sanbōe* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1988), 93.

<sup>9</sup> There is still no clear consensus about the dating of the text, though Teramoto Naohiko positioned it between 1176 and 1189. Teramoto Naohiko, *Genji monogatari juyōshi ronkō zokuhen* (Tokyo: Kazama shobō, 1984), 508–509. Regardless, *Genji ipponkyō* is nearly contemporaneous to *Genji monogatari shaku* [The Tale of Genji Explicated] by Fujiwara no Koreyuki (ca. 1160), the earliest extant treatise on *Genji*.

<sup>10</sup> Scholars generally follow Gotō Tanji's early argument that the author is Chōken. Chōken, who was a son of Fujiwara no Michinori (1106–1159), is referred to in *Genji ipponkyō* as *hō'in* (Tendai prelate) but was not given that status until 1183. On the Agui School's sympathy to issues of gender – for example, emphasizing the role of the mother over the father, see Komine Kazuaki, “Shōdō – Agui Chōken o meguru,” *Koten bungaku to bukkyō*, eds. Kon'no Tōru et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995), 32–36.

<sup>11</sup> The term *ipponkyō* usually identifies a ceremony in which the twenty-eight chapters of the *Lotus Sutra* are copied, so the title *Genji ipponkyō* can be translated as “Copying the Lotus Sutra for *Genji*.” Gotō Tanji was the first modern scholar to comprehensively analyze this text beginning in 1930

It explains that a nun has approached the priest for help in granting salvation to Murasaki Shikibu and readers of *The Tale of Genji*.<sup>12</sup> She tells that the *Genji* author's ghost has been appearing in people's dreams, warning them that *Genji* readers will join her in hell because *The Tale of Genji* commits the offense of being *monogatari*, the lowest form of writing,<sup>13</sup> deemed inferior for failing to tell "good and evil actions of people of the past" and "providing record of old events from earlier eras."<sup>14</sup> Though *Genji* is identified to be the most superior of such tales, it is especially egregious in showing relations between men and women and stimulating readers:

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and revised as "Genji hyōbyaku kō," *Chūsei kokubungaku kenkyū* (Tokyo: Isobe kōyōdō, 1943): 3–28.

<sup>12</sup> Though there is some doubt, the nun is said to be Bifukumon'in no Kaga (d. 1193), wife of Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114–1204) and mother of Fujiwara no Teika (1162–1241). If Bifukumon'in no Kaga took vows at the same time that Shunzei did (1176), the first *kuyō* was probably performed around 1180. See Matsuoka Shinpei, "Genji kuyō," *Genji monogatari handobukku*, eds. Akiyama Ken, Watanabe Tamotsu, and Matsuoka Shinpei (Tokyo: Shinshokan, 1996), 83. As Michael Jamentz notes, however, the Sōanshū manuscript shows that the sponsor was a lady-in-waiting known only as Tosa no Naishi. Michael Jamentz, *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 189. It is possible that the same *kuyō* ceremony is referenced in several other texts including *Hōbutsushū* [Collection of Treasures] (ca. 1180) and *Ima monogatari* [Tales of the Present] (ca. 1240), though *Ima kagami* [Mirror of the Present] (ca. 1170) suggests that there were numerous ceremonies performed on different occasions.

<sup>13</sup> The famous ranking of literature cited by *Genji ipponkyō* is the following: Buddhist scripture, Confucian tracts, histories, Chinese poetry, Japanese poetry, and finally, fictional *monogatari*. This hierarchy had already existed by the time of *Genji*'s composition, though it is only during the late Heian period that *monogatari* becomes recognized as a part of literature (*bungaku*). Takahashi Tōru, *Genji monogatari no taihō* (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1982), 265.

<sup>14</sup> "Genji ipponkyō," in *Genji monogatari, Kokugo kokubungaku kenkyūshi taisei 3*, eds. Abe Akio, Oka Kazuo, and Yamagishi Tokuhei (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1960), 37.

Of the *monogatari*, the tale of the Shining Genji was written by Murasaki Shikibu. Totalling sixty scrolls and comprising thirty-nine chapters,<sup>15</sup> its words span those of Buddhist and Confucian texts, its contents skillfully composed of conversations between men and women. Amongst the tales of old, this is the most superior. Its poetry is superbly beautiful and stirs up passions. In homes where men and women value the senses, and with people, both wealthy and poor, who are easily allured, this tale is used as a means to manipulate people's thoughts. When unmarried ladies in their inner chambers view it, they are moved to springtime yearnings. When men who lie alone on their cold mats open it, their hearts are worked up with autumnal passions. For this reason, the spirit of its maker and the many people who have viewed it are together bound in sin, trapped in the cycle of birth and death and will fall to the blades of the forests of hell. And because of this, the spirit of Murasaki Shikibu has from old appeared in people's dreams to tell them of the weight of the sin.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Some versions cite 49 chapters and 60 scrolls. The specific number of chapters that comprise the whole of *The Tale of Genji* was long a source of some confusion, with numerous references to the tale having a total of sixty books, presumably to match the number of scrolls in the Tendai scriptural canon. By the Kamakura period major *Genji* recensions declared that the correct total was fifty-four, as we have today. Ii Haruki, *Genji monogatari no nazo* (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1983), 203–205.

<sup>16</sup> Translated from “Genji ipponkyō,” 37; in consultation with the modern Japanese reading by Hakamada Mitsuyasu in *Genji monogatari to Bukkyō: butten, koji, girei*, ed. Hinata Kazumasa (Tokyo: Seikansha, 2009), 223. A slightly longer passage is translated in Haruo Shirane, “*The Tale of Genji*

It is not only men and women that “value the senses” and “who are easily allured” – that is to say, those who are somehow primed to be drawn to lascivious stories – who are affected by the tale.<sup>17</sup> So potent is *The Tale of Genji*’s appeal that no one, including confined maidens brought up in protective homes and unattached men leading ascetic lives, can possibly resist its temptations. All such *Genji* readers, including the nun who has volunteered to sponsor the *kuyō*, are culpable and are bound in sin with Murasaki Shikibu, together awaiting a destiny of shared suffering. In order to save them all, the twenty-eight volumes of the *Lotus Sutra* are to be copied, each scroll appended with an illustration of a chapter of *Genji*.<sup>18</sup> The same readers who could not help but be negatively influenced by the tale are tasked with this penitentiary act.<sup>19</sup> The *Genji* reader is thus both victim and potential liberator upon whom Murasaki Shikibu must rely to expunge her of her unique sins as the *Genji* author.<sup>20</sup>

*Genji ipponkyō* concludes with Bo Juyi’s view of *kyōgen kigo* (wild words and fanciful phrases) that admonishes secular literature while simultaneously declaring it a means to promote Buddhist truths. First seen in *Hakushi monjū* [Ch. *Boshi wenji*, Collected Works of Bo Juyi], in Japan, this declaration is most famously incorporated in *Wakan rōeishū* [Collection of Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing] (ca. 1017) and

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and the Dynamics of Cultural Production,” *Envisioning The Tale of Genji: Media, Gender, and Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 18. Also translated by Michael Jamentz, *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 190.

<sup>17</sup> “*Genji ipponkyō*,” 37.

<sup>18</sup> Re-arranged into twenty-eight ‘corollary chapters’ (*narabi no maki*).

<sup>19</sup> “*Genji ipponkyō*,” 37: The salvation ceremony is conducted by a diverse group of people, “whether they have entered the path of the Buddha or not, whether they be wealthy or poor.”

<sup>20</sup> There are other examples of cases in which the victims are the only ones able to mitigate the suffering of the perpetrator; for example, in *A Wonderful Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution*, a famed beauty appears in the dream of dharma monk Jakurin, after which the monk determines that she will not be relieved of her pain until her children copy out sutras in her name in a show of forgiveness. Charlotte Eubanks, *Miracles of Book and Body: Buddhist Textual Culture and Medieval Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 103–104.

repeated in numerous texts including *Heike monogatari* [Tales of The Heike] (mid-thirteenth century) and *Shasekishū* [Collection of Sand and Pebbles] (1279–1283). The phrase *kyōgen kigo* comes to be, as Takahashi Tōru put it, akin to a “mantra that legitimizes literature and performing arts.”<sup>21</sup> Though the *Sarashina nikki* [Sarashina Diary] (ca. 1059) hinted at the possibility of reading *The Tale of Genji* from the perspective of *kyōgen kigo*, it was not until *Genji ipponkyō* that the phrase was used in explicit reference to the tale.<sup>22</sup> The first text of the *Genji kuyō tan* thus acknowledged *The Tale of Genji* to be problematic in its fictional depiction of amorous affairs while simultaneously employing Bo Juyi’s rhetoric to forge a connection between the tale and Buddhist enlightenment. This reconciliation of literature with Buddhist faith becomes one popular justification of *Genji* as seen in commentaries like *Kakaishō* [Book of Seas and Rivers] by Yotsutsuji Yoshinari (1362–67) and *Myōjōshō* [Notes for the Morning Star] by Sanjōnishi Kin’eda (ca. 1552).<sup>23</sup> The possibility that literature could be repositioned or reconstituted as an instrument of Buddhist teaching is fundamental to early *Genji kuyō tan*.<sup>24</sup>

Following this concept, over the next few decades *Genji ipponkyō* is succeeded by texts such as *Ima kagami* [Mirror of the Present] (ca. 1170), *Shin chokusen wakashū* [New Imperial Collection of Poetry] (1235) and *Ima monogatari* [The Tales of The Present] (ca. 1240) that tell of similar *kuyō* ceremonies. The *Ima kagami* cites the *Murasaki Shikibu daraku ron* only to debunk it and defend the *Genji* author, claiming that her tale – which was prized by emperors and empresses – cannot be deemed transgressive since the Buddha himself primarily preached not with

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<sup>21</sup> Takahashi Tōru, *Genji monogatari no taiihō*, 247.

<sup>22</sup> Teramoto Naohiko, *Genji monogatari juyōshi ronkō zokuhen*, 500. *Sarashina* suggests that the amorous relations in *Genji* can ultimately lead the reader to seek Buddhist truths; in her *nikki*, Takasue’s daughter depicts herself as resisting this idea until later in her life. See *The Sarashina Diary: A Woman’s Life in Eleventh-Century Japan*, trans. Sonja Arntzen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

<sup>23</sup> Shirane, *Envisioning the Tale of Genji*, 26–27.

<sup>24</sup> Women readers in particular felt a need to forge a connection between *The Tale of Genji* and Buddhist enlightenment. Mitamura Masako, *Kioku no naka no Genji monogatari* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2008): 37–43.

historical anecdotes but rather through allegorical parables.<sup>25</sup> In its refutation of the Murasaki-in-hell legend, the historical tale suggests that the story was widely known by that time.

Though *Ima kagami* defends the author, in most narratives of *Genji kuyō* the story of *Genji* is identified as corrupt and corrupting, as seen in the below passage from *Ima monogatari* [The Tales of The Present] (ca. 1240):<sup>26</sup>

In a certain person's dream, someone without a discernable form appeared as if a shadow. When questioned who it was, [the form] replied: "It is Murasaki Shikibu. Because I gathered a great number of lies (*soragoto*) and misled people's hearts, I fell to hell and am suffering. It is truly unbearable. Please, take the titles of *Genji's* tale and for every chapter, compose a poem and include the chant *Hail, Amida Buddha* – and pray for my suffering." When asked how such poems should be composed, she answered thus:

Lost in the darkness of *Kiritsubo*  
Bring light by repeating the incantation:  
*Hail, Amida Buddha.*<sup>27</sup>

The sin identified here is similar to that outlined in *Genji ipponkyō*: the tale is fiction and it influences readers, leading them astray. And yet, Murasaki Shikibu is alone in hell, for the offense is here considered to lie only in the

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<sup>25</sup> See translation and introduction by Thomas Harper in *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 180–184. As Teramoto Naohiko succinctly summarizes, there have been various suggestions on the dating of the text, ranging from the third month of 1170 to as late as 1188. Most scholars agree that *Genji ipponkyō* preceded *Ima kagami*. Teramoto Naohiko, *Genji monogatari juyōshi ronkō zokuhen*, 521. Though *Ima kagami* denies the Murasaki-in-hell legend, in the end it declares that anyone with enough compassion (*nasake ōku*) who prays for her deliverance will be a recipient of good karma, thus advocating for the very thing that it denies is needed.

<sup>26</sup> Attributed to Fujiwara no Nobuzane (ca. 1176–1266).

<sup>27</sup> *Ima monogatari, Takafusashū, Tōsai zuihitsu*, ed. Kubota Jun et. al (Tokyo: Miyai shoten, 1979), 156.

writing of the tale, not in its reading. Unlike *Genji ipponkyō*, in which the readers and the author share in the sin and subsequently the penalty found in *The Tale of Genji*, here the responsibility lies clearly and solely with Murasaki Shikibu, who is held liable for writing and disseminating the tale – in other words, for constitutively being the *Genji* author. In fact, in the majority of *Genji kuyō* texts after *Genji ipponkyō*, the *Genji* reader is no longer depicted to be in any danger of ‘falling’ – to hell or elsewhere – alongside the *Genji* author.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, one could argue that by conducting services for the author, readers were also hoping to save themselves; dreaming of the author in distress (or claiming to have such dreams) is itself perhaps a manifestation of a sort of guilt in associating with the tale.<sup>29</sup> But so far as the *Genji kuyō* narratives after *Genji ipponkyō* are concerned, readers do not share in the sins of the *Genji* author. Komine Kazuaki<sup>30</sup> has noted that the *Genji kuyō*

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<sup>28</sup> The *otogi zōshi* [Muromachi tale] *Genji kuyō sōshi* [A Story of Genji kuyō], shows a nun who fears that her obsession with the tale is injurious and incompatible with her devotions, but the tale itself is not depicted as entirely problematic, as evidenced by the Agui priest’s facility with *Genji* chapter titles, which is praised and rewarded. Andō Michiko favors Fujii Takashi’s dating of the text between 1311 and 1381. Andō Michiko, “Genji kuyō sōshi” in *Monogatari bungaku no keifu 2, Kamakura monogatari 1*, ed. Mitani Eiichi (Tokyo: Yūseidō shuppan, 1989), 172. Most likely the *Genji kuyō nō* play was based in part on this tale.

<sup>29</sup> Andō Tōru has discussed the tendency of select *Genji* enthusiasts even in the modern period to imagine a unique connection between themselves and the *Genji* author, often in the form of dreams. Andō Tōru, “Yomi no rekishi to monogatari sakusha no jikoseikei: ‘Murasaki Shikibu nikki’ no ichi,” in Ōchō monogatari kenkyūkai, ed., *Ōchō joryū nikki no shikai* (Tokyo: Shintensha, 1999): 308–314. The story that people who have died appear in dreams to ask for *kuyō* appears often in the medieval period. For a brief discussion of dreams in the context of medieval Buddhist thought, William R. LaFleur, *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1983): 4–7.

<sup>30</sup> As Komine notes, it is no coincidence that the *Genji kuyō* are first seen around the same time as *Genji monogatari shaku*, *Genji monogatari emaki* [The Tale of Genji Picture Scroll] and the age of Fujiwara no Shunzei and

narrative was born once *The Tale of Genji* was established as a ‘classic text’ (*koten*) and the world of the reader became separated from that of the tale. Indeed, *Genji* was undeniably on its way to becoming a ‘classic’ by the time of *Genji ipponkyō*, but the separation of reader from text – and from its author – is manifest more clearly in subsequent *Genji kuyō* texts.

### ***Genji kuyō nō***

In significant contrast to the *Genji* reader, the author of *The Tale of Genji* continues to be branded a sinner and made to pay penance in *Genji kuyō tan*. The image of her suffering ghost is most prominent in the *nō* play *Genji kuyō*, of unclear authorship and first performed in 1464.<sup>31</sup> In it, a priest on his way to Ishiyama temple is stopped by the author’s spirit, who asks that he conduct a memorial service for *Genji* at his destination. He complies, reciting a condensed version of *Genji monogatari hyōbyaku* [The Tale of Genji Proclamation], a proclamation in the form of an extended poem comprised of *Genji* chapter titles attributed to Chōken’s son Seikaku (or Shōkaku, 1167–1235).<sup>32</sup> This declares the tale to be akin to Buddhist doctrine. At the end of the play, it is revealed that Murasaki Shikibu was an incarnation of Bodhisattva Kannon, and that *Genji* was in fact written by the deity “to tell mankind that the world is but a dream.”<sup>33</sup>

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Teika, who emphasized the use of *Genji* in *waka*. Komine Kazuaki, *Setsuwa no gensetsu – chūsei no hyōgen to rekishi jojutsu* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2002), 193.

<sup>31</sup> The earliest recorded performance of the *nō* play *Genji kuyō* was in 1464 at the Tadasugawara in Kyoto. Translated with an introduction by Janet Goff in Janet Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji: The Art of Allusion in Fifteen Classical Plays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991): 198–209; and Royall Tyler, *To Hallow Genji: A Tribute to Noh* (Charleston, S.C.: CreateSpace, 2013): 3–17.

<sup>32</sup> Most scholars agree with Gotō Tanji’s early suggestion that Shōkaku is the author. Gotō Tanji, “Genji ipponkyō to Genji hyōbyaku,” 44–46.

<sup>33</sup> Janet Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 209. Kobayashi Kenji suggests that *Genji kuyō* were indeed long conducted at Ishiyama temple using a portrait of Murasaki Shikibu depicted as an incarnation of Kannon. Kobayashi Kenji, “Nō ‘Genji kuyō’ seisaku no haikai: Ishiyamadera ni okeru Murasaki Shikibu shinkō” in *Kokubungaku kenkyū shiryōkan kiyō, bungaku kenkyū hen 37* (2011): 59–92.

During her first contact with the priest, who is identified only by his affiliation with the Agui temple and therefore could be either Chōken or Seikaku, the woman's spirit requests a prayer. Below, the spirit is the *shite*, and the priest is the *waki*:

Shite:           If I may, I wish to speak to the  
                    incumbent priest of Agui Temple.  
Waki:           Are you addressing me?  
Shite:           In seclusion at Ishiyama  
                    I composed the sixty *Genji* chapters,  
                    An idle diversion that survived my  
                    death.  
                    Although my name is still remembered  
                    for it,  
                    I failed to hold a memorial service for  
                    *Genji* and am thus condemned  
                    to wander without attaining salvation.  
                    If possible, would you please at  
                    Ishiyama  
                    Hold a memorial service for *Genji*  
                    And pray on behalf of my soul?<sup>34</sup>

In this *nō* play, ubiquitous descriptors of the tale found in earlier *Genji kuyō tan* like the term *mōgo* (falsehoods) do not appear.<sup>35</sup> Even though the phrase *kyōgen kigo* is included at the close of the *hyōbyaku*, there is no other explanation of the tale itself as being sinful. Instead, the identified sin is the failure of the author to “hold a memorial service for Genji” – in other words, she is wrong to not have conducted a *Genji kuyō*. In the *kyōgen* or comic interlude to the drama, the necessity for this *kuyō* is explained.<sup>36</sup> It

<sup>34</sup> Janet Goff, *Noh Drama and the Tale of Genji*, 203–4. See also Royall Tyler, *To Hallow Genji*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> The priests' reference to a “story of Genji” that is “not true” (*makotoshikaranu*) may point to the fictional nature of *The Tale of Genji*, but it is likely regarding the Ishiyama temple legend. Itō Masayoshi, *Yōkyokushū* 2, 55.

<sup>36</sup> In the modern period the interlude is omitted from most performances. Janet Goff, *Noh Drama and the Tale of Genji*, 275 (n. 19). Royall Tyler includes the interlude in his translation. Tyler, *To Hallow Genji*, 8–9.

tells that Empress Shōshi (988–1074), after hearing that the Great Kamo Priestess (Senshi 964–1035)<sup>37</sup> was tired of stories like *Taketori monogatari* [The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter] and *Utsubo monogatari* [The Tale of Utsubo], commanded Murasaki Shikibu to write a new tale. Finding this task daunting, Murasaki sought divine assistance at Ishiyama temple. On the fifteenth night of the eighth month, the temple deity Bodhisattva Kannon bestowed Murasaki with visions of the tale. Because the divine inspiration came to her so suddenly, she wrote the tale on the back of the *Great Wisdom Sutra* that was lying in front of her. In penance, she was supposed to have copied the scripture to dedicate it to the Ishiyama temple's Kannon – but she neglected this duty.

This legend of the composition of *The Tale of Genji* at Ishiyama temple was popularized beginning in the late twelfth century around the same time as the Murasaki-in-hell story, and is later famously repeated in the influential *Genji* commentary *Kakaishō* [Book of Seas and Rivers] (1362–67).<sup>38</sup> The two narratives appear to be in direct opposition to one another; that is, how could the *Genji* author be condemned for writing a tale if it was inspired by a deity? The *nō* play reconciles the apparent contradiction by recounting that the tale was in fact composed under Buddhist auspices at Ishiyama, but the author failed to make amends for having used the back of scripture to write it. The Ishiyama temple legend will be further discussed below, but here I point out that in the *nō* play the *Genji kuyō* is deemed necessary not because Murasaki Shikibu wrote fiction

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<sup>37</sup> Senshi was the tenth daughter of Emperor Murakami and the Priestess of Kamo Shrine from 975 to 1031. As her tenure lasted over five imperial reigns, she came to be known as *Daisai'in*, or Great Priestess of Kamo. Ii Haruki, *Genji monogatari no nazo*, 11.

<sup>38</sup> By Yotsutsuji Yoshinari (1326–1402). The Ishiyama temple legend is later seen most prominently in *Genji monogatari Kogetsushō* [The Tale of Genji Moon on the Lake Commentary] (1673). The fourth chapter of *Ishiyama monogatari* [Tales of Ishiyama] (1658), *Murasaki Shikibu no maki* [Story of Murasaki Shikibu], also made the story accessible to the wider public. For a short discussion on the legend and its emphasis of Murasaki Shikibu's Buddhist devotion, see Naito, "Beyond *The Tale of Genji*: Murasaki Shikibu as Icon and Exemplum in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Popular Japanese Texts for Women," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9/1 (2014): 63–69.

with amorous content, nor was it (as we might otherwise expect) done in order to give thanks to Ishiyama's Kannon for giving inspiration. What was judged sinful in earlier *Genji kuyō tan* – that Murasaki Shikibu was constitutively the author of *The Tale of Genji* – is no longer an issue. Rather, it is the use of the physical material upon which she wrote it that is deemed transgressive. This is a crucial difference from the sin identified in earlier *Genji kuyō tan*.

Furthermore, in the *nō* play the *Genji* reader is not made to save the *Genji* author. In fact, the position of the *Genji* reader, whose function was so indispensable in earlier *Genji kuyō tan*, is effectively eliminated. Instead of appearing in dreams and delegating the role of sponsoring a sanctification ceremony to a loyal reader of her tale, Murasaki Shikibu has taken on the task herself. In fact, though she asks the priest to perform the service, Murasaki Shikibu's spirit provides the words of the *Genji hyōbyaku* for him to recite. In the passage below, the "I" points to the *Genji* author:

Shite:	This rare encounter
Chorus:	inspired a fervent prayer, which I have inscribed on a scroll hoping to awaken from darkness. May Radiant Genji's spirit attain enlightenment. <sup>39</sup>

In the *nō* play, the ghost of Murasaki Shikibu literally authors her own salvation prayer.<sup>40</sup> By initiating the *kuyō* and providing the prayer to be used for it, Murasaki Shikibu takes on roles that were divided among *Genji* reader(s) and the priest in previous *Genji kuyō tan*. Furthermore, when the *Genji* author's spirit reappears in the latter half of the play as the *nochi waki* (later *waki*), the actor wears an *eboshi* hat, as if Murasaki were at once the author and a character in her own tale. Indeed, in the *Genji kuyō nō* play, the *Genji* author is undeniably front-and-center, as it happens, atop the *nō* stage.

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<sup>39</sup> Janet Goff, *Noh Drama and the Tale of Genji*, 207. Itō Masayoshi, *Yōkyokushū 2*, 57. See also Tyler, *To Hallow Genji*, 14.

<sup>40</sup> It is possible that the scroll mentioned here is a copy of the *Lotus Sutra*, as Royall Tyler suggests (Tyler, *To Hallow Genji*, 5), but it is also likely to be the prayer that is recited immediately following passage. Itō Masayoshi, *Yōkyokushū 2*, 57.

This central figure of Murasaki Shikibu initially appears as a soul suffering in hell, but in the end she is revealed to be a Bodhisattva incarnate. Her divinity is amplified with the declaration that she composed *The Tale of Genji* with the intention of disseminating the Buddhist truth that life is but a dream. Centuries prior, *Genji ipponkyō* had used Bo Juyi's declaration of *kyōgen kigo* to proclaim the potential of the tale to be a medium of Buddhist instruction, but the *nō* takes this concept further to allege that *The Tale of Genji* was in fact composed precisely for that purpose by a Buddhist deity.

The story that Murasaki Shikibu was a reincarnated deity – most commonly the Bodhisattva Kannon, the “god(dess) of mercy” – was prevalent by the mid-Kamakura period and appeared as early as the late eleventh century. The *Ima kagami* (ca. 1170) and *Mumyōzōshi* [Nameless Book] (ca. 1200) both claim that she must have been a deity.<sup>41</sup> This Murasaki-as-god story likely emerged as a reaction to the Murasaki-in-hell narrative, and both are clearly premised upon a Buddhist worldview.<sup>42</sup> The story of her deification also most effectively accounted for the perceived awesomeness of the *Genji*, as select scholars were unconvinced that a mere mortal could have written the tale on her own; the only legitimate explanation would include a superhuman origin. In the *Genji kuyō nō* play, Murasaki Shikibu is deified for the feat, after initially having been vilified for the transgression, of authoring the tale.

From the *Genji ipponkyō* to the *Genji kuyō nō* play we thus see the depiction of Murasaki Shikibu shift from that of a sinned woman whose spirit is forced to rely on others to save her, to a divine figure who composes her own means of salvation. There is also a significantly reduced presence of the *Genji* reader. The *Genji kuyō jōruri*, to which I now turn, is loosely based on the *nō* and its assimilation of the Ishiyama legend with the *Genji kuyō* narrative. In it, the *Genji* author becomes even more celebrated – even if she is no longer made to be divine.

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<sup>41</sup> *Imakagami* shows the beginnings of Murasaki-as-deity story, suggesting that she was either Myō'on or Kannon. The basis may have been the myth that Bo Juyi was the reincarnation of Manjusri. Takahashi Tōru “Ōchō ‘onna’ bunka to *Mumyōzōshi*,” *Kodai bungaku kenkyū* 10 (2001), 7.

<sup>42</sup> Misumi Yōichi, *Genji monogatari to Tendai Jōdokyō* (Tokyo: Wakakusa shobō, 1996), 199–200. The final revelation that a main character is divine is also not atypical in *nō*.

***Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō***

The *jōruri* play *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō* [Ishiyama Temple in Ōmi Province: Genji kuyō] (1676) depicts the *Genji* origin story at Ishiyama temple found in the *nō*, and adds dramatic twists such as a literary competition between Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon (ca. 965), highlighting issues of humility, pride, and social expectations with regards gender and literary production. The *kuyō* ceremony appears almost as an addendum and is conducted for reasons distinct from earlier *Genji kuyō* stories. This, in addition to the motley nature of the play – with its sensational flourishes obviously intended for maximum entertainment on the *bunraku* stage – aligns it strongly within a uniquely *bunraku* tradition and is likely why it has not been the object of much scholarship on *Genji* reception.<sup>43</sup> However, the differences of *Gōshū Ishiyama dera* from earlier *Genji kuyō tan*, including *Genji kuyō nō*, show the development of the Murasaki-in-hell narrative into a complete celebration of Murasaki Shikibu.

The play begins, as do many accounts of the *Genji* author of the time, with praise of Empress Shōshi (988–1074). Murasaki Shikibu is listed amongst her large and impressive salon of attendant women, which includes other renowned Heian women writers like Akazome Emon (ca. 964–1021), Izumi Shikibu (fl. ca. 1000), and Sei Shōnagon. The last in fact served Empress Teishi (977–1001), but in popular literature of the time is often depicted alongside her contemporaries in Shōshi's rooms.<sup>44</sup> In the *jōruri* Murasaki Shikibu is singled out as a “noble poet” whose “intelligence in matters of Japanese and Chinese are unparalleled now as in the past.”<sup>45</sup> When Shōshi receives a letter from the Great Kamo Priestess (Senshi 964–1035) soliciting a new tale, she deems the duty best suited for Murasaki. The latter humbly declines, at which point Sei Shōnagon takes the opportunity to volunteer her own work, *Makura no sōshi* [The Pillow

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<sup>43</sup> *The Tale of Genji* has not been as influential on *jōruri* as medieval *gunki mono* [war tales] such as *Heike monogatari* [The Tales of the Heike] in mid-thirteenth century, and *nō*, though some schools used references to *Genji* in an attempt to elevate their art. Masaru, “Genji monogatari to *jōruri*,” 177–79.

<sup>44</sup> In fact, Sei is often depicted as an attendant to Shōshi, rather than to Teishi. I am grateful to Gergana Ivanova for this confirmation.

<sup>45</sup> *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō*, in *Kojōruri shōhonshū Kaga no jō 1*, ed. Kojōruri shōhonshū kankōkai (Kyoto: Daigakudō shoten, 1989), 21.

Book]. The Empress decides to turn this into a contest, commanding Murasaki to complete her own original tale as well.

When Murasaki's husband Nobutaka hears of this momentous assignment, he arranges to steal *The Pillow Book* to assess the competition. This plan centers on a hired thief, disguised as a dog, who is promptly sidetracked from his mission when he becomes enamored by Sei's beauty. He makes his advances but is immediately rejected by a horrified Sei Shōnagon. Thus, the would-be-thief fails, both in his endeavor to steal *The Pillow Book* and to woo its author, and is ultimately executed by Nobutaka who wants to hide his connection to the whole ordeal. Murasaki, without giving any opinion on the matter, then cloisters herself in Ishiyama temple to write the tale; here we return again to the Ishiyama *Genji* origin legend. Murasaki completes the tale in sixty-four days. The narrative, which identifies it as "*Tale of Shining Genji (Hikaru Genji monogatari)*"<sup>46</sup> confers ornate accolades upon the tale, comparing it to *Shiki* [*Ch. Shi ji*, Records of a Historian] and *Nihongi* (or *Nihon shoki*) [Chronicles of Japan] (720).

When both Murasaki and Sei's works are presented, the priest Seikaku, designated by the Empress to act as judge, first reads *The Pillow Book* and deems it clearly praiseworthy, its words "elegantly refined (*yasashiku taketakaku*)."<sup>47</sup> But then he reads Murasaki's offering and cannot help but to name it the clear winner:

After reading [*The Tale of Genji*] thoroughly, for a while [Seikaku] remained in awe. Noticing this, Shōshi asked: "how is it?" Though it was in front of Her Highness, without hesitation he suddenly clapped his hands together. The beauty of the prose, the flow of the *waka*, it is alluringly refined (*en ni yasashiku*). It not only holds its mysterious awe, but leads to the deep meanings of Buddhism.... It is an exceptional *monogatari*." Raising it three times to his head, he looked to be extremely moved indeed.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 29. This nomenclature is common.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

Murasaki soon asks Seikaku to pray for the tale's characters.<sup>49</sup> Though moved by this request, it is not until he has a vivid dream of Shining Genji suffering in hell for his treatment of women that the priest hastens to conduct services. The *kuyō* again includes recitation of *Genji monogatari hyōbyaku*. In attendance at Ishiyama temple to witness the service are Empress Shōshi, Murasaki Shikibu, and other ladies of the salon. In the conclusion of the play, Genji and others from the tale appear together with a declaration that they have attained Buddhahood.

**The *jōruri* within *Genji kuyō tan***

This *jōruri* retains key aspects of earlier *Genji kuyō tan*; first and foremost, the text includes the performance of a *Genji kuyō*, conducted by Seikaku. This priest and his father Chōken are the religious institutional figures who appear individually to conduct *kuyō* rites in most versions of the *Genji kuyō tan*, including *Genji ipponkyō* and the *nō* play. The *jōruri* continues in this tradition, though Seikaku is accorded the added authority to judge the quality of *The Tale of Genji*. One significant element shared with the *nō* is the inclusion of the Ishiyama legend, but another is the recitation of *Genji monogatari hyōbyaku*. As it has often been discussed, the *hyōbyaku*, while closing with a reference to the sins of *kyōgen kigo*, is itself quite ornate in its lyricism.<sup>50</sup> Clearly the notion that *Genji* is sinful because of its form and content cannot be taken literally, and in fact the extended poem facilitates memorization of *Genji* chapter titles, thereby promoting an important aspect of the tale's popular dissemination. The *Genji hyōbyaku*, far from simply condemning the tale, lauds it as an effective vehicle to Buddhist understanding, and functions similarly to the reference to Bo Juyi's declaration of *kyōgen kigo* in *Genji ipponkyō*. This ultimate celebration of *Genji* is fundamental to *Genji kuyō tan*, though it is

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<sup>49</sup> This may also refer to the people on which the characters are based.

<sup>50</sup> Yuasa Yukiyo, "Genji monogatari hyōbyaku," in *Genji monogatari to Bukkyō: butten, koji, girei*, ed. Hinata Kazumasa (Tokyo: Seikansha, 2009), 235–236. In comparison to Chōken's other known *hyōbyaku* there is far less decorative language, perhaps precisely because the text admonishes the literary work of *Genji*. Komine, "'Hōei bungei' to shite no Genji kuyō – hyōbyaku kara monogatari e," *Genji monogatari to waka o manabu hito no tameni*, eds., Katō Mutsumi and Kojima Naoko (Kyoto: Sekai shinsōsha, 2007), 244.

not until the *jōruri* that its author becomes fully and unapologetically celebrated.

Though the *jōruri* is thus clearly marked as belonging to the *Genji kuyō* tradition, there are also several peculiarities. For instance, the hired thief in dog's clothing has little to do with *The Tale of Genji* except to highlight the competition between Sei's camp and that of Murasaki. The elaborate scene in hell of Genji being 'haunted' by the women he has wronged is also unique (in the *kuyō nō* play the audience is also told that he is in hell, but this is not dramatized). Clearly these additions are meant to make the most of the *jōruri* stage, functioning as *miseba*, or highlights of the play worthy of viewing. Parts of the Suma and Akashi chapters are also staged as if above the waters of Lake Biwa, using a technique repeated in later *jōruri* plays.<sup>51</sup> Though I do not elaborate on this any further here, *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō* clearly belongs to the *bunraku* theatrical tradition.<sup>52</sup>

In this *jōruri*, it is also notable that Shōshi and her entire salon are together for much of the narrative. In *Genji kuyō tan*, the archetypal *Genji* reader – first represented in *Genji ipponkyō* by the sponsoring nun – is notably female, but the *jōruri*'s united community of women further and more absolutely genders the tale's transmission. Though Murasaki writes in solitary confinement, the tale is precipitated, evaluated, and prayed for in the illustrious company of the Empress and her closest female attendants. The notion of a female-gendered audience to *Genji* is not new; after all, Takasue's daughter recounted in *Sarashina nikki* (*Sarashina Diary*, ca. 1059) that the tale was shared amongst female readers, and *Mumyōzōshi* (*Nameless Book*, ca. 1200)<sup>53</sup> depicts only women evaluating *Genji* and other tales. But it is also significant that the male priest Seikaku has such an integral part in the tale's assessment and its characters' salvation. Though

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<sup>51</sup> Hayashi Kumiko, "Jōruri no kabuki ka – Iwase bunkobon 'Genji kuyō' o megutte," *Jōruri no sekai*, ed. Sakaguchi Hiroyuki (Tokyo: Sekai shisōsha, 1992), 225–226.

<sup>52</sup> Features like the hired *ninja* thief and *michiyuki*-like listing of place names make the *jōruri* 'typically *kinsei* [early-modern].' Uesaka Nobuo, *Genji monogatari tensei: engekishi ni miru* (Tokyo: Yūbun shoin, 1987), 70–74.

<sup>53</sup> Attributed to the "daughter" of Fujiwara no Shunzei (Shunzei no musume, ca. 1170–1250), who was in fact his granddaughter.

scholars have importantly demonstrated that the *Genji* commentarial tradition was not limited to men,<sup>54</sup> the *jōruri* is one example of the popular depiction of *Genji* being critically assessed by a male authority figure while read predominantly by women.

More clearly deviating from earlier *Genji kuyō tan* is the prominent narrative position given to Sei Shōnagon. A tendency to speak of her together with Murasaki Shikibu was prevalent by 1703, when Andō Tameakira aggressively declared that they could not even be compared.<sup>55</sup> This comment was extremely influential for Meiji intellectual critics who maligned Sei in favor of Murasaki.<sup>56</sup> As it is evidenced, however, the assessment of Murasaki's work as superior was not unique to Tameakira, even if the effect of the *jōruri* is not to disparage *The Pillow Book*, since it too receives high accolades.<sup>57</sup> Murasaki herself is also depicted as giving no negative opinions – or any opinions, for that matter – regarding her so-called rival. In fact, she is clearly depicted as being forced into the competition by the Empress. And though she does express curiosity in *The Pillow Book*, it is her husband who arranges for its burglary. She does not stop his plans, but neither does she play a part in it, and instead is portrayed as obediently following her husband. Murasaki remains above the fray, and

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<sup>54</sup> For example, Christina Laffin examines the significant critical work of Nun Abutsu in *Rewriting Medieval Women: Politics, Personality and Literary Production in the Life of Nun Abutsu* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013).

<sup>55</sup> In *Shika shichiron* [Seven Essays on Murasaki] (1703): “It has long been the custom to speak of Murasaki and Sei Shōnagon as two of a kind. But Sei Shōnagon's talent is so limited and slight, and her intellectual pretensions so obvious that her work is often distasteful. These two women can hardly even be compared.” Andō Tameakira, *Shika shichiron*, in *Kinseishintō ron, zenki kokugaku, Nihon shisō taikai* 39, eds. Taira Shigemichi and Abe Akio (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), 422–41. Introduction and partial translation by Naito in *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 392–411.

<sup>56</sup> Discussed by Gergana Invanova, “Heian Writers as a Tool for Gender Training,” Lecture, Association for Asian Studies, March 27, 2015.

<sup>57</sup> In fact the early thirteenth-century *Mumyōzōshi*, mentioned above, concluded that while *The Pillow Book* is an excellent work, Sei was not a great poet, though it does not explicitly declare that Sei is inferior to Murasaki.

she is calm despite the chaos that surrounds her. This is just one attribute that adds to her image in this *jōruri* as a faultless woman.

### **Faultless Murasaki**

A major contribution to the image of Murasaki as an exemplary woman is found in the *jōruri*'s use of the Ishiyama temple legend. As recounted above, this story tells that Murasaki wrote her tale as mandated by the Empress and thanks to divine inspiration; this, then, allowed her to be cleared from the responsibility of writing a fictional tale of lascivious content, effectively negating any liability as an individual author who creates from her own genius and intention. The *nō* uses this effect but simultaneously has her commit the sin of failing to atone for writing the tale on the back of the *Great Wisdom Sutra*. In the *nō* it is also only after the *kuyō* recitation declares that Murasaki is to be saved that we are told she was in fact the Bodhisattva Kannon. Hence, as the narrative order is concerned, she has to be saved before she is revealed to be divine. In the *jōruri*, however, Murasaki Shikibu is not made to take any misstep, and she needs not be saved at all. This depiction of the *Genji* author as being completely free of culpability – a characterization that became prominent in popular culture at the time – is the most significant development of the *Genji kuyō tan* found in the *jōruri*.

Instead of Murasaki Shikibu, in the *jōruri* it is the character Genji who has sinned. This assessment of the character as morally depraved is seen much earlier outside of *Genji kuyō tan*.<sup>58</sup> In the *jōruri*, Genji is alone in his sins, and does not share them with the author.<sup>59</sup> Though he and the other characters are censured, the tale itself is not deemed problematic; thus, there is no prolonged discussion of it containing *mōgo* or *kigo*, as was the case in earlier *Genji kuyō* texts. In the *jōruri* the performed *kuyō* recitation ends with the words: “Help the Shining Genji’s next life”<sup>60</sup> – and

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<sup>58</sup> One example is *Mumyōzōshi* (*Nameless Book*, ca. 1200).

<sup>59</sup> As Shirakata Masaru phrased it, “when the sin is shifted to Genji, that of the author is forgotten” (*Genji monogatari to jōruri*, 184).

<sup>60</sup> *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō*, 34. Use of the phrase *Hikaru Genji* [Shining or Radiant Genji] does not necessarily point to the character, since the tale at the time was sometimes identified as *Hikaru Genji no monoagatar* [Tale of the Shining Genji]. Here the context makes clear that the phrase applies to the character.

the recitation is meant for the character Genji, not the *tale Genji*. While *Genji kuyō* texts had before shown a *Murasaki Shikibu daraku ron*, here it is quite literally a *Hikaru Genji daraku ron* instead.

In the *jōruri*, Murasaki Shikibu is not ‘in hell’ but rather is alive and well. Significantly, in earlier *Genji kuyō tan*, it is always the *Genji* author’s spirit that is depicted as suffering. In contrast to her female Heian contemporaries – particularly Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu, popularized in medieval legends as leading degenerate ends to their lives – when Murasaki is damned, it is after her death.<sup>61</sup> But in the *Genji kuyō jōruri*, she is seen as not even deserving this after-life of destitution. Moreover, Murasaki is not an incarnated deity, as was the case in the *nō* play. Though she may have been assisted by superhuman powers in writing the tale, she herself is still very much human. She is simultaneously greatly idealized; this is in keeping with the popular image of the *Genji* author in texts such as *jokunsho* (instructional books for women) and *ōraimono* (primers) for women of the time, wherein she is predominantly depicted not just as an extraordinary writer, but also a humble, chaste, and beautiful woman, venerated in both Confucian and Buddhist contexts.<sup>62</sup> While within *Genji kuyō tan* the image of a faultless *Genji* author stands out, the *jōruri*’s textual and visual depiction of Murasaki Shikibu could easily be found in such popular texts for women of the time. The combination of Murasaki’s image as an exemplary woman and the *Genji kuyō tan* tradition is significant because of the origins of the latter in the Murasaki-in-hell narrative. The *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō*’s characterization of

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<sup>61</sup> On the various apocryphal stories of notable Heian women including Murasaki Shikibu in various *Genji kuyō*, see R. Keller Kimbrough, *Preachers, Poets, Women, and the Way: Izumi Shikibu and the Buddhist Literature of Medieval Japan* (Ann Arbor, MI: Centre for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan): 1–27.

<sup>62</sup> For a discussion on Murasaki Shikibu in Early Modern popular texts for women, see Satoko Naito, “Beyond *The Tale of Genji*,” *Early Modern Women* 9/1 (2014): 47–78. Outside of Japanese literature, the construction of a humble, non-ambitious and quiet female writer is perhaps most famously seen with Jane Austen, frequently referred to as the unmarried ‘Aunt Jane’ who cared little for money or fame, whose image and letters were “whitewashed.” Emily Auerbach, *Searching for Jane Austen* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 5.

Murasaki Shikibu is unrecognizable when compared to that found in *Genji ipponkyō*. What began as Buddhist apologia for *The Tale of Genji* that had the *Genji* author paying penance for writing fiction of amorous content is eclipsed by the new popular narrative that greatly idealizes the figure of Murasaki Shikibu.

#### **From Purifying *Genji* to Celebrating Murasaki's Name**

More than four centuries separate *Genji ipponkyō* and *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō* and the entirety of *Genji kuyō tan* covers an even longer period of history.<sup>63</sup> As discussed above, *Genji kuyō tan* and the Murasaki-in-hell narrative first emerged, in the form of *Genji ipponkyō*, as Buddhist apologia for the tale during a time when prose fiction was regarded with suspicion by the religiously devout. As Ikegami Jun'ichi put it, particularly during the time of the Genpei Wars (1180–85), it was simply necessary for Murasaki Shikibu to fall into hell.<sup>64</sup> And though there is evidence that the nun depicted in *Genji ipponkyō* was the wife of Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114–1204), it was also written a generation before he made his famous judgment in 1193 that all poets must know *The Tale of Genji*.<sup>65</sup> This declaration was instrumental in the initial canonization of the tale and came to represent the most accepted manner of *Genji* consumption and evaluation which identified it as a handbook for *waka* poetry composition.<sup>66</sup> But *Genji ipponkyō*, appearing before Shunzei's proclamation, makes no

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<sup>63</sup> Discussion of *Genji kuyō* can be extended into the modern period, most notably with Mishima Yukio's modern *nō* play "*Genji kuyō*" and Hashimoto Osamu's response to it. Tamura Keiko, "Futatsu no 'Genji kuyō'—Mishima Yukio no yōkyoku to Hashimoto Osamu no essei o megutte," *Kindai bungaku ni okeru Genji monogatari, Kōza Genji monogatari kenkyū* 6, ed. Chiba Shunji (Tokyo: Ōfū, 2007): 286–310.

<sup>64</sup> Ikegami Jun'ichi, "Genji monogatari no kyōkaiteki hyōron," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 14/1 (1969), 22.

<sup>65</sup> Translation by Gian Piero Persiani and Lewis Cook, *Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to 1600*, ed. Haruo Shirane (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 603.

<sup>66</sup> On the association of *Genji* with *waka* poetry composition, see *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 158–176. For an overview on the history of *Genji* reception, see Shirane, "*The Tale of Genji* and the Dynamics of Cultural Production: Canonization and Popularization," in *Envisioning The Tale of Genji*: 1–46.

such connection and instead declares every aspect of *Genji*, from its composition to its consumption, to be problematic. It thus relies on the authority of Bo Juyi and of the *Lotus Sutra* to declare the tale a means to Buddhist enlightenment. Soon after, however, the text was on its way to becoming a standard poetic resource, and anxieties regarding the consumption of the tale became less pronounced. All the while, the narrative of Murasaki-in-hell continued to spread, showing a persistent ambivalence with the text as well as a fascination with its author's fate and a pervasive Buddhist notion that women were a root of sin and suffering.

By the time the *nō* play was first performed in the mid-fifteenth century, Shunzei's pronouncement had long been taken for granted, and *The Tale of Genji* had continued to gain reputation as a singular text. It was prized not just for poetry composition, but was popular amongst warrior lords as cultural commodity connecting them to the imperial court of the Heian period. Production of *Genji* commentaries that included identification of literary and historical references as well as narrative interpretation was in full swing, and this tradition clearly deemed the tale as worthwhile of serious study.<sup>67</sup> Such scholarship had also suggested the possibility that *Genji* was to be read didactically, and indeed in *Genji kuyō nō* we are told that the intention of the author – who in fact was Bodhisattva Kannon – was precisely to those ends.

As times changed and the *kuyō* narrative developed further, the sins and the sinners continued to be transformed, suggesting decreased anxieties and expectations regarding *The Tale of Genji*. It is not surprising that of the *Genji kuyō tan* texts discussed here, the *jōruri* shows the least resistance to fictional tales like *Genji*. Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century and the advent of mass print publication, there was a surge of old and new literature, particularly in Edo, Kyoto and Osaka. Anxieties about writing – let alone reading – fiction, comparable to medieval ideas of *kigo*, were hardly widespread. The *Genji* also became available for the first time to a wider audience thanks to print technology. Greatly influential was *Genji monogatari Kogetsushō* [The Tale of Genji Moon on the Lake Commentary] (1673)<sup>68</sup> by Kitamura Kigin (1624–1725), published only

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<sup>67</sup> Most noteworthy was the *Kakaishō*, but contemporaneous to the *Genji kuyō nō* was Ichijō Kanera's (or Kaneyoshi, 1402–1481) *Kachō yosei* [Intimations of Flowers and Birds] of 1472.

<sup>68</sup> Harper, *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 368–370.

three years before *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō*, it allowed access to the entirety of the original tale to a vastly larger audience.

By the early modern period, the tale was comfortably on its way to uncontested canonization. To be sure, there were some detractors, like Sinologists who found the tale unfit for general women's readership.<sup>69</sup> Some scholars of *kokugaku* (nativist learning) also continued to find fault with elements of the tale that seemed to denigrate the imperial throne.<sup>70</sup> In the late seventeenth century when the *jōruri* was first performed, we had yet to see some of the most influential arguments defending the tale such as that of *mono no aware* by Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801).<sup>71</sup> But Norinaga clearly came after a long tradition of *Genji* scholars who found the tale both in need of defense and worthy of celebration. And as discussed, the Ishiyama temple legend had long claimed that *Genji* was created under imperial sanctions and Buddhist auspices, and the story became even more widely repeated after the publication of *Kogetsushō*. By this time *The Tale of Genji* was also being widely disseminated in various other deconstructed and reconstructed forms; the list of chapter titles and select poems were frequently included not only in *Genji* digests but also in instructional texts for women. The tale was also 'rewritten' in several ways, most famously in

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<sup>69</sup> P. F. Kornicki, "Unsuitable Books for Women? *Genji Monogatari* and *Ise Monogatari* in Late Seventeenth-Century Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 60/2 (2005): 147–193.

<sup>70</sup> *Mono no magire*, or *onkoto* – the 'incident' in which Genji and Fujitsubo's affair results in their offspring ascending the imperial throne. Andō Tameakira's *Shika shichiron*, mentioned above, transforms this sequence of events, previously deemed the most problematic component of *The Tale of Genji*, into its most important plot development and lesson. Kobayashi Masaaki, "Genji monogatari no bunka genshō – kyōgeki suru taishūka to kenryoku sayō," *Genji monogatari kenkyū no genzai, Kōza Genji monogatari kenkyū 1*, ed. Ii Haruki (Tokyo: Ōfū, 2006), 73.

<sup>71</sup> Norinaga's *Genji monogatari Tama no ogushi* [The Tale of Genji, A Little Jeweled Comb] (1799) reads the tale as a fully literary text, and one that should be appreciated primarily for its portrayal of human feelings. He was championed in the Meiji period as having modern sensitivities, most famously by Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859–1935) in *Shōsetsu shinzui* [Essence of the Novel] (1885–1886). See introduction and translation by Harper, *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 411–506.

a loose parody by Ihara Saikaku in *Kōshoku ichidai otoko* [Life of a Sensuous Man] (1682).<sup>72</sup> In short, though it did have detractors, the *Genji* was being widely consumed in one way or another.<sup>73</sup> Murasaki Shikibu was not considered to be in need of saving, nor was the tale in any true need of validation.

*Genji kuyō tan* is at its core a discourse on the justification of *The Tale of Genji* and its place within Japanese literature, and the study of *Genji kuyō* texts, is crucial to understanding the complex reception history of *Genji* and its canonical status. This paper has given an overview of *Genji kuyō tan* with a focus on the often-overlooked text *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō* to highlight the changes in the presentations of Murasaki Shikibu. *Genji kuyō tan* is said to have been born of the separation between the *Genji* reader and its author, and indeed already by the time of *Genji ipponkyō* new readers of *The Tale of Genji* no longer lived in the world of Murasaki Shikibu. Clearly with each passing generation the potential and actual *Genji* reader, as opposed to Murasaki's contemporary audience, is separated even further from the author – temporally, linguistically, and otherwise. But within *Genji kuyō tan* it is only after *Genji ipponkyō* that Murasaki Shikibu is beatified and truly separated from her readers. The *Genji kuyō* texts discussed here show crucial developments in the relationship between the *Genji* reader and writer and the *daraku ron* narrative. Early on, readers are exonerated of the 'sin of reading *Genji*' and are no longer made to pay penance alongside the *Genji* author. The *Genji kuyō nō* suggests that readers can be further freed of the responsibility of saving Murasaki Shikibu.

Finally in the *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō*, the *Genji* author is herself completely absolved of all sins to do with writing *Genji*. This transformation is particularly crucial considering that the *Murasaki Shikibu daraku ron* was from inception concerned with the author's ultimate salvation. And yet, the initial, even if provisional, presentation of the *Genji* author as committing some sort of sin is a significant part of much of *Genji*

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<sup>72</sup> Haruo Shirane, ed., *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology, 1600–1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 42–57.

<sup>73</sup> For a discussion on various forms of *Genji* consumption in the Edo period, see *Genji monogatari to Edo bunka: Kashika sareru gazoku*, eds. Kojima Naoko, Komine Kazuaki, and Watanabe Kenji (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2008).

*kuyō tan*'s narratives. It is with the *jōruri* that Murasaki Shikibu is cleared of all wrongdoings and made to be an exemplary woman and writer, one that deserves as much praise and canonical status as her tale. In fact, the compulsion to apologize for the Shining Genji's actions as illustrated in the *jōruri* – that is to say, the persistent need to defend the prose content of *The Tale of Genji* – suggests that Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*'s author, is an icon that transcends her tale.