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Beyond “In Spring, the Dawn”: Redeeming *The Pillow Book* through Manga

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Introduction

Manga adaptations of *Makura no sōshi* 枕草子 (The pillow book, early eleventh century) greatly outnumber scholarly editions published in Japan over the past thirty years. Featuring amusing characters who speak in contemporary slang and exchange witticisms, many of these later *pillow books* are intended to augment students’ preparation for university entrance exams and to expand adult readers’ literary and cultural horizons. Manga versions of *Makura no sōshi* serve as useful case studies to examine how the genre works to reignite interest in classical literature and shape new perceptions of literary texts. Scholars have overlooked the role of manga as one of the most influential forms of media for disseminating knowledge about Japan’s literary heritage. In relationship to this gap, I argue that manga adaptations work to rectify misconceptions of *Makura no sōshi* generated by national literature (*kokubungaku* 国文学) scholarship and traditional methods of teaching classical literature in Japan, while increasing modern interest in this ancient text.

Since *Makura no sōshi* is taught at every level of the educational system in Japan and often appears in university entrance exams, it is widely known for its opening passage “*Haru wa akebono*” 春はあけぼの (In spring, the dawn) and is associated with a few keywords, including its female author Sei Shōnagon 清少納言 (964?–after 1027), the *zuihitsu* 随筆 (miscellany) genre to which it has been attributed, and the Heian period (794–1185) during which it was written. This approach of introducing a literary work by way of keywords rather than focusing on its content and the context of its creation dominates national language education in Japan, which centers on classical grammar and vocabulary. Although this keyword strategy facilitates memory learning, it is deemed to have led to



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a superficial understanding of and diminished interest in the classical work.¹ Manga rewritings that closely follow the eleventh-century work, rather than place historical figures in entirely fictitious settings, reveal keen awareness of dominant views of the text as an unwieldy educational material (*toriatsukainikui kyōzai* 取り扱いにくい教材) in the national language (*kokugo* 国語) public school curriculum.² They also consistently promote the idea that *Makura no sōshi* is not just about the well-known keywords but is a literary work worthy of reading. Prioritizing the content instead of its formal features, these rewritings offer a new approach to the ancient text by presenting the material in an engaging and relevant way that resonates with modern readers. They provide a necessary corrective to the official pedagogical tradition and, thus, attempt to redeem Sei's writing from modern perceptions of the work as outdated and poorly structured.

Examining manga adaptations of *Makura no sōshi* reveals how popular culture challenges Japanese public school education and its approaches to teaching classical literature. These adaptations also refine understanding of the roles that manga play in preserving and promoting Japanese literary heritage in the early twenty-first century. Out of the many adaptations countering long-established views of Sei's writing as a literary work that is difficult to comprehend due to its textual, thematic, and stylistic diversity, I analyze three versions of *Makura no sōshi*. The first one is a bestseller from the series *NHK Manga de yomu koten* NHK まんがで読む古典 (NHK's reading the classics through manga), re-published several times between 1993 and 2011 and belonging to the *shōjo* 少女 (girls') manga genre.³ The second one, considered a *josei* 女性 (women's) manga, is included in the series *Manga de dokuha* まんがで読破 (Reading from cover to cover through manga, 2011).⁴ Finally, the third version I analyze is known in Japanese as *gyagu* ギャグ (gag) or humorous manga titled *Honjitsu mo ito okashi Makura no sōshi* (Splendid even today: The pillow book 本日もちとをかし!! 枕草子, 2014) overseen by a Japanese literary scholar.⁵ All three adaptations are aimed at women. Through a selection of specific passages and images highlighting particular episodes and aspects of Heian-period culture, each manga generates new interpretations of the eleventh-century work. Although produced for female audiences in different age groups and applying varied approaches to Sei's writing, these adaptations draw attention to *Makura no sōshi*'s rich content and claim that it extends beyond the opening section. The diverse strategies the producers use to market the text to modern readers further

prompt ideas for enhancing students' interest in classical literature in a classroom setting.

The Orphaned Protagonist

One of the most successful attempts to make Sei Shōnagon's writing accessible to readers in the late twentieth century is Mendō Kazuki's 面堂かずき manga titled *Makura no sōshi* (1993, 2006). It originates from the TV show *Manga de yomu Makura no sōshi* まんがで読む枕草子 (Reading The pillow book through manga), which was aired between 1988–1989 on NHK.⁶ The success of the show brought more classics to the screen in the following years (until 1992), including *Sarashina nikki* 更級日記 (The Sarashina diary, eleventh century), *Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草 (Essays in idleness, 1330–1332), *Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語 (The Ise stories, tenth century), *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 (The tale of Genji, ca. 1008), and *Ugetsu monogatari* 雨月物語 (Tales of moonlight and rain, 1775). Hosted by the comedian Shimizu Michiko 清水ミチコ (b. 1960), this TV series introduced literary texts of Japan's distant past in ways accessible to young audiences.⁷ After the completion of the show, manga adaptations of the works featured were published and have since then been made available to various readerships. First, these rewritings came out within a series titled *NHK Manga de yomu koten* by Kadokawa shoten 角川書店 in 1993. In 2006, the works were republished by Hōmusha ホーム社, a publisher specializing in comics, newspapers, and magazines, and five years later in 2011, the children's book publisher Kin no hoshisha 金の星社 issued the same series, advertising the manga adaptations of the classical texts as appropriate for readers seven years and older.

The show *Manga de yomu Makura no sōshi* was based on Hashimoto Osamu's 橋本治 (1948–2019) bestselling translation into modern girls' slang titled *Momojirigo-yaku Makura no sōshi* 桃尻語訳枕草子 (The pillow book: Translated into peach-bottomed girls' language, 1987–1988).⁸ The beginning of the show features Hashimoto himself appearing on screen and casually conversing with an actor playing Sei Shōnagon. The actor “Sei” thanks Hashimoto for bringing her back to life through his work and proceeds to ask him questions about his translation of *Makura no sōshi*. Hashimoto explains that because various language aspects of one thousand years ago during the Heian period are no longer current in late twentieth-century Japan, he chose to translate the eleventh-century text into present-day girls' slang because Sei's style can best be grasped through it and understood by his contemporaries. In a friendly manner,

Hashimoto comments on Sei Shōnagon's writing while Sei nods and listens carefully to him, a scene reminiscent of a male mentor providing feedback to a young female. After this scene, the show's host Shimizu rejoices saying that *Makura no sōshi* has brought together two famous writers, from the past and the present, in an extraordinary (*fushigi* 不思議) conversation. The format of the TV show illustrates that although *Makura no sōshi* was written about a thousand years ago, the subject matter of classical Japanese literary culture translates successfully into a contemporary context, in a way that is both relatable and understandable to modern audiences. This approach was widely adopted in subsequent manga renditions of the eleventh-century text.

The manga adaptation of *Makura no sōshi* based on the TV show transforms Sei's work into a timeless story about a cute and lovable girl from her childhood to the end of her career by drawing parallels between the Heian court and contemporary society one thousand years later, and replacing the classical language with modern girls' slang. This popular rewriting introduces the Heian text as a booklet in which Sei recorded "her memories from the imperial court, things that she enjoyed, and splendid people she met there."⁹ Readers find out that Sei's mother dies soon after giving birth and that Sei is brought up and educated by her father. Sei gets married but not too long after, she leaves her husband due to his infidelity and tedious personality and returns home to her father. Worried that people may label Sei *demodori musume* 出戻り娘 (a woman who lives with her parents after divorce), her father urges her to return to her husband, but Sei is unrelenting.¹⁰ The Sei character depicted in manga questions what married women who stay at home say, namely that women's happiness is only found in marriage. Admiring women working in the imperial court, and following the death of her father, Sei finds employment and partakes of the life of celebrities there. Overcoming her grief at the loss of her father, Sei asserts "Watch me, father! I'll do my best" (*Mitete ne otōsama. Atashi ganbaru.*).¹¹ This manga traces Sei's adventures in the imperial court including her close relationship with her patron Empress Teishi 中宮定子 (976–1000), repartee between Sei and male courtiers, and the events following the death of Teishi's father, Fujiwara no Michitaka 藤原道隆 (953–995). The manga artist Mendō Kazuki uses action-oriented images and contemporary dialogue in the form of modern Japanese girls' slang to capture readers' imaginations and to educate modern audiences about the Heian period, including the importance of poetry and color coordination in the multiple layers of aristocratic women's robes (*jūni hitoe* 十二単).

This manga version of *Makura no sōshi* enriches the history of the reception of the Heian author by adding a new image of Sei, namely a girl who grows up without a mother. Over the centuries, Sei has been consistently introduced to readers as an exceptionally erudite woman who was the daughter of the famous poet Kiyohara no Motosuke 清原元輔 (908–990) but there has hardly been a mention of her mother.¹² In addition, the fact that as a young girl Sei has to part with her father further evokes emotional affinity with the orphaned protagonist who succeeds through education and hard work. Although historical records show that Sei went to serve in the imperial court in her thirties and that she was about ten years older than Teishi, in this manga adaptation Sei appears as a young girl in attendance to a more mature empress. Nagon-chan, as Sei is referred to in the manga version, appears at the beginning of the work making a V-sign and giving a wink to the reader (Fig. 1).¹³ A common photographic pose among young people in Japan over the past few decades, the V-sign gesture presents Sei as a girl living in the twentieth century. The image recalls photos of girls wearing long-sleeved kimono and posing for photos at coming-of-age ceremonies (*seijinshiki* 成人式) held in January in Japan.

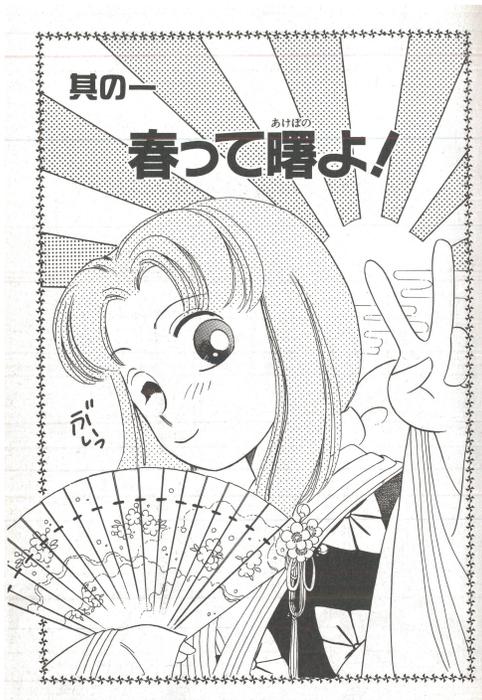


Figure 1. Sei makes a V-sign and gives a wink to the reader Mendō Kazuki, *Makura no sōshi* (2006), 9. (Courtesy of Hōmusha).

In addition, of the approximately three hundred passages in modern-day scholarly editions of *Makura no sōshi*, this adaptation has selected sections viewed as appealing to girls. “Boy-talk” (*Otoko no ko no hanashi* オトコの子の話) is a case in point.¹⁴ This episode draws from passages in *Makura no sōshi* that describe various men Sei encounters in the imperial court. Here these passages are condensed into one scene in which young male courtiers emerge one after the other as if parading on a pageant walk beneath the scrutinizing gaze of female attendants who sit behind the blinds (Fig. 2). The scene is described as a competition show (*hinpyōkai* 品評会), which refers to the assessment of the value of products and objects, and its use in the context of judging people creates a humorous effect. Using present-day standards for judging men’s appearance, the female attendants comment on the merits and demerits of male courtiers with expressions, such as “cute” (*kawaii* かわいい), “dazzling” (*kirakira* キラキラ), “He also looks dumb” (*atama mo warusō* アタマもわるそう), and “Young men should be slim” (*wakai uchi wa sumāto na hō ga ii wa yo*).¹⁵ Confident in her aesthetic sense, however, Nagon-chan objects to such comments and maintains that men’s intelligence is as important as their looks. Considering the young age of both the parading boys and the observing girls, the scene is highly reminiscent of beauty pageants for young men that are commonly held at Japanese universities.¹⁶ The parallels drawn between Heian court life and contemporary beauty contests undoubtedly produce a humorous effect, but they also make an aspect of the distant lifestyle accessible to readers today.



Figure 2. Female attendants behind the blinds observe and comment on male courtiers Mendō Kazuki, *Makura no sōshi* (2006), 44–45. (Courtesy of Hōmusha).

The Sei character in this manga mirrors present-day young readers in another episode based on a scene in *Makura no sōshi* revealing why Sei began to write. According to this episode, when Empress Teishi wonders what to do with the paper she has received from her brother Korechika 伊周 (974–1010), Sei suggests that she make it into a pillow (*makura* 枕). Scholars have interpreted Sei’s reference to *pillow* in two ways: one signifying a notebook for recording personal thoughts and observations, which Heian women kept inside wooden pillows, and another serving as a pun on the title of Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 work *Shiki* 史記 (The records of the grand historian; Ch: *Shiji*, 91 BCE).¹⁷ In this manga adaptation, when Korechika mentions the production of a copy of *Shiki* as commissioned by the emperor, Nagon-chan notes that just imagining filling the paper with Chinese characters makes her sleepy and she would likely turn the paper into a pillow and take a nap. Nagon-chan’s comment on Chinese writing being tedious amuses the empress who lets her use the paper as she wishes. Giving a humorous twist to a scholarly interpretation, this work presents Nagon-chan as resembling many young people who view writings of the past as boring and useless.

Makura no sōshi abounds in passages that describe how either Empress Teishi or a high-ranking male courtier challenge Sei by asking her to complete a poem, the beginning of which they have provided. In this manga, Nagon-chan sweats over such challenges like a high-school student who has crammed for an exam but still panics and thinks hard to recall the correct answer. In one such scene, she thinks to herself “I must pull myself together!” (*Shikkari shinakucha*) and “Get to work, brain!” (*Hatarake watashi no nōsaibō*) trying to mobilize all her resources to succeed.¹⁸ The childlike portrayal of Sei in this manga and images of her holding a brush and facing a desk with paper on it or just holding a brush and paper and feeling under pressure, bring the ancient writer even closer to modern high-school students in Japan by illustrating that she is just like them (Fig. 3).

Furthermore, to enliven the story, this manga adaptation has added verbal exchanges between the characters. The modern girls’ slang through which *Makura no sōshi* is presented to readers creates an immensely entertaining effect. For example, depicting the highlights of each season in the eleventh-century work, the opening episode “In spring, the dawn” here features court ladies observing together and commenting on the mountain rim at dawn in spring, the fireflies and the moon on a summer night, the crows and the wild geese in the sky on an autumn evening, and

the brazier fire on a cold winter morning. They use many loan words, such as *fantasutikku* ファンタスティック (fantastic), *romanchikku* ロマンチック (romantic), and *merankorikku* メランコリック (melancholic), and modern colloquial expressions such as *suteki* ステキ (lovely), *saikō* サイコー (super), and *wakuwaku* わくわく (thrilled).¹⁹ In another episode, a courtier trying to seduce a female attendant approaches her saying, “Honey, hop into my ox cart! It’s the best ox and the cart rides nicely.”²⁰ The use of slang in an episode from the past conveys the function of the scene and its significance in modern terms. By replacing classical Japanese language with contemporary slang used by girls and young women, this rendition makes Sei’s writing accessible to readers. As slang reveals speakers’ “intimacy and solidarity,” its use here transforms the eleventh-century text into one written for young people in Japan today.²¹



Figure 3. Sei panics trying to recall a poem. Mendō Kazuki, *Makura no sōshi* (2006), 245. (Courtesy of Hōmusha).

At the end of this manga adaptation, the artist, signed under the pen name Mendō Kazuki, appears as a manga character and tells readers that just like them, she used to associate *Makura no sōshi* with the keywords through which the text is taught at school, but having read it in its entirety, she was astonished to discover how interesting it was. Sharing relevant personal experience, the manga artist establishes common ground with readers in order to persuade them of the value of the classical work.²² In

fact, this approach is widely shared among manga adaptations of *Makura no sōshi*.

Instead of presenting an idealized image of the Heian literary woman, this manga version constructs her as a girl whose manners and interests resemble those of young people in twentieth-century Japan. This impresses readers by suggesting that the eleventh-century text is interesting precisely because it was written by someone similar to them. Eliciting readers' compassion and creating an emotional connection with the Heian-period writer, this image of Sei is intended to encourage them to cheer her on to do her best and follow her adventures.

The Diligent Employee

Another manga adaptation titled *Manga de dokuha: Makura no sōshi* まんがで読破 (Reading from cover to cover through manga: The pillow book, 2011) presents Sei's writing as "a story about the life of a working woman" who was able to acquire a "coveted" (*akogare no* 憧れの) job.²³ Unlike Mendō Kazuki's manga, this adaptation appears within a series focusing on a much larger collection of texts beyond Japanese classics. Created by Variety Art Works (*Baraetī āto wākusu* バラエティ・アートワークス) and published by East Press (*Īsuto puresu* イースト・プレス), the series *Manga de dokuha* (Reading from cover to cover through manga, 2007–2017) includes over a hundred works from various fields, such as literature, philosophy, psychology, and economics from Japan and around the world. These manga adaptations are sold in convenience stores and are targeted at young people. According to Maruo Kōsuke 圓尾公祐, one of the editors of the series, this strategy was employed in order to expose people to works that are considered "tough reads" by making them easily available and accessible.²⁴ Such "tough reads" include Japanese literary works, such as *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (Collection of ten thousand leaves, eighth century) and Tanizaki Junichirō's 谷崎潤一郎 *Chijin no ai* 痴人の愛 (*Naomi*, 1925), as well as foreign titles, including Confucius's *Analects*, Plato's *Apology*, Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Marx's *Capital*, Einstein's *A Theory of Relativity*, and Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.²⁵ These manga renditions successfully condense the lengthy works into slim volumes covering a diverse range of texts deemed important over the centuries.

Placed within this international collection of texts, Variety Art Works' adaptation of *Makura no sōshi* is one of the representative works of Japanese literature and offers a glimpse into ancient Japan. The

transformation of Sei's writing into a story about the life of a career-driven woman promotes a naïve and misleading image of Japan as a country in which women were active outside the household and enjoyed an equal status with men even one thousand years ago. Focusing on Sei's career without referring to her childhood and using girls' slang, this adaptation has repackaged *Makura no sōshi* for adult readers. It rearranges passages from the eleventh-century work in a chronological order and chronicles Sei's service during the height of Michitaka's political career and his passing, to the untimely death of the empress, which signaled the end of Sei's service to the court. Sei appears as a mature woman who is erudite (*hakugaku* 博学), brilliant (*saiki kanpatsu* 才気煥發), and deeply trusted by her female patron.²⁶ Referred to as Nagon, she was married once but divorced her husband because they did not get along well. The story follows Nagon shortly after her father's death. Still in mourning, she contemplates how to take advantage of the education her father gave her when she is suddenly summoned to serve the empress.

Variety Art Works' manga opens with a section describing the beginning of Sei's career that is based on the passage from *Makura no sōshi* titled "When I first went into court service."²⁷ In the eleventh-century text, this rather long section describes Sei's early days at court and how "everything seemed to overwhelm [her] with confusion and embarrassment."²⁸ The beginning of the story depicts the protagonist who is in awe of Empress Teishi and her brother, Korechika, who joins the empress on the first day of Sei's service. She also records many aspects of life in court that impress her, including descriptions of the lavish palace, beautiful scenery, and attentive women of the empress.

In Variety Art Works' manga, Sei's professional life is depicted in a way that relates to the experience of a person living in twenty-first century Japan (Fig. 4). Readers encounter her as a diligent employee, who blushes when praised by her superiors, feels tense in the workplace, and is exhausted at the end of the workday. Sei first appears as a woman who has secured her dream job; however, when summoned by Teishi for the first time, she reveals feelings of pressure and tension for her new duties and is embarrassed by the revelation. Sei's peers are a constant comfort: they wish her luck (*ganbatte ne* 頑張つてね) when she leaves for work and praise her return at the end of the day with the phrase *otsukare sama* お疲れ様 meaning "Nice work today," a typical phrase used in modern Japan.²⁹ When asked about how the first day went, Sei responds that she is dead tired (*hetoheto* へトヘト).³⁰ The setting of the story and the dialogues

between Sei and the other ladies-in-waiting place the characters in a context suggestive of a present-day working environment.

The account of Sei's service to Teishi continues with the episode about the snow of Kōro Peak, which in many modern editions appears toward the end of the work. Being still new to this elite setting, Sei is extremely nervous, hesitant, and lacking in confidence whenever she is summoned to attend the empress. Sei's reluctance irritates a senior female attendant who scolds her and explains that Teishi's insistence on being attended incessantly by a novice like Sei reveals the empress's strong liking for her. Sei's erudition leads her to become Teishi's favorite lady-in-waiting and her resourcefulness and vitality alleviate the empress's gloominess later during the tragic decline of Teishi's court.



Figure 4. Sei appears as a diligent employee. Variety Art Works, *Makura no sōshi*, *Manga de dokuha* (2011), 22. (Courtesy of Isuto Puresu)

This manga adaptation ends with Sei's departure from the court following Teishi's death, which further adds to the gloomy atmosphere. "The days I spent being able to serve the empress are my treasure. This treasure is securely preserved in this booklet."³¹ This statement presents *Makura no sōshi* as a text that relates the precious experiences Sei accumulated as a working woman. As such, this manga depicts the Heian-

period writer as intelligent, career driven, and Teishi’s favorite, but also as emotional, modest, and down-to-earth.

The final page of this work is divided into four blocks: the first one featuring a modern city suggestive of Tokyo; the second block depicting a modern printed version of *Makura no sōshi* open on the first passage “In spring, the dawn”; the third showing a student with *The Pillow Book* open in front her; and finally a teacher writing the opening words of the passage and a student looking out the window at a blooming cherry tree (Fig. 5). The captions state, “However, *The Pillow Book* that contains Sei Shōnagon’s memories has not faded though one thousand years have passed and as Japan’s first *zuihitsu*, a masterpiece from women’s literature of the imperial court, it continues to shine even today.”³² The classroom setting is related to the context in which *Makura no sōshi* is usually encountered today and the mention of *zuihitsu* refreshes readers’ memories. This ending of the manga constructs Sei’s writing as an

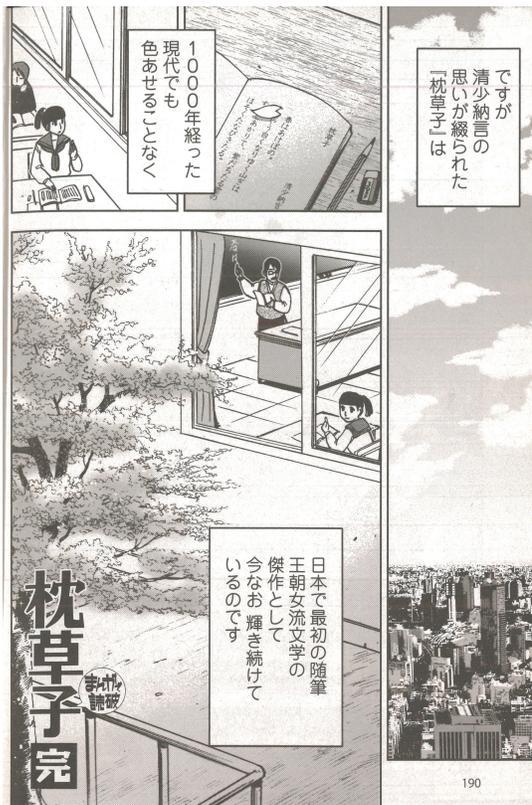


Figure 5. A teacher introduces Sei Shōnagon’s *Makura no sōshi* in a classroom setting. Variety Art Works, *Makura no sōshi, Manga de dokuha* (2011), 190. (Courtesy of Īsuto Puresu)

enduring work that continues to be important even a millennium after its completion. Positioning the text as Japan's first masterpiece of the genre of *zuihitsu* further highlights its importance. The image of the student looking at the cherry blossoms while reading the opening passage strengthens the idea of the timelessness of the literary work by showing that what mattered one thousand years ago is still relevant today and that Sei's writing is precisely what connects the past with the present.

The Indomitable Woman

Another manga adaptation that convincingly shows that *Makura no sōshi* can offer much more than the passage about the beauty of the four seasons is *Honjitsu mo ito okashi: Makura no sōshi*. On the publisher's website, the work is introduced as follows:

Makura no sōshi [is a literary work] that people tend to avoid (*ken'en* 倦厭) because it's a classic (*koten*)! In fact, it's a superb (*shūitsu* 秀逸) woman's essay (*essē* エッセイ) permeated by Sei Shōnagon's shrewd observations. It abounds in topics that resonate with modern women: sincere feelings and social appearances among women, love tactics, what Sei liked and disliked.³³

This blurb suggests that classical texts are viewed as tedious precisely because they are considered must-read literary masterpieces. Contesting the canonical status of the eleventh-century work as *koten* 古典 or one of the "authorized texts, particularly those in school curricula," it claims that *Makura no sōshi* is a work intended for mass consumption, thus trading its elevated status with purported wide appeal.³⁴ *Koten* in the Japanese context also refers to literary works of recognized value produced before the Meiji period (1868–1912); as such the term is viewed as relegating classical writings to the remote past, relics and of no interest to contemporary readers. To rectify such misconceptions, the publisher's review draws readers by introducing Sei's writing as an essay filled with topics that women find engaging. It describes the Heian text in a new way and presents it as a work of popular literature, thus hinting at the problematic categorization of ancient texts as canonical because of their inaccessibility to modern readers.

In the preface, the artist Yumiko Comukai 小向裕美子 relates that her understanding of *Makura no sōshi* was based on what she learned in high school, namely that "it is the progenitor of *zuihitsu*" (*zuihitsu bungaku no ganso* 随筆文学の元祖) and that it contains the passage *haru wa akebono*

which she had to memorize.³⁵ Since a typical Japanese language curriculum only covers these basic concepts about literary works, the manga artist was left with the impression that she had comprehended the ancient text. Although to her *Makura no sōshi* was just a “boring” (*taikutsu* 退屈) text assigned in class, re-reading the work ten years later and apparently outside the classroom, Comukai was surprised to discover that Sei Shōnagon from the Heian period and herself “living in the twenty-first century get angry and irritated, make mistakes, and rejoice over similar things.”³⁶ Now, Comukai refers to Sei Shōnagon as a friend or a kindred spirit (*nakama* 仲間) and concludes that although one thousand years have passed “nothing has changed.”³⁷

The work opens with the first line of the passage *haru wa akebono* and acknowledges that it comes from the familiar old (*onajimi no* おなじみの) *Makura no sōshi*. A character hiding half of her face with a fan, who turns out to be Sei Shōnagon, peeks from behind a screen and asks the reader, “But did you know that [*Makura no sōshi*] is not just this?”³⁸ Imbued with humor and using the Kansai dialect at times, this adaptation draws from popular beliefs about and scholarship on Sei’s writing in order to introduce readers to the rich content of the eleventh-century work. This modern version is divided into several sections, including “Days when your heart beats fast” (*Dokidoki-suru hibi* ドキドキする日々), “Days when you fail” (*Shippai-suru hibi* 失敗する日々), and “Wonderful days” (*Subarashii hibi* すばらしい日々), drawing from over sixty episodes from Sei’s text. These headings allude to the list-like, specifically *mono*-type, passages of *Makura no sōshi*.³⁹ Within each large section, the manga artist includes references to several passages from the Heian text. Prioritizing “days” (*hibi*) over “things” (*mono*), this manga shortens the distance between the reader and the ancient text and presents *Makura no sōshi* as an autobiographical essay or a memoir that resonates with readers in the twenty-first century.

The view of *Makura no sōshi* as a literary work that belongs to the present is further emphasized by the inclusion of a section at the end of the work titled “My notebook, Comukai-style” (*Komukai-teki watashi no sōshi* コムカイ的ワタシノソウシ). It includes lists the manga artist herself has compiled, such as “Irritating things” (*Iraira suru mono*), “Things that stress you out” (*Sutoresu no tamaru mono* ストレスのたまるもの), and “Things to be cautious about” (*Keikai suru mono* 警戒するもの). These lists focus on everyday life and resonate with readers who, like Comukai, find being asked your age irritating, or who find it stressful to be riding in

a taxi whose driver stops at every yellow light when you are all in a hurry to catch the bullet train.⁴⁰

In a manner reminiscent of scholarly editions of *Makura no sōshi* published since the Edo period, this recent version begins with an introduction to the Heian writer. It projects predominant stereotypes of Sei and her work and immediately dismantles them. It first draws from the famous disparaging entry in *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* 紫式部日記 (Murasaki Shikibu's diary, eleventh century) that presents Sei as a hateful woman who liked to boast about her learnedness and knowledge of Chinese. This diary entry has served as the main source for hints about Sei's personality to generations of writers leading to the construction of a rivalry between Sei and Murasaki.⁴¹ However, this manga points to a major problem, which many had disregarded over the centuries, namely that Sei and Murasaki most likely never met. A full figure portrait of Sei surrounded by several brief notes provides an overview of who the producers of this manga think Sei actually was. Thus she is described as “indomitable and



Figure 6. Sei appears as an outspoken, competitive, and confident woman. Yumiko Comukai, *Honjitsu mo ito okashi Makura no sōshi* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2014), 5. (Courtesy of Kadokawa) © Yumiko Comukai 『本日もいとをかし!! 枕草子』小迎裕美子・著 KADOKAWA 刊

cheerful” (*kachiki de yōki* 勝気で陽気), “one who says what she thinks; is a kind of person who wants to have the last word; has a pretty sharp tongue,” “she deliberately writes about what others don’t take up,” “she doesn’t lose heart when faced with [the ups and downs of] life”, and “she had a strong aesthetic sense because of her complex about her appearance” (Fig. 6).⁴² The fuller portrait of Sei is intended to capture readers’ attention and to show that she is an interesting person from whom one can learn. Sei emerges as a comic character who is outspoken, competitive, brims with confidence, and comments on various situations using contemporary slang.

Sei’s rich character presented in this adaptation is further introduced through her views on what success means for women. This episode is inspired by a section in *Makura no sōshi* in which the narrator dwells on marriage and court service. The episode in the eleventh-century text juxtaposes women serving at court with “women without prospect who lead dull earnest lives” and claims that although working women are considered frivolous, they make better wives because of the knowledge and experience they accrue through court service.⁴³ Drawing on this episode, Comukai’s manga offers Sei’s amusing critique of women for whom happiness and success in life means “becoming a full-time housewife, bearing a child to the man she loves, staying at home, getting a flower on wedding anniversaries, and being praised when she prepares a delicious meal.”⁴⁴

The manga adaptation juxtaposes working women in general with full-time housewives (*senyō shufu* 専業主婦) who dedicate their lives to husbands and families. With an angry expression, Sei claims that “[w]omen should come out into society, work, and learn about the world” (Fig. 7).⁴⁵ Placing images of housewives in present-day Japan next to Sei, the producers of this manga offer a reflection on modern women through the lens of a historical figure of the distant past. Adjacent to these panels is one that features two courtiers who disagree with Sei, saying that a man prefers a meek (*otonashii* おとなしい) wife who stays at home rather than a hard-working one. With an even angrier expression Sei opposes them, arguing that it is important for a woman to see the world and acquire knowledge about it. Based on a passage from *Makura no sōshi*, this scene shows how negative views of women who work outside the home that linger in Japan today have been around for many centuries. This is an important dialogue between the past and the present that reveals how gender roles and views of them have not changed much over the course of

a millennium; yet a strong woman’s voice coming from the past serves as a corrective to still prevalent patriarchal norms and societal expectations.



Figure 7. Sei argues for the importance for women to work outside the household. Yumiko Comukai, *Honjitsu mo ito okashi Makura no sōshi* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2014), 11. (Courtesy of Kadokawa). © Yumiko Comukai 『本日もいとをかし!! 枕草子』小迎裕美子・著 KADOKAWA 刊

The manga’s “pre-epilogue” (*atogaki no mae ni* あとがきの前に) dedicates two pages on Sei’s loyalty to Teishi. It points to the fact that *Makura no sōshi* was written when Teishi’s court had started to lose its splendor, but which goes without mention by Sei in her work. The manga goes on to explain that Sei possessed a more “manly spirit” (*otokogi* 男気) than men at the time because male courtiers’ choice of patrons was often guided by the potential benefits such service would bring them. In contrast to them, “once [Sei] decided to serve someone, she would go to the depths of hell out of loyalty and devotion (*chūgishin* 忠義心).”⁴⁶ The phrase “manly spirit” stands out on the page as a keyword written in oversized characters. Below them stands a man’s figure surrounded by text stating that this is Nagon and that she “would have probably been a good samurai if she had been born at the right time” (Fig. 8).⁴⁷



Figure 8. Sei appears as a member of the *yakuza*. Yumiko Comukai, *Honjitsu mo ito okashi Makura no sōshi* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2014), 175. (Courtesy of Kadokawa) © Yumiko Comukai, 『本日もいとをかし!! 枕草子』小迎裕美子・著 KADOKAWA 刊

The figure resembles a member of the *yakuza*, or Japanese organized crime groups, as suggested by the long strip of white cloth (*sarashi* 晒し) wrapped around the midriff, the two characters for *jingi* 仁義 (humanity and justice) inscribed on the robe, his short-cropped hair, and the dagger he is holding.⁴⁸ The Sei portrayed like a man claims that, “even under adverse circumstances I never show cowardice.”⁴⁹ Next to this masculine image of Sei is a portrayal of Teishi, who claims that although Sei wrote

that relationships between women never last long, their relationship did. The section continues by reiterating that after Teishi's death, Sei left the court and did not serve another patron.

The image of Sei as a member of the yakuza is novel and surprising. The positioning of this masculine Sei next to the feminine-looking Teishi is undoubtedly charged with erotic overtones. The underlying premise, however, is that their relationship recalls the exceptionally strong bonding that yakuza culture promotes. Sei's service as a lady-in-waiting to an empress translates into a loyal employee in the present context but the extremity of her devotedness is best described within the context of yakuza.

The view of Sei as masculine, on the other hand, is not new. As early as the Kamakura period (1185–1333), she was described as similar to a man in an anecdote in *Kojidan* 古事談 (Tales of the past, 1212–1215). In this story, the Heian-period writer raises her skirt to show her genitals to a group of warriors in order to prove that she is a woman and thereby to escape death.⁵⁰ In the Meiji period, too, male literary historians pitted Sei against Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 (ca. 973–1014) and viewed her as lacking in femininity because of her arrogance and haughtiness. In this manga, however, Sei's masculinity takes on a different meaning. It expresses her loyalty to her patron without invoking Confucian virtues for women, such as faithfulness, chastity, and obedience. The hyper-masculinity of the member of the yakuza mocks traditional gender stereotypes that still linger in Japanese society.

Produced in consultation with professor Akama Etsuko 赤間恵都子, a specialist on *Makura no sōshi* and Heian literature in general, this manga approaches Sei's writing with a balance of humor and scholarly commentary. Within the work, five long sections introduce various aspects of the context of *Makura no sōshi*'s production. Titled *Akama-sensei no yoku wakaru Makura no sōshi kōza* 赤間先生のよくわかる枕草子講座 (Professor Akama's lectures: Understanding The pillow book), this scholarly addition to the manga not only presents the text as an interesting literary work but also aims at expanding readers' cultural literacy. The sections explain what *Makura no sōshi* is, what a "career woman" in the Heian period was, how people back then communicated, and what differences in status implied. The eleventh-century text is described as a "literary work based on Sei Shōnagon's experience she acquired during her service at court and written from the viewpoint of a lady-in-waiting to an empress."⁵¹ It further invites readers to experience "the new world of *The Pillow Book*" that matches "the incisive style and rich expression of

Comukai's manga."⁵² This adaptation concludes with the classical text of *Makura no sōshi* passages on which it draws. Combining a scholarly approach with a humorous interpretation, *Honjitsu mo ito okashi!! Makura no sōshi* introduces the Heian-period text as an engaging and relatable work.

New Meanings of the Classic

Although the manga draw attention to different aspects of *Makura no sōshi*, all three adaptations present Sei's writing as a story about a talented woman's experience as an employee of an empress. Passages from the eleventh-century text that have made their way into manga include those related to Sei's first day at work, her famous defense of service at court as a lady-in-waiting, and poetic exchanges between the Heian-period writer and the empress and male courtiers that highlight Sei's literary knowledge. Sei appears as active outside the household and successful in the workplace. Her career-related experience is recast in an idealized working environment, in which she forms close relationships with her female employer and co-workers.

Although Sei's strong bond with Teishi frequently reoccurs in manga, the centrality of their relationship in the work is a result of modern interpretations. In fact, Sei's identity has not always been tied to her service to Teishi. For example, Edo-period adaptations of the work predominantly introduce Sei as a lady-in-waiting to Teishi's rival Empress Shōshi 中宮彰子 (988–1074), or Jōtōmon-in 上東門院.⁵³ Teishi's absence from the most widely reproduced episode about the snow of Kōro Peak further indicates that she has not always been viewed as a character who appears in *Makura no sōshi*. In this episode, Sei emerges as the most knowledgeable woman who guesses an allusion to a Chinese poem. All versions of the episode since the late nineteenth century feature Sei as being challenged by Teishi during a gathering of ladies-in-waiting.⁵⁴ Until the end of the Edo period, however, within this episode Sei appears in the company of high-ranking men who are trying to solve a riddle posed by the emperor. The emperor's question "What does the snow of Kōro Peak look like" alludes to a poem by Bo Juyi (772–846) that says, "I raise the blind and gaze at the snow of Kōro Peak." By raising the blind Sei shows that she has recognized the allusion to the Chinese poem. Emerging as the most quick-witted and knowledgeable, she thereby impresses the emperor.

The predominant use of this episode in instruction manuals for women and the portrayal of Sei as a woman others should emulate reveal that

women's erudition was viewed as enhancing their marriageability.⁵⁵ It was not until the Meiji period when the same episode came to feature a homosocial setting in which Teishi, surrounded by ladies-in-waiting, posed a riddle to Sei. In the new political context, Sei introduced an exemplar of female talent and wit in women-oriented magazines and school textbooks, while male literary historians viewed her learnedness as revealing of her boastfulness.⁵⁶

In manga, the homosocial pairing of Sei with Teishi drives the narrative, which features the story of Sei's first day of work in the imperial court until her departure after the death of Teishi. The strong bond between the two is foregrounded by the inclusion of several passages from *Makura no sōshi* that focus on poetic exchanges between the Heian-period writer and the empress, reconfirming Sei's devotion to her patron and Teishi's favoritism of Sei. Their relationship emerges as an ardent friendship between two girls, rather than mere interactions between an employee and an employer.

Mendō's manga presents this episode at the beginning of the section titled "A Good Pairing: The Empress and Nagon" (Naisu konbi! Chūgū-sama to Nagon ナイスコンビ! 中宮さまとナゴン). Asked by the empress about the snow of Kōro peak, Sei requests that the blinds be lifted. The other ladies-in-waiting are clueless, and hearing Sei's explanation, they exclaim, "That's just what one would expect of her" (*sasuga* さすがっ). Teishi smiles (*nikkori* にっこり) and only remarks "How charming!" (*suteki ne* ステキね).⁵⁷ Sei's ability to solve the riddle serves to exemplify the strong bond between Sei and her female patron.

In Variety Art Works' manga, the episode appears as part of the account of Sei's first day at work. She is extremely nervous and hesitant. When Teishi wonders why the ladies-in-waiting have all cloistered themselves behind the blinds and asks Sei about the snow of Kōro peak, Sei has the lattice raised. Teishi is delighted and notes that she has changed her opinion of Sei (*minaoshita wa* 見直したわ).⁵⁸ Sei, on the other hand, realizes that the reason Teishi had the lattice closed was to help Sei to throw off her reserve sooner. Here, too, Sei's learnedness is highlighted with regard to her relationship with Teishi.

Lastly, in Comukai's version, the episode follows Professor Akama's explanation of the nature of the work that ladies-in-waiting were expected to perform, namely, to engage in intellectual repartee with male courtiers and increase their good reputation, which would result in enhancing their patron's value.⁵⁹ Teishi, pleased with Sei's ability to solve the puzzle,

marriageability; instead, it is directly related to her professional success. Introduced across manga adaptations as a single mother due to divorce, the Heian writer shines a very negative light on marriage.⁶⁰ At a time when marriage has ceased to be women's only path to financial security, Sei's learnedness offers her independence and career advancement, as illustrated by the episode about the snow of Kōro. Sei's literary talent and knowledge help her acquire a longed-for career and professional recognition.

The construction of a strong bond between Sei and Teishi reflects the aesthetics of girls' culture (*shōjo bunka* 少女文化).⁶¹ The visual and textual portrayal of the interiority of Sei as the main character allows readers to sympathize and identify with her. Sei's service in Teishi's entourage takes place in a cultural space that allows the protagonists to mature both personally and professionally in a way reminiscent of the development of a teenage girl. The distant past serves as an imaginary space outside patriarchal norms where fathers and husbands are absent or play a diminished role. References to social differences are muted by the close relationship between Sei and Teishi. In contrast to the Edo-period view of Heian women as courtesans working in a brothel, for readers in Japan today, a woman's work experience in the imperial court takes on a new meaning. It is presented as a setting that gives an orphaned girl an opportunity to succeed, a working environment available to women even in the distant past—as such presenting Japan as an advanced nation—and an elite workplace that allows a glimpse into interpersonal relationships. Most importantly, however, employment in the imperial court is depicted as an environment conducive to the cultivation of strong friendships.

Lately, the repackaging of *Makura no sōshi* for girls and young women in manga is further evident from the frequent use of the phrase *Heian joshi* 平安女子 (Heian girl[s]) to refer to Sei Shōnagon and other women writers active in the tenth and eleventh centuries. For example, in the most recent adaptation titled *Makura no sōshi: Heian joshi kirakira nōto* 枕草子平安女子キラキラノート (The pillow book: A Heian girl's dazzling notebook, 2020), Sei appears as a girl “serving her favorite (*daisuki-na* 大好きな) Empress Teishi in the imperial court where girls leading dazzling lives (*kirakira joshi* キラキラ女子) gather.”⁶² Sei shares that in her notebook she has recorded things that resonate with others, such as the joy one feels when reading the continuation of a favorite manga and girl's gossiping.

Another work that introduces Heian literary culture, drawing from *Kagerō nikki* 蜻蛉日記 (The *kagerō* diary, tenth century), *Sarashina nikki*, *Makura no sōshi*, and *Genji monogatari* tells readers that just as in present-day Japan, girls in the Heian period were lovesick, enjoyed fashion, and thought seriously about their future. Titled *Heian joshi no tanoshii! seikatsu* 平安女子の楽しい！生活 (The enjoyable lives of Heian girls!), it features five young women dressed in loose garments suggestive of the Heian period.⁶³ The two recently published works introducing *Makura no sōshi* highlight the girls' community in the Heian court to draw the audience closer to the classical text. Thus, readers encounter the talented women writers from one thousand years ago as like-minded girls whose behavior and attitude are appealing to them. Responding to the changing interests and needs of readers in the early twenty-first century, popular culture transforms Heian literary works from "women's literature" (*joryū bungaku* 女流文学) to girls' blogs (*joshi burogu* 女子ブログ) and notebooks (*joshi nōto* 女子ノート).

Conclusion

Despite their selective nature, manga adaptations of *Makura no sōshi* function as a powerful tool to capture readers' attention and educate them about Japan's past in an entertaining way. Translating verbal information from the text into a visual explanation, focusing on the content of the work, and emphasizing its comprehensiveness, they promote the ancient text as timeless and claim that it has to offer more than its opening passage. The perception of Sei's writing as an engaging text signals publishers' desire to fill the growing gap between traditional approaches to literary works in Japanese school curricula and students' shifting interests and learning habits. The images of Sei as an orphaned girl who finds new happiness through an elite occupation, as a working woman who efficiently navigates workplace challenges, and as a comic character who speaks her heart and mind, bring accessibility and appeal to the aura of the Heian writer and transform the ancient text into one that belongs to the present. Encouraging identification with the Sei appearing in manga, readers encounter *Makura no sōshi* not as the classical text one studies at school but as a text written by someone similar to them in terms of age, interests, and personal traits. Readers' identification is further gained by manga artists' experiences of rediscovering the work outside the school context they share in either a foreword or an afterword. Just as the producers of the adaptations have realized that it is a captivating literary work by delving into its content,

they invite readers to follow in their steps and rediscover *Makura no sōshi* through manga.

These manga adaptations effectively rectify misconceptions of Sei's writing as incoherent and tedious generated by the work's categorization as a *zuihitsu*, complex textual history, and stylistic diversity. They also dismantle negative portrayals of the author and misrepresentations of the tone of her work resulting from later writers' and scholars' attempts to underscore the superiority of Murasaki Shikibu and her *Genji monogatari*.⁶⁴ Updating *Makura no sōshi* for present-day readers, however, these recent rewritings inevitably create new readings of the eleventh-century text shaped in the present context. These new interpretations, though misconceptions of their own, increase the audience of *Makura no sōshi* and alleviate its marginalized status both as writing that belongs to a minor genre within the Japanese literary canon and as a classical literary work, or *koten*. Produced to entertain and educate, these new *pillow books* tout Sei's text and serve as primers on Japanese literature. As manga scholar Itō Yū reminds us, educational manga (*gakushū manga* 学習マンガ), whether aimed at children or adults, is not intended to replace study guides and school materials but to intrigue and instigate readers to read specialized literature.⁶⁵

Intended to resurrect ancient literary works, manga create an imaginary past. Rewriting *Makura no sōshi* as a story at the center of which is an energetic young woman who thrives in an elite working environment not only increases the appeal of the work for modern readers, but also projects an image of ancient Japan as a place in which women were free from typical oppressive patriarchal structures. Scenes of Sei lauding working women and criticizing those who dedicate their lives to housework and child-rearing further attest that even someone who lived one thousand years ago could discredit popular belief in female nurturance. The focus on women and career in manga echoes the shifting roles of women in Japanese society and their increased participation in the labor force. Drawing parallels with contemporary Japan, manga adaptations create a continuum between the distant past and the present and claim that although written a thousand years ago *Makura no sōshi* still holds relevance for modern readers.

NOTES

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¹ Fujimoto Munetoshi 藤本宗利, “‘Haru ha akebono’ o ikasu tame ni: koten kyōzai toshite no aratanaru kokoromi,” in *Atarashii sakuhinron e, atarashii kyōzairon e: Bungaku kenkyū to kokugo kyōiku kenkyū. Koten hen 3*, ed. Tanaka Minoru et al. (Tokyo: Yūbun shoin, 2003). Cited in Komori Kiyoshi, “Kokugo kyōiku no naka no *Makura no sōshi*,” in *Makura no sōshi: Sōzō to shinsei*, ed. Tsushima Tomoaki and Komori Kiyoshi (Tokyo: Kanrin shobō, 2011), 272.

² Fujimoto, cited in Komori, “Kokugo kyōiku no naka no *Makura no sōshi*,” 272. For a list of manga inspired by *The Pillow Book* see Mimura Yūko, “Shōjo manga no naka no *Makura no sōshi*-Chūgū Teishi no mō hitotsu no koi to Shōshi no henbō,” in *Makura no sōshi: Sōzō to shinsei*, ed. Tsushima Tomoaki and Komori Kiyoshi (Tokyo: Kanrin shobō, 2011), 315–16. Some of the adaptations have appeared in series, such as *Kumon no manga koten bungakukan* (1991), *Nihon no koten o yomō, shirō!* (2010), *Gakken manga nihon no koten* (2015), and *Sutorī de tanoshimu nihon no koten* (2017).

³ Mendō Kazuki 面堂かずき, *Makura no sōshi. NHK Manga de yomu koten 1* (Tokyo: Hōmusha, 2006).

⁴ Variety Art Works, *Makura no sōshi, Manga de dokuha 77* (Tokyo: Īsuto Puresu, 2011).

⁵ Yumiko Comukai 小向裕美子, *Honjitsu mo ito okashi Makura no sōshi* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2014). This manga is supervised by Akama Etsuko who is a professor of Japanese literature at Jūmonji University (Jūmonji Gakuen Joshi Daigaku).

⁶ NHK is Japan’s national broadcasting organization.

⁷ The adaptations of *Ise monogatari* and *Sarashina nikki* from the same series have been examined in this special section of *Japanese Language and Literature*. See Joshua S. Mostow’s “The *Ise-e* Tradition and *Ise* Manga” and Pana Barova-Özcan’s “From a Romantic *Shōjo* to an Independent *Otaku*: The Transformations of the Female Protagonist in the *Sarashina Nikki* Manga.”

⁸ Hashimoto Osamu 橋本治, *Momojiri goyaku Makura no sōshi* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1987–1995).

- ⁹ 宮廷での思い出とか楽しかったことステキな人達のことなんかを いっぱいつめこんだ ^{ノート}草子. Mendō Kazuki, *Makura no sōshi*, 344.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 89.
- ¹¹ 見ててねお父さま あたし頑張る！！ Ibid., 97.
- ¹² See Gergana Ivanova, *Unbinding “The Pillow Book”: The Many Lives of a Japanese Classic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018). Chapters 4, 5, and 6 particularly focus on the images of Sei over the centuries.
- ¹³ Sei Shōnagon is referred to as Nagon-chan in the TV show as well, thus invoking an image of a young and cute girl or an endearing adult through the suffix *-chan* following her name.
- ¹⁴ Mendō Kazuki, *Makura no sōshi*, 43–53.
- ¹⁵ 若いうちはスマートな方がいいわよ. Ibid., 44–47.
- ¹⁶ I refer to Jan Bardsley’s invited talk “Fashioning Mr. Japan: Masculinity on the Pageant Runway.” September 13, 2019, University of Cincinnati.
- ¹⁷ Because Sei heard that the emperor had commissioned the production of a copy of the text, she playfully brought together the words *shiki* (spread) and *makura* as words associated with each other in Japanese poetry, as in the phrase *shikitaе no makura* (hempen/spread-out pillow). See Kitamura Kigin, *Makura no sōshi: Shunshoshō*, ed. Ikeda Kikan (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1951), 1:35. See also Burton Watson, trans., *Records of the Grand Historian* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 3 vols.
- ¹⁸ しっかりしなくちゃ！！； 働け！私の脳細胞！！ Mendō Kazuki, *Makura no sōshi*, 40.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 10–16.
- ²⁰ ぼくの ^{くるま}牛車にのっていきなよ ハニー♥サイコーの ^{ガソリン}牛 だから 走りがグーよ♥ Ibid., 22. The panel appears as an example of “Irritating Things” (*iraira suru mono* イライラするもの！！).
- ²¹ Cited from Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik, *A Communicative Grammar of English* (London: Longman, 1994), 26. Both scholars define slang as “language which is very familiar in style and is usually restricted to the members of a particular social group.”
- ²² Mendō Kazuki, *Makura no sōshi*, 348.

- ²³ 働く女性の人生が綴られたお話です. Variety Art Works, *Makura no sōshi*, 6. Because this manga does not include page numbers, the numbers I provide refer to the pages as I have counted them beginning immediately after the title page.
- ²⁴ Daily Yomiuri, “Novels under Manga Cover: Convenience Stores Go Literary,” *The Yomiuri Shinbun* (July 25, 2008), accessed May 3, 2020, <https://archive.is/20080802010605/http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/20080725TDY13001.htm>.
- ²⁵ Each manga is produced by editor Maruo Kōsuke, who compiles dialogues and arranges the narrative, and artists from the production company Variety Art Works, who draw the images. Ishikawa Tomoya, “Manga ‘Mein Kampf’ Gives Hitler a New Audience,” *The Asahi shinbun* (2009/09/30), accessed May 3, 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20091002224341/http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/TKY200909300044.html>.
- ²⁶ Variety Art Works, *Makura no sōshi*, 1.
- ²⁷ See Section 176 in Sei Shōnagon, *The Pillow Book*, trans. Meredith McKinney (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 168–74. See also section 178 in Tsushima Tomoaki and Nakajima Wakako, eds., *Shinpen Makura no sōshi* (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 2010).
- ²⁸ McKinney, *The Pillow Book*, 168.
- ²⁹ Although the phrase “Otsukaresama” has existed since the Meiji period, it became commonly used in the workplace regardless of the hierarchical status distinction between the speaker and the addressee after 1989. Togī トギー, “Dōshite ‘otsukaresama’ wa OK na noni, ‘gokurōsama’ wa shitsurei na no? Tadashii tsukaikata to sono henka,” LIG, accessed March 27, 2021, <https://liginc.co.jp/272362>.
- ³⁰ Variety Art Works, *Makura no sōshi*, 10–21.
- ³¹ 中宮様にお仕えすることができた日々は私の宝物だ その宝物はしっかりとこの草子に収めてある. *Ibid.*, 189–90.
- ³² ですが清少納言の思いが綴られた『枕草子』は1000年たった現代でも色あせることなく日本で最初の随筆 王朝女流文学の傑作として今なお輝き続けているのです. *Ibid.*, 190.
- ³³ 古典だからと倦厭されがちな『枕草子』。実際は、清少納言のするどい観察眼が冴え渡る秀逸の女性エッセイ。女同士の本音と建前、恋人との駆け引き、彼女の好きなもの、嫌いなものなど現代女性が共感できる内容満載。Kadokawa, “Ninki irasutorēta ga egaku Makura no sōshi,” accessed May 3, 2020, <https://www.kadokawa.co.jp/product/301312000324/>.

- ³⁴ Cited from Haruo Shirane, “Introduction,” in *Inventing the Classics: Modernity, National Identity, and Japanese Literature*, ed. Haruo Shirane and Tomi Suzuki, 1–30 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press: 2000), 2.
- ³⁵ Comukai, *Honjitsu mo ito okashi Makura no sōshi*, 10. I follow the spelling of the name of the manga artist as requested by Kadokawa.
- ³⁶ 平安時代の清少納言が平成を生きる自分と、同じようなことでブーブー怒り、イラつき、失敗したり、喜んだり. *Ibid.*, 10–11.
- ³⁷ 何も変わっていないんだ. *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ だけじゃないって知ってました? *Ibid.*, 2.
- ³⁹ There are two types of lists in *Makura no sōshi*: *mono*-type and *wa*-type. *Mono*-type lists are “assortments of situations and compartment that evoke common emotions or invite similar assessment, such as ‘Embarrassing Things’ and ‘Elegant Things,’” whereas *wa*-type lists are “catalogues of appellations of concrete entities, including places, deities, court positions, anthologies, and robes.” Cited from Ivanova, *Unbinding “The Pillow Book,”* 22.
- ⁴⁰ Comukai, *Honjitsu mo ito okashi Makura no sōshi*, 186, 190.
- ⁴¹ See Ivanova, *Unbinding “The Pillow Book,”* 136–43.
- ⁴² The Japanese text appears in Figure 6. Comukai, *Honjitsu mo ito okashi Makura no sōshi*, 5.
- ⁴³ McKinney, *The Pillow Book*, 22–23 (section 21); Tsushima and Nakajima, *Shinpen Makura no sōshi*, 38–39 (section 22).
- ⁴⁴ 専業主婦だと思うのお—愛する人の子供産んでさ 家庭を守って 結婚記念日とかにはさ、一輪でもいいからお花なんかプレゼントされてさ おいしいごはんをつくったらおいしいねとホメてくれる的な. Comukai, *Honjitsu mo ito okashi Makura no sōshi*, 20.
- ⁴⁵ 女だって社会に出て 働いて (宮仕えして) 世の中ってものを、知るべきよ!! *Ibid.*, 21.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.
- ⁴⁷ 時代が時代ならいいサムライになっていたかも. *Ibid.*, 175.
- ⁴⁸ *Sarashi*, cloth wrapped around the chest to protect from injuries, was originally worn by samurai and later by members of the yakuza. *Jingi* refers to the “correct yakuza conduct” or “the formal greetings peculiar to this world.” See Peter B. E. Hill, *The Japanese Mafia: Yakuza, Law, and the State* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford

University Press, 2003), 86.

- ⁴⁹ 逆境でも弱味は見せませんぜ！！ Comukai, *Honjitsu mo ito okashi Makura no sōshi*, 175.
- ⁵⁰ For an explanation and translation of the whole episode, see R. Keller Kimbrough, “Apocryphal Texts and Literary Identity: Sei Shōnagon and *The Matsushima Diary*,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 57.2 (Summer 2002): 133–71, 135–36.
- ⁵¹ 清少納言が宮仕え生活で得た体験を元に、後宮女房の立場で書いた作品。Comukai, *Honjitsu mo ito okashi Makura no sōshi*, 24.
- ⁵² 切れ味がよく表現力豊かなコムカイ漫画にピッタリとはまります。これまでにない新しい『枕草子』の世界を、是非、体感していただきたい。Ibid., 25.
- ⁵³ See for example Nishikawa Sukenobu 西川祐信, and Minamoto Sekkō 源浙江, *Ehon Asahi-yama*, vol. 1 (1741), 1 *omote*.
- ⁵⁴ This episode appears in section 282 in Tsushima Tomoaki 津島智明 and Nakajima Wakako 中島和歌子, eds., *Shinpen Makura no sōshi* (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 2010), 282–83 and section 279 in Meredith McKinney, *The Pillow Book* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 238.
- ⁵⁵ Ivanova, *Unbinding “The Pillow Book,”* 111–12.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 144–46.
- ⁵⁷ Mendō Kazuki, *Makura no sōshi*, 121–25.
- ⁵⁸ Variety Art Works, *Makura no sōshi*, 24.
- ⁵⁹ Comukai, *Honjitsu mo ito okashi Makura no sōshi*, 51–52.
- ⁶⁰ According to Kishigami Shinji’s 岸上慎二 theory, Sei Shōnagon married Tachibana no Norimitsu 橘則光 (b. 965) who was a year older than her and gave birth to a son Tachibana no Norinaga 橘則長 in 982. The marriage between Sei and Norimitsu ended in the year 1000. Masuda Shigeo 増田繁夫, “Denki,” in *Makura no sōshi daijiten*, ed. Makura no sōshi kenkyūkai (Tokyo: Bensei shuppan, 2001), 150.
- ⁶¹ Shamooin defines *shōjo bunka* as “a discreet discourse on the social construction of girlhood.” See Deborah Shamooin, *Passionate Friendship: The Aesthetics of Girls’ Culture in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2012), 1.
- ⁶² Asahikawa Hiyori 朝日川日和, and Fukuda Hiroko 福田裕子, *Makura no sōshi: Heian joshi no kirakira nōto* (Tokyo: Kadokawa tsubasa bunko, 2020), accessed May 3, 2020, <https://tsubasabunko.jp/product/321909000653.html>.

- ⁶³ Kawamura Yūko 川村裕子, *Heian joshi no tanshī! seikatsu* (Tokyo: Iwanami Junia shinsho, 2014), accessed May 3, 2020, <https://www.iwanami.co.jp/book/b223810.html>.
- ⁶⁴ See Ivanova, *Unbinding “The Pillow Book,”* 136–43.
- ⁶⁵ Itō Yū 伊藤遊, “Gakushū manga kenkyū josetsu: Kyōiku, kyarakutā, riaritī,” in *Kokusai manga kenkyū 3 Nichikan manga kenkyū* (Kyoto: International Manga Research Center, Kyoto Seika University, 2013), 208, 210.