

Chivalry in Shambles

Fabricating Manhood amid Architectural Disrepair

How should we understand the relationship between gendered intimacy, loss, and built-space? Here, I read the “Yūgao” chapter to examine how Genji’s tragic tryst with Yūgao in a rundown residence opens the door for masculinity to be questioned and queer relations to take center stage. Conventional chivalry collapses at this site. With *chivalry*, I shorthand masculine ideals typified by mid-Heian literary tropes of courtiers’ expansive mobility, industrious “sexual appetite” (*irogonomi*), and material or martial wherewithal to support or defend women and property, all of which are destabilized in *Genji*. The residence’s disintegrating borders allow Genji to be emasculated as supernatural forces infiltrate the estate. This drama unfolds after Genji ushers Yūgao, his new love interest, to a deserted mansion, hoping to seduce her. He gets to play tough in this eerie estate, but its disrepair invites violence that fractures Genji’s facade. Genji has been favoring Yūgao over Rokujō, and on dreaming of Rokujō, a spirit seeps through rafters to murder Yūgao. Genji fails as protector and is left defeated in a heap on the floor. But here, his faithful manservant Koremitsu swoops to the rescue, literally lending a shoulder to cry on as Genji attempts to redress emasculation and rebuild his shattered self-regard in the wake of losing both his pride and his woman.

In this chapter, I highlight scenes where the assertion of hegemonic masculinity falters alongside a host of homosocial affinities and homoerotic undertones that sustain it. I examine the slide between these, informed by Eve Sedgwick’s account of male homosociality, which posits “the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual.”¹ Male intimacy in “Yūgao” becomes less about erotic pleasure and more about the male bonding needed to preserve the gap between rehearsing an idealized erotic masculinity and keeping certain intimate relations at bay.

I argue that Genji's relationships with Yūgao, Rokujō, and Koremitsu show how the breaching of architectural boundaries can reshape intimate relations along queer lines. The dilapidated site hosts a spirit possession that de-eroticizes the female object of desire, as this encounter repulses Genji to fuel forms of caretaking and susceptibility left unrealized elsewhere. I demonstrate that the porosity of this site sets a straightforward romantic vector adrift, skimming the vicinity of homo-erotic desire but without lodging there. This departure from ideal courtship stokes a form of male-male intimacy forged in the rubble of failed chivalry and fatal loss. Accentuating the phenomenological facets of this embodied experience of failure, I read this scenario as queer insofar as characters grapple with a disabling, disorienting contingency in veering between the materialities of vengeful apparition and abject corpse.

SETTING THE SCENE: KOREMITSU'S SERVICE AND THE EXPANSION OF EERIE SPACE

We learn early in the "Yūgao" chapter that "there wasn't a single person, even those catching merely a glimpse of him, whose heart didn't pause on Genji. Seeing this radiance that surrounded him, men of every station, even down to the rough-hewn woodcutter, wished, *I'd love to have my dearest daughter attend him*; while there wasn't a man who, despite being lowly, didn't keenly consider sending a sister he thought promising into Genji's service."² This detail reminds us of Genji's irresistible charms—notably by emphasizing men's desire rather than that of the potentially interested daughters or sisters themselves. This rhetorical twist highlights a triangular framework wherein Genji's beauty rouses men to secure connections to him through their female kin. That the men fall along a spectrum of status positions underscores the breadth of Genji's allure.

Besides giving a sense of the erotic (and inevitably political) desires men have for Genji, this description also anticipates his deepening homosocial relationship with Koremitsu. Koremitsu serves as faithful retainer and intermediary for Genji's affairs with women. Following orders, Koremitsu reconnoiters Yūgao's residence through a fence and then "report[s] in wonderful detail what he'd ascertained": "I really can't fathom who that woman is. I certainly get the impression she's doing her best to keep hidden from everyone. Her women pass humdrum days. . . . Although I could only faintly make it out, her face indeed suggests she's quite alluring."³ Koremitsu thus paves the way for Genji's exploits with this reputed beauty.⁴

Koremitsu's desire to please Genji mounts: "Koremitsu smiled as he talked on, noticing how very eager Genji was to know more. 'My own romancing of a woman there proceeds as planned, and I've left no nook unmapped in scouting the residence. They think their secret so well hidden, but . . .'"⁵ In courting one of the women of Yūgao's house, Koremitsu subordinates heterosexual desires he

might have to his desire to please his lord. Here, Gustav Heldt's insights regarding the fluidity of *tomo* (friend/follower) and *kimi* (milord/my love) in Heian court poetry seem apt: "Desire in such cases is the expression not so much of a sexed identity as of a relationship determined by power differentials."⁶

Koremitsu marshals his newfound knowledge to titillate Genji. Koremitsu's tone both solicits affirmation ("Please commend my courtship skills!") and is haughty, with a misogynistic tinge ("Those ladies think they're so clever!"), as he tries to impress and enthrall Genji with a display of juicy knowledge. The intelligence Koremitsu gathers on the women coaxes Genji closer to him. Genji asks to "peek through that fence" himself, determined to gain firsthand the knowledge his retainer has conveyed verbally.⁷ Koremitsu thus transfers Genji into the dominant position of courting Yūgao, first visually, and then physically, by smuggling him into her residence: "Pondering the condition of where Yūgao was living for the time being at least, Genji thought, 'She must represent exactly that lower grade Tō no Chūjō derided. What if within it were an unexpectedly enticing find?' Koremitsu, who hated the thought of veering even slightly from his lord's wishes, mustered his own sweeping courtship knowledge, arriving after much roving back and forth at a plan to usher Genji into the house."⁸

Yūgao's "lower grade" intrigues Genji and suggests that she would be delighted to have him woo her. Notably, this detail, based on the disrepair of Yūgao's dwelling, cites the "Rainy Night Discussion" from two chapters earlier in the narrative. In that conversation, Tō no Chūjō explained, "The girl unknown to the world, the surprisingly alluring one shut away alone in some rundown house overgrown with creepers, this is exactly who's boundlessly intriguing. *How did she ever end up that way?* you wonder, since it strays from expectation, captivating you with curiosity."⁹ Tō no Chūjō himself had in fact previously considered venturing a relationship with Yūgao.

Considering the "Rainy Night Discussion," we should remember that this "elegant locker-room discussion on the varieties of women available to young aristocrats," in Norma Field's terms, itself represents a primal scene of male homosocial exchange whose heterosexual eroticism stirs homoerotic desires among the men: "Rain had been dribbling the whole humdrum day, showering softly into evening. . . . Over supple white gowns, Genji wore only a dress cloak, donned with a casual disregard, its cord slightly unfastened, and his lamplit silhouette as he reclined there against a pillar was so sublime that one wanted to see him as a woman."¹⁰

A discovery I made in translating this passage and comparing Seidensticker's rendering to the original Japanese merits mention here. To revisit a point I argued in chapter 1, Seidensticker's version actively avoids homoerotic language and even fabricates a means to deflect the suggestiveness of the original. Seidensticker appears to have redacted details that—from the vantage of the 1970s—were deemed too queer to include. He writes, "Because it was very warm, [Genji] loosened his dress, and they thought him even handsomer. . . . The Minister came

to pay his respects. Seeing Genji thus in dishabille, he made his greetings from behind a conveniently placed curtain.”¹¹ “Conveniently placed” indeed: there is no mention of “supple white gowns” (*shiroki ongoromodomo no nayoyokanarau ni*), a “lamplit silhouette of Genji reclining against a pillar” (*sohifushitamaheru onhokage*), or crucially, “that one wanted to see Genji as a woman” (*onna nite mitatematsuramahoshi*). These phrases are remarkable for the selectivity of their omission. Part of the weirdness here comes from the odd interposition of summer warmth as a rationale for Genji’s seductive appearance; it comes out of nowhere in Seidensticker’s rendition. This recourse to hot weather dampens the scene’s eroticism by reducing Genji’s alluring exposure to mere pragmatism (the heat is to blame for his appearance!), making desire between men less discernable and scuttling the queer potential liable to surface when articulating textural particularities of clothing and gesture.

In short, Seidensticker drains the eroticism from this charged scene of homosocial exchange. Stranger still is the interposition of a “conveniently placed curtain” to cordon from view a “Genji thus in dishabille.” Indeed, this curtain’s appearance is utterly too convenient; I find no trace of it in the original Japanese of this passage. The jarring recourse to French here—perhaps to cushion the scenario’s risqué tenor with foreign flourish?—flags an uncharacteristic excess in his translation. Consequently, the curtain appears out of thin air as an overcompensating architectural concoction designed to neutralize the presence of homoerotic arousal by shielding protagonists and hapless readers from Genji’s wiles. In this regard, Seidensticker’s Cold War translation reads as phobic toward the Heian text’s queer tenor.

The androgyny foregrounded by the phrase “wanted to see him as a woman” is complex, partly because it lacks an explicit subject, making it possible to translate the desiring entity as a general *one* or as the more localizably concrete *they*, referring to the men sharing the steamy chamber with Genji as they gossip. Rajyashree Pandey further enhances our sense of this scene’s implications:

The fact that the text does not specify whether it is the viewer who wishes to be a woman or whether he or she wishes to see Genji as a woman points to the fluid and interchangeable nature of “male” and “female” here. The scenes in which the men around Genji express their erotic feelings are perhaps best read not as manifestations of homosexual desire but rather as culturally available performance stances in which the tropes of *otoko* and *onna* . . . could be playfully manipulated by the male protagonists of the text, irrespective of their physical sexual attributes.¹²

Pandey’s insight disallows an oversimplified recourse to gender categories as indicative of sexual preference. She even argues that the performative nature of desire itself makes locating its bodily origin or destination futile.

Meanwhile, the provocative phrase nonetheless highlights an erotic potential infusing homosocial competition between the men as they vie for varied distinctive

ladies. Paul Schalow observes that “with the rainy-night scene, the friends embark on a sexual rivalry that dominates the next several chapters of the tale, covering the entire span of their youth.”¹³ Tsutamura Tomohiko stresses further that even though Genji and Tō no Chūjō are brothers-in-law, their true bond comes from their exchanges of women; Yūgao’s purpose in the narrative is to serve as shared property binding Genji to Tō no Chūjō.¹⁴ And for Dote Shiori, that Genji learns of Yūgao’s death before Tō no Chūjō signals Genji’s growing dominance over him.¹⁵

But the status gap between male hunter and female prey attests to Genji’s opportunism. This detail betrays the fragility of Genji’s masculinity through his disinterest in more formidable, securely situated women. For his part, Koremitsu now moves to phase two of his oblique form of courting Genji: using his “own sweeping courtship knowledge” (*onore mo kumanaki sukigokoro nite*) to convey Genji closer to the secluded woman Genji hopes will exceed his modest expectations. Interactions like these help us problematize an idealized chivalry flaunted in texts like *Tales of Ise*, which *Genji* inherits and retools. By reducing Genji’s sphere of movement, magnifying his dependence on other men, and highlighting his inability to seduce securely and successfully, the tale undercuts literary conventions of male heroism.

The secrecy suffusing this narrative juncture helps build drama by stressing status boundaries that might be blurred as the men conspire: “Unable to deduce for sure that this woman was who he sought, Genji didn’t announce his own name, going to terrible lengths to play down his true station and pursuing her with such exceptional vigor that Koremitsu saw that Genji would surely be thought foolish, and thus gave up his own horse, dismounting to walk alongside his lord. Koremitsu lamented, ‘How perilous it would be the moment they discovered the great lover making his way contemptibly on foot!’”¹⁶

Genji’s disguise conceals standard markers of rank to situate him more on par with the vassal shadowing him. Within this pocket of secrecy, the men’s bond tightens, and Koremitsu garners a space to offer his horse and walk beside Genji, not out of mere duty but out of an admiration for Genji’s “exceptional vigor” (*rein-arazu oritachi arikitamahu ha*). Koremitsu’s capacity to identify with “the great lover” and indispose himself to augment Genji’s appearance in women’s eyes suggests a developing intimacy between the men premised on, yet not reducible to, servitude alone. For instance, Furuta Masayuki notes that because of Koremitsu’s link to Genji through Koremitsu’s mother, who nursed both boys, another kind of familial relation can achieve glory surreptitiously, via Koremitsu’s efforts to assist Genji’s imperial ambitions.¹⁷

This intimacy, manifested through Koremitsu’s efforts to assist Genji’s infiltration, allows Genji to carry Yūgao off to the deserted spot where his manhood will be tested. Before Genji arrives there, however, he is taxed in a more trivial fashion. He makes a preliminary visit to Yūgao’s residence, where, “On the eighth month’s

fifteenth night, Genji was amazed by the appearance of a dwelling the likes of which he'd never seen, as boundless moonlight came flooding through countless crevices in the plank-built house, filling every cranny."¹⁸ The structural porosity of the shabby house allows not just excess light but also excess sound inside:

Yūgao felt quite mortified by the incessant clamor of folks rising and leaving to carry out their pathetic daily business. One reckons the place's impression would surely have made someone aiming to display a fancy countenance want to melt right into the earth. Louder than thunder roared the deafening clunk, clunk of a treadle mortar whose sound seemed to pound their pillow until [Genji] realized this was exactly what "shameless racket" meant. Clueless as to what was making the echoes entering his ears, he merely heard a baffling, loathsome noisemaking; it was nothing but a nonstop raucous muddle.

The sound of snowy robes being drubbed at the fulling block drifting faintly toward him from this way and that, the cries of geese in flight—these joined an assortment of surrounding sounds to amass a poignancy difficult to subdue. . . . The hiss and hum of myriad insects intermixed. And for Genji, who had only rarely heard even a cricket in the wall, this mishmash of singing grazing his ears nearly made for a wholly peculiar sensation. Even as he pondered how [Yūgao] might take more care to boost her outer appeal a tad, Genji still desired to see her unconstrained. "Come along, let's go spend the night cozily at some nearby spot. Meeting only here like this has really taken its toll."¹⁹

In this radically permeable space, Genji is simultaneously fascinated and annoyed by the "bizarre novelty" of its cacophony. Genji is vexed by the noise because of its variety and volume, but also because of its dislocating potency. He cannot discern the referent for some sounds; others pummel identifiably at his pillow block; still others percolate, dispersed, in the sky or garden, echoing toward him from all sides. This onslaught makes Genji feel exposed and on edge. He lacks the means to seal the physical and aural membrane of the house or to manage the "incessant clamor" of those coarse neighbors going about "their pathetic daily business." This unnerving excess provokes Genji to seek less distracting, less constricting surroundings, wherein he could orient himself more stably to woo Yūgao. The vexing noise around him makes Genji take a more forceful tone with his female associate. In analyzing Genji's conversations with female characters, Murayama Maki observes that with the middle-ranking Yūgao, Genji uses the command form unusually often.²⁰ This suggests that his invitation to spend the night elsewhere reads as an order aimed at someone he views as subordinate, marking the affair as initially empowering for Genji.

However, Genji gets far more than he bargained for in switching to a far less bustling, less constrained locale. The new site is similarly porous, and its atmosphere grows murky. Genji tries to play brave despite his fragile constitution:

While Genji coaxed however he could, [Yūgao] shrunk from dashing off into the unknown beneath a dithering moon, when, without warning, it was concealed

by clouds to show a stunning daybreak sky. Before daylight exposed his exploits, Genji rushed out as usual, breezily scooping Yūgao into the carriage, and Ukon also came aboard.

They reached a certain estate not far away, and, waiting for the attendant to emerge, they peered up at the dismal ferns sprawling from the decrepit gate's eaves, immeasurably dark with trees. With fog thick and dew coating all, Genji's sleeves got utterly soaked merely lifting the carriage blinds. "I've never encountered anything of this sort before," he said. "It's really something that frays the nerves, huh?" . . .

Exceedingly untamed, the abandoned garden spanned far into the distance, its ancient woods looming with a sinister air. The shrubbery close by lacked any particular appeal, and mounds of water weeds had clogged the lake, making the place all the more creepy indeed. There was what looked like a shed of some sort where someone might have lived, but that sat off at a remove behind the main house. "What an eerie place! But all the same, let's see those demons and such slip past *me*," Genji said.²¹

According to Norma Field, "From Genji's point of view, the Yūgao episode represents an excursion into foreign territory—foreign . . . for its unaristocratic realism as well as for its supernaturalism."²² Similarly, Nakanishi Susumu notes that the eeriness of the mansion's depiction stems from Chinese references deployed to thicken the setting's mystique.²³ The desolation of the spot Genji has chosen for his tryst with Yūgao arouses as it unnerves, partially because the scene's allusions to Chinese literature—such as the moor-like expanse, where "mounds of water weeds had clogged the lake"—intensify an *irogonomi*, or "desire for ladies," who are reminiscent of Chinese beauties.²⁴ Various images also interlock to create a sense of a harrowing expanse of space, new to both Genji and the reader: the "abandoned garden" that "spanned far into the distance" and the "ancient woods looming with a sinister air" confront Genji with his smallness and stymied movement. Furthermore, as Ōta Yōsuke observes, descriptions of the moon throughout "Yūgao" depart markedly from other instances of lunar imagery seen in both *Genji* and other Heian literary sources in their consistently ominous associations.²⁵ Even as Genji puts on a show of strength in lifting Yūgao into the carriage and scoffing at demons' threats, travel to this place delivers the first truly disconcerting blow to Genji's gleaming notion of himself.

GHOSTLY INFILTRATION AND THE SCRAMBLE TO SOUND MANLY

More significant than its sinister ambience is how the locale determines gendered action as a wraith surfaces. The setting's remoteness, "unkempt and deserted garden," and "ruinous eaves" underscore a spatial permeability and lack of safety. While the setting holds promise for Genji in implying heightened privacy and the increased sexual availability of the woman he is courting, its permeability allows for disorientating infiltrations that disrupt the heterosexual masculinity he's eager to enact:

Genji passed the day with [Yūgao], chiding her one moment, then sweet-talking her the next. Gazing at the indescribably tranquil sunset sky, Genji recalled how dreadful she found the house's murky depths, so he raised the outer blinds and snuggled down beside her. They traded glances in the evening glow, and in a setting like this, Yūgao was surprised to find that despite her misgivings, she had forgotten her countless troubles; she became quite alluring as her attitude toward Genji thawed a bit. She spent all day lying there fixed beside him, seeming heartrendingly girlish in being so frightened by everything. He lowered the lattice shutters early and had the lamp brought in, complaining, "It's too cruel to bear. We've grown past our lingering reservations, yet at heart some hindrance still remains for you."

"What an uncanny love this is! And on Rokujō Avenue, how warped her feelings must be. Though it's tough to admit, I comprehend the ill will she no doubt harbors toward me," Genji mused, his concerns focused foremost on her. . . .

Late that evening, when Genji had fallen slightly asleep, a gorgeous woman seated herself at his pillow. "I view you as so marvelous, yet you don't think to visit me, conveying a lackluster creature here like this and showering your affections on her. It's so stunningly callous of you . . ." she said, and Genji saw her start shaking the woman beside him awake. Jolted, Genji woke up, feeling assaulted by some unseen presence. The lamp's flame had died. Rattled, he drew his sword, laid it down, then woke up Ukon. She came to him, looking like she also had felt frightened.

"Go wake the bridgeway guard and tell him to bring a hand torch," Genji ordered.

"But how can I possibly manage, in the dark?"

"Oh, don't be such a baby!" Genji chuckled and clapped his hands. Ominous echoes answered, like voices in a mountain haunt.

No one could hear him, so they weren't coming. Meanwhile, Yūgao was shuddering violently, and one wondered what on earth should be done. She was now drenched in sweat and seemed comatose.

"How pitiful! So frail, and prone to spend her days just staring up at the sky," Genji thought.

"I'll go and wake [the guard] myself. Getting just these hollow mountain echoes for my clapping is too galling. Wait right here with her, close," he said, dragging Ukon over. Then he went to the Western double doors and pushed them open to find that the bridgeway's light, too, had gone out. . . . The steward's son rose to heed his call.

"Fetch a hand torch. And tell my footman, 'Twang your bowstring and keep shouting without pause.' . . . How could you drop your guard to fall asleep in such an isolated place? I thought Koremitsu had come, but . . ."

"He was in your employ, but you issued no orders so he went off, saying that he would return to get you at dawn."

Genji went back in and felt his way to Yūgao. She was still laid out as before, with Ukon lying there face down beside her.

"What's all this about? Your witless cowardice is such a joke! In deserted places, things like foxes and such will try startling people with eerie little frights. I bet that's all this is. Plus with the likes of me around, there's no chance we'll be intimidated by anything like that," he said, pulling Ukon upright.

"I was only lying down like that because I feel so awfully unwell and totally perturbed. My lady must be scared senseless all the more," she said.

Genji replied, "Sure, but why should she be?" and reached to touch Yūgao. She wasn't breathing. He shook her, but she just swayed, limp and clearly unconscious; feeling helplessly bereft, he reckoned, "As terribly childlike as she is, a spirit must've stolen her away."

Someone brought the hand torch. Ukon appeared in no condition at all to move, so Genji drew up the nearby standing curtain. "Bring it closer!" he ordered. These circumstances being unprecedented, the servant couldn't manage to approach Genji any closer, so he hesitated, stopping short of even crossing the room's threshold.

"Bring it closer already! Save the ceremony for another occasion," Genji barked. Once the torch was brought closer, he saw, right there at her pillow, the very same woman whose face he'd seen in his dream, her phantom there dimly before vanishing in a blink. *One hears of things like this in those old tales*, he thought, but despite all his astonished terror, he was so frantic wondering firstly, *What has befallen Yūgao?* that he forgot all dignity and lay beside her.

He yelped, trying to rouse her, but she grew colder by the second and had long since breathed her last. He was speechless. There was no one he could trust in to tell him how to handle this ordeal. He should have remembered that this was the type of time when a monk was precisely what one required, but despite wanting to be so tough he had a child's heart, and watching Yūgao die before his eyes devastated him. He clung to her, pleading, "Oh my love, come back to life! Don't do such a cruel thing to me!" But the body had gone cold and now became loathsome to touch.

Whereas "How dreadful!" was all Ukon could think before, all her fear and trembling gave way to a horrible frenzy of wailing. Recalling the example of a demon that had once accosted some minister in the palace's Southern Hall, Genji summoned courage to speak up.

"No, this can't be. She can't possibly have just perished like that. How blaring a voice sounds at night! Hush up!" he scolded Ukon, the whirlwind events having left him in an irksome stupor. He summoned the footman, saying, "Send my retainer straightaway to where Lord Koremitsu is lodging and tell him he must hurry back here at once."²⁶

A phenomenological method becomes valuable here, because much of this scene's drama hinges on how spatial borders are manipulated to modulate physical intimacy and sensory perception jointly. Just before disaster strikes, we notice Genji raising the blinds to allow more sunset light into the room and thus comfort the timid Yūgao. Soon afterward, he lowers the lattice shutters and lights a lamp, to set the mood and to comfort himself through sex with her. This oscillation of opening and closing the room's outer wall echoes the alternating reproach and flattery of Genji's flirtation. More importantly, the actions indicate a wavering structural border that portends invasion.

To control the permeability of the room is for Genji to exercise a masculine authority premised on a capacity to police borders. Genji disposes those borders to his advantage, first for seduction and later to speed the arrival of help, when, in a claustrophobic panic, he "went to the Western double doors and pushed them open" and "drew up the nearby standing curtain." Having insisted

on greater privacy and dismissed trusty men like Koremitsu, Genji himself must now perform the frantic labor of opening doors and crying for help. Indeed, as Genji yells, “Bring [the torch] closer!” we find that “the servant couldn’t manage to approach Genji any closer, so he hesitated, stopping short of even crossing the room’s threshold,” which suggests that Genji has overdone it with his efforts to commandeer the space. The situation deteriorates because he can no longer reliably calibrate the proximity of bodies to desired effect. Men like Koremitsu and the unnamed servant might have stood guard, but their closeness to Genji’s bedchamber would have also deprived him of a fuller impression of authority. The site’s forbidding character encouraged delusions of grandeur—so long as the perimeter was secured.

But the trespassing spirit perforates that delusional bravery. Although Genji dreams of Rokujō just beforehand, the narrative does not specify the spirit’s identity; only Genji witnesses it, and no mediums or exorcists extract its name. This ambiguity distinguishes Yūgao’s spirit possession from all others in the tale, exemplifying a queerness in its unnerving indeterminacy.²⁷ Heterosexual dalliance in these porous quarters provokes a queer disorientation that afflicts the would-be seducer. Therefore, this spirit reads as queer in forcing courtship’s failure and for the inescapable contingency it both embodies and inflicts.

Despite Genji closing the shutters, the spirit invades the tryst to plant itself at his pillow and murder the woman he prefers. The spirit revenges Genji’s distance from Rokujō by forcibly projecting itself into both his bedchamber and his headspace. The visitation’s violence—with all the shaking, shivering, and pouring perspiration it provokes—reads like an assault targeted to enter Genji’s innermost sanctum and slit it wide. While the attack literally kills Yūgao, it symbolically castrates Genji. It deprives him of the light on which he would rely to regain his bearings and makes him lay down his sword.

Loss of speech further marks Genji’s emasculation. Where he’s just been shouting in panic, yelling orders to bring the hand torch—a phallic symbol of light and knowledge that might dispel the feminizing darkness—his words now wane. His status and concomitant ability to make announcements that demand subordinates’ response mean nothing once the spirit descends. Genji’s screams sound both extreme and feeble compared to the spirit’s dreamy whisper; the sheer volume at which he now barks orders signals his descent into impotence. Similarly, the physical work that Genji does—pushing open shutters, dragging and shaking bodies—recalls the bustle at Yūgao’s old house, suggesting that the status he normally maintains vis-à-vis the menials charged with such tasks has eroded.

Genji has dismissed his entourage so he might indulge his lovely fantasy all alone and at leisure. He appreciates their absence and Yūgao’s “heartrendingly girlish” manner, as both make him feel like more of a man. Eerie environs scare him, but they scare his woman more, which helps to deflect his own misgivings. Where secrecy ruled the day as he arrived and sought sex, Genji now scrambles for all the

light he can get. He opens doors, shutters, and curtains, exposing not only himself (and his bumbling) but also his dying lover. The murdering ghost snatches anonymity's cozy entitlements away. Hence Genji has no choice but to acknowledge his plight as akin to that of the menials beside him. He wants to unbolt the space and allow as many men as possible to close in and crowd out the solitude he felt in being beset by the apparition. This homosocial closeness will help him reorient himself, take stock, and hold court despite having fumbled his sword.

The layers of architectural and interpersonal mediation that would normally insulate this Heian noble from the vulgarities of everyday interaction evaporate amid the emasculating immediacy of spirit possession. As Kaoru Hayashi explains, "The narrator tells us how [Rokujō's] father once held high hopes for her to become an empress consort, but these plans were dashed at the very last moment as Zenbō did not ascend to the throne. Her name—a combination of the location of a non-imperial residence as well as her title as a widow—embodies her family's failed expectations and her resulting physical distance from the imperial palace."²⁸ Given this background, the loss of Genji's loyalty and distance from him in the Capital arguably leads Rokujō to induce other losses elsewhere, not to redress her own misfortune but to produce an artificial kinship in the sense of "misery loves company." She cannot have the romantic intimacy she desires with Genji; therefore, she foists trauma on Genji to produce an altered sort of intimacy with him through shared loss—with Yūgao serving as the conduit binding murderer to mourner.

To punish Genji for staying away from Rokujō in favor of Yūgao, the spirit hurls him too close for comfort. The spirit that alights at his pillow attacks by peeling all filters from Genji's sensory experience of the murk, depositing Genji into a state of radically de-mediated exposure to the cruel world's stimuli. Thus the narrator remarks that the victim's "body had gone cold, and now became loathsome to touch" as Genji experiences a new position and perception sensitive enough to register the shift in temperature when he "went back in and felt his way to Yūgao."

Emptied of eroticism, skin-to-skin contact with Yūgao only chills Genji's bones and elicits his screaming. This contact reads as queer in its conjoined phenomenological emphasis and a violent disorientation characterizing the strange porous space in which vision fails, touch unnerves, and sounds infest Genji's ears while his own voice rings hollow and unheeded. The spirit forces the cowed Genji to "for[get] all dignity and lay beside [Yūgao]." As Genji gropes for steadiness amid the swirling clamor, the spirit makes him first relinquish his sword and then prostrate his very body, assuming a position mimicking that of the murdered woman. This assault wickedly grants him the closeness he coveted earlier, but it simultaneously withholds fully functioning powers of proprioception and surveillance that could control that closeness.

This dislocating violence makes Genji long for the proximate removes he formerly enjoyed vis-à-vis both servants and lovers. At those manageable distances,

Genji maintained optimal authority and mystique. But this ramshackle patch of land, with its teeming weeds and rickety planks that let the icy moonlight stream through, establishes a frame inhospitable to the optimized distances Genji accepts as natural entitlements. These were distances of space and status. Despite Genji's recourse to commanding those around him, "no one could hear him, no one was coming."²⁹ The porous nature of the space, which so aroused Genji's interest initially, now nullifies his once commanding voice. So Genji keeps shouting, each call more desperate, as he "chuckle[s] and clap[s] his hands," praying any noise might snap the spirit's spell.

No other passage in *Genji* toggles so starkly between coaxing whispers and harsh shouts, as Genji tries to stand his ground. Not unlike Genji's earlier alternation between closed and open spaces, this modulation attests to his lacking the "faintest idea what to do now." One moment he's yelling at a servant to "bring [the torch] closer!"; the next he's remarking, "How blaring a voice sounds at night! Hush up!" Frantic hope sprouts that the torch will replace the sword, banishing shadows to restore equilibrium and lending strength. Holding the torch partially reinstates Genji's purview within an ever-encroaching aural surround in which "the pines' howling sounded like the deep woods', and a creepy bird cried with ragged caws" to "give the place a sheer horror defying description."³⁰

SOMEDAY MY PRINCE WILL COME

As Genji struggles to regain his composure and his language, the cavernous house amplifies the sounds penetrating from the expansive wilds outside. At this juncture, Genji reaches the limits of his senses, and his macho façade fractures:

The desolation held far and wide; not a single human voice sounded. As Genji's thoughts churned, "Why," he asked himself, steeped in pointless regret, "did I ever decide to spend the night in this despicable place?"

Ukon was distraught and clutched him, shuddering like she'd surely die. *And what will become of this one*, he wondered in a daze, holding onto her. He alone had kept his wits about him, yet he hadn't the faintest idea what to do now. The flame faintly petered out, while over the screen standing at the chamber's edge, from murky corners near and far came the fitful hiss of unseen things' footfalls rasping as they stalked.³¹

The lamp goes out and Genji crumbles, feminized beside the bawling Ukon, Yūgao's breast sibling (*menotogo*). Edith Sarra explains, "This is important because it creates a symmetry: she is to Yūgao as Koremitsu is to Genji. When Genji clasps Ukon to him, the gesture also suggests a class-based disorientation: Genji is put in Koremitsu's place."³² Note the spatial transition: where Genji wooed Yūgao at a sleeping dais, he now has been literally lowered and thrust to the aisle, where servants might sleep. The screen shields Genji, Ukon, and Yūgao's fresh corpse only in the barest sense, letting in the "fitful hiss of unseen things' footfalls." These

noises confound Genji further, making him rue the absence of his man: “He felt them coming up close from behind. *If only Koremitsu would come quickly!*” Genji thought. But Koremitsu’s whereabouts were uncertain.”³³

Genji is unmanned as he yearns for his loyal steward to come make everything alright. Where Genji once actively governed the permeability of built-space, he has now fallen to the aisle, flanked in darkness by two women, one dead and another “shuddering like she’d surely die,” not to mention the roaming specter. The chapter “Yūgao” has mined porosity for its dramatic tension: drama builds according to how architectural borders adjust apertures of perception. Now, with the spirit’s entrance, bodies, too, are pried open. Genji has ceded his sword, crawled into the corridor, speechless and sightless, and is exposed to forces he can’t withstand. With his senses of hearing and touch piqued by the enveloping darkness, Genji’s dread and wish for rescue bud like an arousal. Formerly amused by this setting’s resemblance to ancient romances, Genji now discovers himself playing the forlorn heroine. Like such a woman, for he had “hear[d] of things like this in those old tales,” he awaits a hero who will quell this insufferable uncertainty. Genji’s anguish recalls his mother’s desperation at the Kokiden faction’s hands, and for Ueno Tatsuyoshi, Yūgao’s resemblance to Genji’s mother explains the courtier’s distress.³⁴

Waiting for relief makes “the ages spent as [Koremitsu] scoured high and low for Genji until dawn broke feel as though that single night eclipsed a thousand ages.”³⁵ This interminable span stands out, especially because Koike Seiji notes that “Yūgao’s” time is narrated in a documentary style that chronicles nearly every moment of that twenty-four-hour period.³⁶ The trope of courtly women waiting in vain for lovers’ visits is well-worn. But this interval Genji inhabits is different. Aristocratic paramours lauded in Heian literature keep mobile, pursuing new conquests and enjoying the prerogative to forgo waiting. But haunted houses gnaw that privilege down. In the “ruinous eaves” that remain, Genji has no option but to keep still, keep waiting.

Emasculation amplifies the duration he endures. A single minute unfurls exponentially as Genji’s disoriented longing protracts temporality, transposing him into the feminine position of waiting for torment to end, until “finally, he heard a cock’s far off crowing.” In a Heian literary context, the cock’s crow immediately calls to mind the trope of heterosexual lovers having to end their tryst at dawn, though we shouldn’t forget the use of “dawn parting” for depictions of male-male sexual liaisons in later eras.³⁷

Recontextualizing the motif of the cock’s crow in this emasculating predicament queers its associations. This stock scenario has been reconfigured by the self-inflicted chaos sparked by Genji’s lust for dominance through sex with a lower-status woman. Genji’s inability to control the porosity of the space is what lets that heterosexual vector veer off course. Whatever type of man Genji thought himself to be before he “decide[d] to spend the night in this despicable place,” he has already been flung wide of that persona as the crowing he finally

hears “send[s] his thoughts reeling.”³⁸ As his thoughts whirl, the narration shifts to Genji’s perspective:

What former life’s bond could have possibly led me to risk my life facing such a trial? I know it’s all my fault, payback for imprudent desires that never should have been, and now it appears this story will surely leave my example in infamy for generations to come. Try to conceal it, but one can’t hide what’s in the world, so it would be all anyone thought about or sought to mention, most likely from His Majesty’s sanctum down to those lowlife children tossing gossip. In the end, everyone will know me as a laughingstock!³⁹

Disorientation and panic at being outed as a failed gallant go hand in hand. This shows that the true threat Genji fears rests with the court of public opinion. Paranoia at being outed as a coward or “fool” here means being branded unmanly, unable to keep one’s wits intact and one’s women safe.

ROLE REVISIONS AND THE AXES OF HEROIC DUTY

At this point, Koremitsu arrives—unforgivably late—and Genji, feeling violated, humiliated, and abandoned, becomes petulant:

Despite feeling bitter, Genji called him in, and he was crestfallen to find, once he tried to tell Koremitsu everything, that suddenly he couldn’t utter a word. Upon hearing what sounded like Koremitsu, all that had happened from start to finish trickled back to mind for Ukon, and she wept. Genji couldn’t bear it either. Although he alone had kept it together, cradling her in his arms, now that Koremitsu was here he sighed with relief, and able to reckon with his sorrow, he couldn’t stop sobbing for a good while. It just hurt too much.

In time he calmed down and said, “Something incredibly bizarre occurred here, in this place, something more horrid than words can convey.” . . . Saying this, the weeping Genji looked so very superbly lovely that Koremitsu, too, grew sad watching him and broke down bawling.

After all was said and done, this was exactly the time when they needed someone mature and well versed in the world’s ways, a seaman who had weathered life’s storms, to rely on. But with the both of them being but callow youths, they were unspeakably out of their depth.⁴⁰

We can view Genji’s emotional responses as attesting to his depth of feeling. This aligns with the *irogonomi* sensualism epitomized by literary forebears like *The Tales of Ise*’s Ariwara no Narihira. So when Genji cries with Koremitsu, it recalls the waiting damsel motif by inverting the prototypical male position normalized by Narihira’s excursions to nab provincial women.

Koremitsu’s arrival grants Genji a welcome dispensation to bawl like a lady-in-waiting, a spatiotemporal interval in which to weep freely.⁴¹ In this shared moment of intimacy, Genji becomes especially beautiful to the man who has come

to rescue him. Indeed, it is the very failure to man up on Genji's part that enables such affection. The mishap makes Genji vulnerable enough to approach. In registers of both status and gender, then, Genji forfeits authority, becoming more Koremitsu's equal. Hence each man can extract comfort from tears mirrored in the other's eyes. Genji cries beside Ukon. But he cries both *for* and *with* Koremitsu, as though he'd been waiting for Koremitsu's arrival to bare his emotions.⁴² Koremitsu's low status relative to Genji absolves the richer man of extra embarrassment or fear of censure. Furuta Masayuki sees this intersecting status gap and breast-brother bond between Genji and Koremitsu as framing Koremitsu as a safe foil who showcases Genji's multifaceted character by sharing in his secrets and failures to an extent that a male foil like Tō no Chūjō, as a rival of comparable status, does not.⁴³

Words fail Genji again. But this time, the failure stems from disappointment in his delinquent manservant, a projection of Genji's even greater disappointment in himself. Ashamed, Genji grows less brash, no longer shouting after having dissolved into tears. Asked, "Could she somehow have been feeling unwell from the start?" Genji responds clinically: "That was not the case at all" (*saru koto mo nakaritsu*).⁴⁴ The implication is that if Yūgao had not been sick, then her death must be all the more Genji's fault. Such an admission, even tacitly, pricks Genji with more guilty feelings, making him cry again. In Koremitsu's eyes, Genji becomes beautiful once he dispenses with the formalities of rank and with butch pretensions and instead speaks on virtually equal terms. This casts Genji in a gentler light, letting empathy bloom such that Koremitsu reciprocates his wounded master's tears.

The "superb loveliness" (*ito okashige ni rautaku*) Genji displays should be conceived as resulting from transitions along two axes: one of gender and one of status. Genji's deadly failure to live up to his own personal standards of heroic masculinity, not to mention traditional literary ones, daubs him with an alluring shame, that of a brash ingénue who's caught his comeuppance and now looks with favor on the soul kind enough to not mention his folly. Although the status divide no doubt still exists between Genji and Koremitsu, Genji's mellowed tone and moist eyes allow for an interval of intimacy framed by the men's mutual commitment to secrecy regarding Genji's fall from grace. That Genji's spectacular failure would "be all anyone thought about or sought to mention, most likely from His Majesty's sanctum down to those lowlife children tossing gossip," until everyone knew him "as a laughingstock" highlights the inefficacy of rank in shielding him from ridicule by high and low alike. Hence Genji and Koremitsu both become aware of the lord's vulnerability and the vassal's resultant rise in import.

Wordlessly knighted with new duties, Koremitsu springs to action. What ensues is a scheme to remove Genji and Yūgao's corpse from the premises undetected. Koremitsu is now tasked with protecting what little remains of Genji's honor. For Miyake Saki, Genji's fears demonstrate that the Fujitsubo and Yūgao affairs are

related, but where the first is seen as an incestuous sin, this one represents disgrace. In her reading, this debacle effectively displaces penance, making Genji pay for his Fujitsubo sins with this partially divulged death scandal.⁴⁵ Despite escaping mortal danger, Genji's reputation is still at stake. So Koremitsu takes the reins, resolving to spirit himself and Genji away to a secluded temple in the Eastern Hills before anyone gets wind of the scandal.

The rescue scene displays how much Genji needs Koremitsu—for his strength, mobility, and wherewithal. The two men's roles are reversed as Koremitsu now gives Genji orders. Where he once "breezily scoop[ed] Yūgao into the carriage," Genji is now too weak to lift Yūgao's body, despite her slightness. Genji rides Koremitsu's horse, implying a demotion as he trots despondently along, outside of a carriage and thus visually unprotected by the sturdy oxcart's walls. Koremitsu is now more mobile, with an added pep in his step after having seen the body of Genji's lover directly. With his heterosexual lover gone and the status symbol carriage ceded along with her, Genji has lost much of his orientation. These two things offered anchoring points that let him locate himself within Heian society stably and with no shortage of pride. This is why he staggers so without them: "In the midst of his dismay and his breast bursting with anguish, skull aching, body feverish, he felt so miserably addled that he thought, 'This frail, I'm apt to meet a wretched end myself.'"⁴⁶ Here, Genji's condition recalls the queer disorientation Merleau-Ponty explains as involving not just "the intellectual experience of disorder, but the vital experience of giddiness and nausea, which is the awareness of our contingency, and the horror with which it fills us."⁴⁷

In such a sorry state, Genji needs Koremitsu more than ever. Koremitsu's loaned horse props Genji up to lend some reminder of the status hierarchy according to which he might rebuild himself. Furthermore, this gap structurally parallels the earlier occasion on which "Koremitsu saw that Genji would surely be thought foolish, and thus gave up his own horse, dismounting to walk alongside his lord. Koremitsu lamented, 'How perilous it would be the moment they discovered the great lover making his way contemptibly on foot!'" Reprising this willingness now that Genji has sunk so low matters more than it did before. In both cases, the desire to maintain some visible modicum of dignity shapes the men's spatial arrangement. Yet in this instance, staging that contrast gains special significance as the "the great lover" (*kesōbito*) struggles to rectify his shortfall. The physical boost Koremitsu provides by citing this earlier gesture literally helps ease Genji back into the saddle as his battered ego mends.

The spirit possession episode underscores the communal nature of sustaining masculine fantasies of sexual and spatial dominance. The trial Genji undergoes here spotlights his limits as a callow youth: "But despite wanting to be so tough he had a child's heart, and watching [Yūgao] die before his eyes devastated him." Age here signifies as a marker both of inexperience and of a certain machismo that aspires to impermeable composure. Given that Genji's staggering loss occurred in

attempting to seduce Yūgao, Koremitsu works to redress that sexual humiliation with supplements like the horse and the backstage finagling to bury evidence of his lord's debacle.

This added responsibility for Genji's masculine well-being occasions new privileges that alter Koremitsu's relationship with him. For example, Genji gives Koremitsu instructions for how he would like Yūgao's funeral performed, sending him off to put things in order. However, Koremitsu no longer takes orders blindly but now takes more of a stand to offer unsolicited counsel of his own: "What, now? No, no," said Koremitsu, standing. 'Sir, this is not the time to overdo things.' Genji despaired to see him leave" (*tote tatsu ga, ito kanashiku obosarureba*).⁴⁸ As Koremitsu states his opinion—"standing" as he does so—Genji feels forlorn. This heartache evokes a lover's parting, reinforcing the sense that Genji has slipped into an acute dependence on Koremitsu following Yūgao's death. Koremitsu's rise denotes a shifting dynamic between the men that repositions Genji more passively, casting him as concerned with the increasingly assertive Koremitsu's attentions as the two men collude.

This new conspiratorial closeness draws suspicion: "Catching snippets of the exchange, the ladies-in-waiting wondered vaguely, *How strange! What could be happening? Genji says he can't head to the palace on account of being defiled. Still, what's with them whispering and grumbling like that?*"⁴⁹ The peanut gallery chimes in, lamenting the lowered volume that makes these men's secrets harder to discern. This intrusive curiosity frames Genji's closed-door consultation with Koremitsu as a pseudo-tryst, laced as it is with urgent groans and whispers.

Genji strives to regain equilibrium. By holding last rites for Yūgao, he aims to end—at least symbolically—the ongoing loss he feels. Genji therefore travels to attend the secret funeral, where he ends up trying to console the distraught Ukon—and to some degree himself—by assuming the paternalistic role of assured confidant. However, time is of the essence, and given the compromising circumstances, Genji mustn't tarry too long:

Koremitsu said, "It seems the night is bound for dawn. You really need to make for home at once." Genji could only look back time and again, his breast brimming with anguish as he rode off. Along the dew-drenched route, he felt like he hadn't a clue where he was, set adrift within an abnormally dense morning fog.

She looks as she did when alive, lying there in that crimson robe of mine from when we traded ours. Whatever could our bond have been? He mulled this over throughout his journey. Once again, Koremitsu was at his side to help, because Genji was shaky in his saddle, seeming unfit to ride, and even slid off his horse as they reached the Kamo riverbank. Woefully unhinged, Genji said, "You should probably just abandon me here in the middle of the road like this. I truly feel like there's simply no way I can make it back home," which rattled Koremitsu, who thought, *Had I been thinking straight, despite what he voiced, would I ever have let him mount up and head off on this journey?*

Getting quite anxious, Genji washed his hands in the river's water and called on the Kiyomizu Kannon for aid, but he still felt baffled, with no solution in sight. For his part, Genji girded up his loins [*shihite ongokoro wo okoshite*], in his heart beseeched the buddhas, and with whatever help he could get, managed to return to his Nijō manor.⁵⁰

Tainted by guilt and death pollution, Genji stoops by the Kamo riverbank to perform a makeshift lustration and entreat deities. However, Koremitsu nips Genji's despondent ministrations in the bud, cutting Genji's mourning short.⁵¹ By sending the bereaved Genji home sooner than he would have liked, Koremitsu flings him into a tailspin: "Genji could only look back time and again, his breast brimming with anguish as he rode off." By curtailing the grieving process, Koremitsu also prolongs the span of time in which Genji needs to lean on him. Given that "along the dew-drenched route, [Genji] felt like he hadn't a clue where he was, set adrift within an abnormally dense morning fog," Koremitsu's value as confidant and guide persists at a premium. For the Genji blinded by grief, Koremitsu serves as a compass, and moreover as a buffer from the desolation that threatens to engulf him. Koremitsu becomes the force that keeps him upright and moving forward through the thickening fog—toward "home" and away from the pollution of Yūgao's death that has soiled Genji.⁵²

The description "dew-drenched" (*ito tsuyukeki*) suits Genji's tear-soaked journey through melancholia's "abnormally dense morning fog" (*itodoshiki asagiri*). Historicizing melancholia's gendered implications within a Western context, Juliana Schiesari reminds us that "the melancholic of the past was an accredited figure of alienation and very much desirous of accentuating *his* difference from the everyday. . . . Women have not had the same cultural tradition, one that would enable them to express feelings of disempowerment and loss in a 'non-alienated' way."⁵³ Schiesari's observation pertains to Genji's predicament. In Yūgao's case, and in contrast to Ukon's reaction, the female object can't be marked or mourned fully by him for fear of disgrace. This implies that for all his pain at Yūgao's death, Genji's capacity to weep and swoon as he does—even in semisecret—is still underpinned by his privilege as a high-ranking man.

As the partners in crime decamp, notice the pull exerted in opposite directions: Koremitsu's eyes are locked on the path ahead of them, while Genji can't help twisting backward repeatedly. Koremitsu takes on the task of conveying Genji away from the distressing bodies of Yūgao and Ukon and back home, away from the feminized atmosphere of death and anguish and toward the Nijō residence, where Genji might convalesce and regain his footing. Koremitsu's stabilizing presence matters vitally as Genji struggles with his precarious position. For example, when Genji slides to the ground at the Kamo River's edge—a liminal space at which water adjoins solid ground—he and Koremitsu must both try hard to keep Genji from drowning in a grief whose allusions to the "Song of Everlasting

Sorrow” augment the gravity of Yūgao’s death.⁵⁴ By the same token, Genji’s tumble to the roadside and his incapacity to fathom the route back to his estate mark an off-axis bearing that had in fact been brewing since his arrival at the haunted house. The emasculating haunting and death of Yūgao spur the shift.

Nonetheless, we should dwell on the question Genji poses as he recalls the material exchange of robes he made with Yūgao: “Whatever could our bond [*chigiri*] have been?” This question opens space to acknowledge more fully Koremitsu’s function as a binding agent. More than any traded fabrics, Koremitsu serves as the force linking Genji and Yūgao. For even beyond the physical labors he performs to advance Genji’s romantic escapades, Koremitsu also suppresses his own sexual desires for Yūgao in order to please Genji: “Koremitsu went to find them, bringing refreshments. Amused, he surmised that her looks must indeed be enough to warrant their trudging all this way. Even so, he felt miffed: *I was well on my way to winning her affections myself, but I let him have her. How big-hearted of me!*”⁵⁵

This “big-hearted” (*kokoro hiroa yo*) concession of desire rewards momentary heterosexual abstinence with an enduring homosocial bond. Even if Genji can’t recognize the answer right next to him—“He mulled this over throughout his journey. Once again, Koremitsu was at his side to help, because Genji was shaky in his saddle, seeming unfit to ride”—the narrator’s mention of Koremitsu’s artful generosity demonstrates the extent to which Genji’s link to his female lover relies on Koremitsu’s intimate assistance. This homosocial help happens adjacent to the scene of heterosexual coupling. As a chapter, then, “Yūgao” suggests that such a coupling cannot occur without the homosocial male intimacy that undergirds it. Without the concerted, if occasionally “vexing” (*mezamashiu omohiworu*), affective labor Koremitsu puts forth to keep that coupling on track, Genji’s tryst would never have stood a chance.

Genji’s bid to sort out the nature of his heterosexual tie to Yūgao and stabilize himself both vertically (on the horse, relative to his walking servant) and laterally (from the cremation site, relative to his Nijō residence) also depends on Koremitsu’s redemptive realignments. To call these efforts “straightening” might seem to undermine the homosocial rapport Koremitsu upholds. However, we observe that it is precisely the scenario of heterosexual courtship that allows and even demands that male-male rapport’s flourishing. Having sought dalliance in fairy-tale ruins, Genji now finds himself bereft: nauseated, fallen from his mount, slumped between the river and the road. His agonized admission to Koremitsu rings with a queer resonance: “I truly feel like there’s simply no way I can make it back home” (*sara ni, e yukitsukumajiki kokochi namu suru*). “Home,” Genji’s Nijō manor, rings here as a preserve of courtier privilege, of the oblivious and untested (and thus undamaged) masculine self-image with which he initially ventured from home into the dark. “Home” centers the site of masculine dominion. It is a place where swords need not be drawn (or dropped), where a man needn’t

raise his voice to get things done, where torchlight is always plentiful, and where nothing moves external to the master of the house's specifications. At these queer junctures, however, the veil of aristocratic mastery falls to reveal the ample extent of servants' actual control. Perhaps most importantly, this home space does not allow Genji to get lost. It sits just south of the imperial palace on the city's grid, with its wings, gardens, and gates intact. This is why, later in the narrative, Genji "sought refuge at Nijō," because "every room at Nijō was spic-and-span, and the whole staff, men and women alike, awaited his arrival."⁵⁶ Genji can thus feel unsullied and even worshipped in his capacity as Nijō mansion's lord.

Tellingly, that masculinity does not travel well. It crumples easily once an apparition splinters his fantasy of masculine stability. In this regard, the spirit queers with the questions it poses and the relationships it reshapes. It also brings men together, slotting them into environments wherein one must rescue the other like he might a storied princess. Without this mediating phantom, Genji and Koremitsu's standard master/servant binary avoids revision. But once the phantom haunts the premises, depriving "Shining" Genji of his light and wits and sword, Koremitsu's relative stature towers as Genji sobs behind a screen.

We might read the spirit's revenge as poetic justice. It gives Genji what he wants—close contact with Yūgao—but amplifies it to a lethal degree. By murdering Yūgao, the spirit flings Rokujō's rival's ragdoll body into Genji's trembling arms. He can touch her to his heart's content now, yet the clammy cadaver, which had become "loathsome to touch," grants no pleasure. Simultaneously, the spirit's assault on Genji's bedchamber hurls him into Koremitsu's arms. Spirit possession thus transposes two ill-fated heterosexual relationships—Genji's liaisons with Yūgao and with Rokujō—into a queer register by making them the basis for dislocation and alienated sensation. Crucially, this visceral disorientation manifests queerness, but the men's increased intimacy with each other signifies only a notable outcome of this queer upheaval, not its cause. Even as the ramshackle setting recalls stereotypical *monogatari* motifs, the spirit upends these genre conventions to queer the gendered schema according to which feminine and masculine styles of experiencing space, time, and feeling cohere.

SECRECY, SERVITUDE, AND SACRIFICE

On this queer note, we observe finally that Genji's pronounced physicality in dealing with women's bodies in this chapter implies compensatory grabs at laying hands on the feminine phantom that unmans him: he "dragg[ed] Ukon over"; "went back in and felt his way to Yūgao"; "pull[ed] Ukon upright"; and "shook her, but she just swayed, limp." These gestures all mark Genji's desperate attempts to rein in a runaway apparition. He fumbles to reinstate his unquestioned rights to touch and know. Genji takes these prerogatives for granted—most visibly in the realm of sexual relations.

This expectation carries epistemological repercussions, too. For indeed, what appears to plague Genji's subjectivity most is not just the cadaver's material presence but also the fact of death's capacity to penetrate and disorganize the proprioceptive and sensual faculties. Blind ("the lamp had gone out," *ho mo kie ni keri*) and mute ("he was speechless," *ihamukatanashi*), Genji must rely on touch and hearing to locate himself amid the chaos.⁵⁷ And yet he hears and feels far too much for comfort. The pendulum swings between sensory overload and deprivation, "the whirlwind events having left him in an irksome stupor" (*ito awatatashiki ni, akiretaru kokochi shitamahu*). If the confusion Genji suffers is any indication, spirit possession undercuts heterosexual masculine fantasies of supremacy by exploiting the porosity of spatial boundaries. What began with Genji nuzzling his lady in a cozy, shuttered carriage ends with him exposed in a broken pile beside a river as that lover's body burns to ash in secret.

What was inside the preserve of polygamous heterosexual courtship has been snatched into uncharted queer territory. In being cast outdoors, past the most familiar bounds he knows, Genji careens toward Koremitsu: "Now that Koremitsu was here, he sighed with relief, and able to reckon with his sorrow he couldn't stop sobbing for a good while." The comfort Genji feels stems not just from physical closeness but also from Koremitsu's capacity to mitigate the public's knowledge of the fiasco. Koremitsu hence serves as a countering force to the spirit's queering menace. It works the crannies to pry wounds open and expose Genji to death and ridicule, but "seeing Genji in such disastrous shape made Koremitsu willing to go on and sacrifice his own life for [his lord]."⁵⁸

Beyond coming to Genji's aid, lending him a horse, and even moving Yūgao's dead body, Koremitsu also reassures Genji by promising that he is "on the case" and that he has "no intention of leaking word of this to anyone."⁵⁹ Koremitsu even goes further, explaining, to Genji's relief, that he "altered things and told everyone, even those monks, a made-up story."⁶⁰ Koremitsu assumes a mediating role in dissimulating the truth of Genji's failures to facilitate his transition out of the emasculating mansion and back into the public eye with his name and manhood ostensibly unscathed.

This labor counteracts the queerness recounted throughout "Yūgao." Broadly speaking, it aims to neutralize the visceral contingency protagonists repeatedly confront. More specifically, Koremitsu's intimate assistance veils Genji's susceptibility to violence, allowing the Shining Prince's manly reputation as "the great lover" to persist uncompromised. Koremitsu interposes himself between Genji and "those lowlife children tossing gossip" to protect his comrade and keep him gratefully close. In this manner, Koremitsu's mediation strategically distances a woman's death to enhance his homosocial proximity to Genji. Koremitsu's labors repair Genji's ego and redress his devastating shame. His serviceable servant's body displaces the social and physical weight of Yūgao's death from Genji shoulders, becoming an invaluable vehicle through which to reintegrate the subjectivity

of his lord. Through lending his body and skills of deception to Genji throughout the Yūgao adventure, Koremitsu helps the weak-willed Genji man up to rehearse an authoritative straightness.

Genji's feeling of security derives in no small part from Koremitsu's inferior status, which dampens the sense of risk Genji feels confessing his inadequacy to this man who steers his carriage. That the social distance allows for such a degree of emotional closeness reflects status and gendered boundaries whose very rigidity opens a space for anguished nobles like Genji to face their subordinates candidly, fearless of betrayal or derision. The very precariousness of the servant's position within the structure of Heian society—the looming threat of bare life on which that political schema insists—nullifies any danger attending the noble's collapse before a subordinate's eyes. The vassal's subjection is so entrenched that such intimate exposures bear no evident risk for the superior who deigns to unravel. Consequently, structures of servitude can ensure a homosocial proximity habitually oriented toward redressing or suppressing the master's devastating encounters with loss.

CONCLUSION: QUEER LINES AND THE CONTINGENCIES OF BUILT-SPACE

For Katō Matsuji, “Koremitsu is an important character who bolsters Genji's charisma.”⁶¹ True enough, but this bolstering is itself scaffolded by a rundown residence. Ultimately, what Koremitsu's relationship with Genji demonstrates is how the breaching of architectural boundaries augments potentials for intimate relations to be remediated along queer lines. Although this queerness accompanies the homosocial intimacy between Genji and Koremitsu, it nevertheless exceeds that category—much like the roaming spirit that engulfs the desolate residence to rupture Genji's subjectivity. Here, I invoke the figure of queer lines to recall Sara Ahmed's notion of the “off-line” quality of queerness and its attendant disorientations.⁶² To be sure, “Yūgao” foregrounds “the intellectual experience of disorder” of, say, Genji trying to comprehend his fate in pursuing the chapter's female protagonist. But it moreover chronicles the “vital experience of giddiness and nausea” that imprints Genji's interactions as he is forced to inhabit a debilitating “awareness of [his] contingency”—in overlapping spatial, gendered, and affective registers.⁶³

The spirit's queering reworks patterns of social station and physical orientation. This queering involves role reversals as new levels of affectionate dependency crystallize between Genji and Koremitsu. It also shapes the built environment: in their dilapidation and distressing darkness, the very structures ostensibly designed to securely compartmentalize space invite deterritorializing presences that dismantle standard vectors of heterosexual romance. We're left with a transfigured terrain where visual mastery of spatial organization splinters and the

disordered sensorium attests to queer energies circulating within even the most mundane settings.

The following chapter revisits some of these motifs as a new woman enters the picture and attracts the attention of Genji and his rival, Tō no Chūjō. Her entrance moves our discussion of male homosocial intimacy toward examining the function of queer embodiments within broader female networks of affective attachment that underpin Heian courtship.