Japanese Language and Literature
Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese
jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 55 | Number 2 | October 2021 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2021.186
ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

Anxieties of Authorship, Critique of Readership: Mishima Yukio's Modern *Noh* Play *Genji kuyō*

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Introduction

Mishima Yukio 三島由紀夫 (1925–1970) was a Japanese writer known domestically and internationally as much for his outsized personality as for his prominent literary career. Without question, his most infamous act was his last: ritual suicide by self-disembowelment after failing to incite a military coup.[1] This dramatic incident half a century ago ensured that his name would forever be associated with a certain fanatic imperialism. It also largely fulfilled Mishima's own wish, which he repeated in the final years of his life, that he would die as a military man.[2] And yet, he was until the end foremost a literary artist, concerned with the critical reception of his written works and preoccupied with his lasting reputation as an author.[3] This paper examines Mishima's portrayal of the celebrity writer, as well as the potentials and limitations of literature, as presented in his oft-neglected modern *noh* play *Genji kuyō* 源氏供養 (Devotional offering for Genji, 1962).[4]

Widely acclaimed for his long-form novels, Mishima was a prolific playwright who dominated the post-war Japanese theater scene and enjoyed critical success in multiple dramatic genres.[5] While he compiled eight of his modern *noh* plays into *Kindai nōgakushū* 近代能楽集 (A collection of modern *noh* plays, 1968), Mishima pointedly excluded *Genji kuyō* and further banned its stage performance and print reproduction.[6] In a dialogue with Miyoshi Yukio 三好行雄 (1926–1990) first published in May of 1970, he remarked that it was "a mistake to adapt the subject matter."[7] Largely considered a "failure," the play has garnered little sustained critical interest, not least because of the apparent renunciation by Mishima himself.[8] In analyzing Mishima's *Genji kuyō,* I position the play within the long history of prayers for *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 (ca.

1008, title first translated as *The Tale of Genji* by Arthur Waley, 1925) that began in the twelfth century in response to the perceived ambiguous morality of the author Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 (d. ca. 1014).[9] The medieval *noh* play *Genji kuyō* 源氏供養 (fifteenth century, translated as *A Memorial Service for Genji,* 1991), from which Mishima's piece derives its title, is only one iteration of several that recount rites performed in an attempt to bring salvation to *Genji monogatari*'s author, readers, and, in the case of the *noh* play, its fictional protagonist.[10] Mishima's *Genji kuyō* articulates an ambivalence about authorial control and legacy creation, and simultaneously censures both critical and casual readers. Considered in the context of the tradition of *Genji kuyō* narratives, the play offers a critique not only of literary production and consumption in post-occupation Japan, but also of a historical tendency in the validation and canonization of literary works arising from certain modes of reading.

Yūkoku 憂國 (1961, translated as *Patriotism,* 1966), published a year prior to *Genji kuyō,* is often discussed as Mishima's final death wish dramatized, and indeed hints at his mindset in the last decade of his life.[11] *Genji kuyō* provides an equally crucial view, not of his aspirations, but of his anxieties: the life, death, and type of literary recognition the writer wished to avoid. Though Mishima himself eschewed it after its initial publication, *Genji kuyō* offers critical insights regarding the writing and reading of literature.

Mishima as a Post-War Writer

While much of the reading public was first introduced to Mishima Yukio only after the end of World War II*,* within the literary circle of the Japanese Romantic school (*Nihon rōmanha*) he had made a name for himself early. Enjoying tutelage from the established authors, the boy born Hiraoka Kimitake began publishing under his pen name while still a student at the Gakushūin Peers' School.[12] Despite imperialist ideological pressures and severe paper shortages during the war, Mishima was able to publish his first novel, *Hanazakari no mori* 花ざかりの森 (1944, translated as *Forest in Full Bloom,* 2000), in book form.[13] The entire run of 4,000 copies was sold out within a week. Feeling the novel to be his life's work, he recounted, "And now, I was ready to die at any time."[14]

Yet, of course, Mishima lived. The year 1945 brought about Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allied powers, and the Shōwa emperor's subsequent declaration that renounced any claim to divinity.[15] The year held additional personal symbolism for Mishima, for in January he had

reached the official age of adulthood as a *seijin*. Evading death had a profound impact on the writer.[16] Indeed, feelings of ambivalence about surviving the war were common, as is prominently reflected in the works of writers like Ōe Kenzaburō 大江健三郎 (b. 1935) and Nosaka Akiyuki 野坂昭如 (1930–2015).[17]

Because Mishima had early been hailed as a young prodigy by the literary elite, any subsequent failure to garner similar accolades was no doubt all the more painful. In recounting the days after the war, he lamented feeling already obsolete:

> The recognition I had previously received from a select group of literati vanished, and the fantasy that I held at the end of the war, that mine was the voice of the age, was no more. I found myself, at twenty, to be left behind by the times. I was completely lost.…
> During the war, minor, individual ideas [*hisokana kojinteki shikō*] could paradoxically be expressed. But the post-war era quickly saw the return of a competitive market of crude ideologies and artistic principles, and society completely discarded anything that did not fit its own mold. I, the young boy who had fancied himself a genius within a small circle, became, after the war, a completely powerless novice, treated by the world like an immature fledgling.[18]

In a famous episode, the writer and critic Nakamura Mitsuo 中村光夫 (1922–1988), who would later become a close friend to Mishima, read early manuscripts of his work for the publishing house Chikuma shobō and rated them to be "minus 120 points."[19] Mishima also felt little kinship with other writers of the time, questioning whether he could abide by the label of "post-war writer" (*sengokuha*).[20] Support from Kawabata Yasunari 川端康成 (1900–1972), who became a lifelong mentor, was crucial in allowing Mishima to break back into a changed literary establishment. Largely thanks to Kawabata's recommendations, Mishima published short stories, including those earlier dismissed by Nakamura, such as *Chūsei* 中世 (The medieval period, 1946).[21] Then came *Kamen no kokuhaku* 仮面の告白 (1949, translated as *Confessions of a Mask*, 1958), which proved to be a massive success.[22]

Around this time, the unrelenting power of the mass media was turning popular writers into celebrities.[23] While some authors became evermore popular, scrutiny over their lives unrelated to their written works increased. Mishima, while critical of the media, also used it to his advantage:

> Novelists, politicians, and athletes—they are all swept up in this current age of mass media. You have to maintain your image, and be constantly calculating your moves. Otherwise you are in danger of violating your true essence [*honshitsu*].[24]

Especially sensitive to his public persona, Mishima carefully curated his image until the very end of his life. In the opinion of writer and politician Ishihara Shintarō 石原慎太郎 (b. 1932), there was "no one as aware of the media, and who could astutely control it—in other words, maintain his own course."[25] No doubt the semi-autobiographical and confessional nature of *Kamen no kokuhaku* primed the public to maintain an interest in Mishima's personal life.

The age also saw a proliferation of popular novels that dismantled the position of "pure literature" (*jun bungaku*).[26] Attuned to this diversification of literature, Mishima was able to garner even wider mass appeal through select publications. While simultaneously writing works he considered to be more serious, for years he published potboiler-like serial novels which he called "minor works."[27] This is not to say that his other works were dismissed, as even his less critically successful novels continued to sell.[28] Seeking recognition both domestically and abroad, Mishima famously pined for the Nobel prize in literature, and appealed to international friends and professional acquaintances for help in winning it.[29]

But Mishima never received the Nobel, a singular validation which would likely have changed the course of his life.[30] He was, after all, "extraordinarily sensitive to criticism of work [that] he took seriously," and the Nobel committee was, at least in theory, evaluating his entire life's oeuvre to date.[31] The failure of *Kyōko no ie* 鏡子の家 (Kyōko's house, 1959) to secure critical praise was likely especially painful, particularly because he considered it to be his most personally meaningful to date.[32] *Utsukushii hoshi* 美しい星 (A beautiful star*,* 1962), serialized in the same year that he published *Genji kuyō,* received a mediocre reception, and by the following year and the publication of *Gogo no eikō* 午後の曳航 (1963, translated as *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace With the Sea,* 1965), Mishima's domestic popularity had declined dramatically since its peak in the late 1950s.[33] *Kinu to meisatsu* 絹と明察 (1964, translated as *Silk and Insight*, 1998), another work of "serious effort," was also a commercial failure.[34] Though his lighter novels remained popular and he financially profited from their sales, Mishima was losing the young college and college-educated readers to the likes of Ishihara Shintarō, Ōe Kenzaburō,

and Abe Kōbō 安部公房 (1924–1993). As John Nathan put it, Mishima "was not attracting the audience he wanted, and the knowledge hurt him."[35] Thus, when he published his play *Genji kuyō* in 1962, Mishima was already feeling his waning popularity.

Modern noh Plays and *Genji kuyō*

Mishima's prospects as a rising star seemed nearly boundless in 1950 when he began publishing his series of modern *noh* plays. It was perhaps inevitable that he would compose such plays at some point in his literary career, as his fascination with the medieval dramatic genre had already taken root in childhood.[36] The first *noh* performance he saw was *Miwa* 三輪 (early fifteenth century, translated as *Three Circles*, 1988), and while he later deemed it "relatively mundane," he was enthralled.[37] Describing *noh* as having the most profound and fundamental influence on his writing, Mishima called it an "unending undercurrent of [his] literature" most apparent in works like *Kinkakuji* 金閣寺 (1956, translated as *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, 1994) and *Eirei no koe* 英霊の聲 (Voices of the heroic dead, 1966).[38] His final work, *Hōjō no umi* 豊饒の海 (1965–70, translated as *The Sea of Fertility,* 1972–74), also clearly highlights medieval Buddhist themes.[39]

While maintaining some structural likeness to traditional *noh*, in his own plays Mishima focused on the genre's metaphysical themes and relative freedom from temporal and spatial constraints. Resituating stories in contemporary settings, he avoided source materials that were difficult to adapt, such as plays belonging to the category of "god plays" (*waki nō*), or those which heavily featured stylized dances.[40] In other words, he did not adapt plays that relied excessively on highly codified symbolism, which would require that the audience be experienced in the act of consuming *noh*. In a conversation with Donald Keene (1922–2019) in 1964, Mishima declared that his modern *noh* were the only plays that truly worked in translation, precisely due to their metaphysical themes.[41]

Mishima himself wrote that he "adapted" (*adaputo shita*) the source material and called his works "adaptations" (*hon'an*), but they take only elements of the original.[42] As Keene put it, Mishima was inspired by the *kokoro,* or essence, of the source plays.[43] Keene also called the end products "the first genuinely successful" modern *noh* plays, and while it has been over half a century since the statement was made, it arguably holds true today.[44] And indeed, the plays were welcomed initially with much fanfare. For some time after the publication of *Kantan* 邯鄲 (1950,

translated with the title *Kantan,* 1957)*,* the inaugural play of the series*,* the highly abstract works drew critical and popular acclaim.[45] But with the proliferation of other *noh*-inspired texts as well as his own declining popularity, Mishima's series lost steam.[46]

Genji kuyō was published in the March 1962 issue of *Bungei* 文藝 with the subtitle "*Kindai nōgakushū no uchi*" (Part of the modern *noh* collection), indicating that at the point of initial publication, Mishima considered it to belong to the named series.[47] Already by the following year, however, there is evidence that Mishima had excluded the play from what he conceived to be his anthology of modern *noh* plays.[48] When he released the collected *Kindai nōgakushū* in 1968, *Yoroboshi* 弱法師 (The blind young man)*,* first published in the July 1960 edition of *Koe,* became officially and retrospectively designated as the eighth and final play of the series.[49]

In Mishima's *Genji kuyō,* two "literary youths" (*bungaku seinen*) climb atop a seaside cliff to visit the stone memorial of Nozoe Murasaki 野添紫, a fictional writer whose novel *Haru no ushio* 春の潮 (Spring tide) was an unprecedented best-seller. While the youths discuss the author and her book, the spirit of Nozoe appears. Together with the young men, she looks on as the figure of Hikaru 光, the protagonist of her novel, repeatedly throws himself into the sea, reenacting his suicide depicted in the final scene of the novel. After some discussion, the spirit of the novelist disappears and the youths find that what they thought was Hikaru was a trick of the eye, the result of the revolving light from a nearby lighthouse. As a group tour comes to admire the monument, the two young men laugh, and declare that they are no longer fans of the writer, or of literature.[50]

The most in-depth critique of *Genji kuyō* and *Kindai nōgakushū* was published in the last decade by Tamura Keiko, who makes the convincing claim that Mishima's *Genji kuyō* functions as an epilogue to the whole collection and underscores its complete negation of salvation and of life itself—a significant issue that I will return to below.[51] While the play has otherwise received little attention, some early critics like fellow playwright and collaborator Dōmoto Masaki 堂本正樹 (1933–2019) hailed it for its evocative inquiries into the mind of a literary author.[52] Since then, the few other studies of the play have largely focused on the portrayal of the fictional author Nozoe Murasaki and her novel. Naturally, Nozoe has been compared to Murasaki Shikibu, the author of *Genji monogatari*; after all, aside from the similarity in their names and the names of their protagonists, the fifty-four women whom Nozoe's Hikaru is said to have

"loved, one by one," is also an obvious reference to the number of chapters that comprise the Heian classic.[53] But scholars have not focused on references to *Genji monogatari* and most often have deemed the play to be a self-critique of Mishima as a writer and a concession on the difficulties of writing.[54]

Indeed, the writer depicted in *Genji kuyō* shares some characteristics with Mishima. Admiring Nozoe's memorial early in the play, the two literary youths (identified as A and B) find an inscription of what we are told is the iconic line from Nozoe's novel:

> B: (Moving his head close to the memorial) They copied this quote from the author's own handwritten manuscript. (Flipping to the last page of the novel) Page 382, it's the fifth line. "As if a bird with elegant, satin wings [*shōsha na shusu no tsubasa o motta tori no yō ni*], Hikaru threw his body towards the spring tide." … Her writing is scraggly and hard to read.
> A: All novelists have that kind of handwriting.[55]

Mishima, known for his numerous and ornate similes, might as well have composed the phrase engraved on Nozoe's memorial in one of his own works.[56] As he declared in *Bunshō dokuhon* 文章読本 (A guide to composition*,* 1959)*,* he believed effective adjectives and similes, when not overused, can immediately give life to an image and allow the reader to grasp the essence of the thing described.[57] Above, Hikaru is likened not to a bird with simply "elegant wings" (too abstract and subjective) or "satin wings" (too trite and plain), but to a bird with "elegant, satin wings." The phrase "as if" (*no yō ni*) forms a simile that describes the man as sharing the appearance and impression of a bird (rather than metaphorically transforming into a bird), and is also reminiscent of Mishima's preferred style. Most crucially, the adjective *shōsha* (neat and refined) also appears in *Yūkoku* to describe the heroic lieutenant as he contemplates his own face in a mirror, cleanly shaven in preparation for his suicide: *"*There was a certain elegance [*aru shōsha na mono*], he even felt, in the association of death with this radiantly healthy face."[58] Mishima had long depicted suicide as both beautiful and heroic, but the use of the same word in *Yūkoku* and *Genji kuyō*, published within fourteen months of one another, hints at a connection between the suicides committed by the lieutenant and the protagonist of Nozoe's novel. The lieutenant in *Yūkoku* kills himself out of loyalty to both the emperor and his comrades, so clearly the motivations for the two fictional men's suicides are unrelated. Or, to be more precise, the reason behind Hikaru's death is never explained, except

that Nozoe felt it would be a cheap cliché for a writer to let him live, as I will explain below.[59] The contrast between the characters makes the coinciding depiction of their deaths even more profound, binding the two together simply for their act of suicide. And on a very basic level, it shows the overlapping lexicon used by Mishima (the writer) and Nozoe (the fictional novelist).

The young men continue to contemplate Nozoe's story:

> B: (While sipping black tea from a canister) You know, that's the strange thing about this novel. It's almost bewildering how realistic it is. Even though she writes those overly ornate sentences, the characters in the story feel so real, as if you could touch them. Ideas have physicality, and the flesh embodies ideas [*shisō ga nikukan o mochi, nikukan ga shisō o motte iru*]. Her writing is like a gem that sweats and bleeds. It's like the power of sulfuric acid, that unconscious creative force that makes reality rot away. The novel itself is like a bird cage covered in black muslin for the night. One can only see the elegant shape of the hanging cage, the cold skeletal frame of its bars, the outline of the engraved trimming. But we can feel with certainty what is inside—the sleeping bird, the occasional flaps of its wings as it dreams, the faint pulse of its heart, the light tremor of its strong leg muscles—all of this can be felt without doubt. The novel is just like that.
> A: Hey, you're just repeating Kuwata Makoto's "Essay on Nozoe Murasaki."
> B: Oh man. You've already read it.[60]

The notion that ideas have physicality and that flesh reifies ideas is seen most conspicuously in the characters of *Hōjō no umi* that individually represent absolute ideals and together depict the fundamental Buddhist concept of unending cycles of life and suffering.[61] The reference to sulfuric acid is close to Mishima's description of what he determines to be the alchemical property of Murasaki Shikibu's protagonist Genji.[62] But it could also describe Mishima's own lyrical prose, highly decorative and comprised of an impressive range of vocabulary from that featured in Heian literature to what were then newly imported loanwords, particularly from the English and French. When writers write about writers, it is almost inevitable that the text will be read at least in part as self-representation, and while Mishima remained ambivalent about the *shishōsetsu* (I-novel) genre, he also obviously wrote often about himself, as evinced in *Kamen no kokuhaku* and *Kyōko no ie*. It is perhaps impossible not to see elements of the writer in *Genji kuyō,* regardless of intent.

As suggested in the above quote, the "realism" or the "realistic presence" (*jitsuzaikan*) of the characters in Nozoe's novel is key to its popularity. Youth B declares that there is "not a single person today who doubts that Hikaru was a real man [*Hikaru no jitsuzai o utagau yatsu ha iya shinai*]."[63] This emphasis on realism is likely a reference to the discourse on "actuality" (*akuchuaritī*) and pure literature in the 1960s, as Fukuda Ryō has recently discussed.[64] Furthermore, as Sakita Susumu proposed early on, it may suggest Mishima's own insecurities that his writings always lacked something in conveying realism.[65] The debate was also part of the larger question of the definition of "pure literature" and the place of literature in general that was highly contested in the years after the war. In a conversation held in 1964, two years after the publication of *Genji kuyō,* Mishima declared that there was no other time in recent history in which the question of why "literary men" (*bunshi*) should write novels was so crucial; the relative lack of pressure meant that there was no natural reason to write.[66] Though clearly it was a time of multi-continental turmoil, most notably regarding the Vietnam war, as well as domestic tensions due to the renewal of the U. S.–Japan Security Treaty, in Mishima's view Japan was becoming too comfortable. There is, indeed, no denying that the post-occupation state of literature itself is being questioned in *Genji kuyō,* but as I will discuss, unlike discourses that focused on the production of literature, Mishima's play highlights its consumption, just as the earliest references to prayers for *Genji monogatari* dealt with how the tale was consumed.

The *Genji kuyō* Tradition

The long history of prayers for *Genji* goes back to at least the second half of the twelfth century. In the proclamation *Genji ipponkyō* 源氏一品経 (ca. 1166, translated as *A Dedicatory Proclamation for The Tale of Genji,* 2015), Murasaki Shikibu is said to be condemned for writing a sensuous, fictional tale (*monogatari*) that corrupted readers.[67] She had committed what might be called the original sin of the fiction writer: she conspicuously flouted a fundamental Buddhist precept that forbids *mōgo* 妄語 (falsehoods) and *kigo* 綺語 (frivolous language). Without rites conducted on her behalf, she, alongside readers of *Genji monogatari*—whose dreams she would haunt in warning—were to be damned to eternal suffering.[68] In response, ceremonies were sponsored to pray for Murasaki Shikibu's soul, thereby simultaneously redeeming the *Genji* reader. As Thomas Harper notes, while documentation of these rites is scant, such ceremonies that often included several participants copying the *Lotus*

Sutra, as well as composing poems that cite *Genji* chapter titles, "were a significant current in the very mainstream of literary activity" of medieval Japan.[69]

The medieval *noh* play *Genji kuyō* 源氏供養 (fifteenth century, translated as *A Memorial Service for Genji*, 1991) is the best known of the texts that make up the tradition of obsequies for *Genji*.[70] Performed at least from the mid-fifteenth century, the *noh* piece of unknown authorship is an enduringly popular play that is still staged today. In it, a priest of the Agui temple of Kyoto is on his way to visit Ishiyama temple in Ōmi (present-day Shiga) when he and his attendant are approached by a woman, soon revealed to be the spirit of Murasaki Shikibu. She asks that he conduct memorial rites for "Genji," for she had failed to seek penance after writing the tale and thus could not attain salvation after death. She later joins the priest at Ishiyama and dances during the service. The service takes the form of a recitation of a shortened version of the *Genji monogatari hyōbyaku* 源氏物語表白 (A proclamation for the Tale of Genji, late twelfth-early thirteenth century), which includes *Genji* chapter titles woven together into a poem.[71] In the end, it is revealed that she was the incarnation of bodhisattva Kannon, and that *Genji monogatari* itself is a parable meant to bring enlightenment to its readers by teaching them that "the world is but a dream."[72]

A significant feature that distinguishes the medieval *Genji kuyō noh* play from earlier narratives that include prayers for *Genji* is the reason given for Murasaki Shikibu's punishment: she is suffering not for writing *Genji monogatari* per se, but because she did not seek penance afterwards. That is to say, she is condemned for not conducting a *Genji kuyō* herself. In the *kyōgen* interlude of the *noh*, often omitted from staged performances, it is further clarified that she had written the tale on the back of a copy of the *Great Wisdom Sutra*, and it is precisely for this act that she was to seek forgiveness. The sin is not in the writing of the tale, but rather, the sacrilegious desecration of the material object on which she wrote. Furthermore, whereas the earliest *Genji kuyō* narratives bound the author and *Genji* readers together, condemning them as accomplices in the crime of associating with *Genji monogatari,* in the *noh*, the readers are no longer in trouble.[73] With this in mind, I turn to why Nozoe Murasaki has not been able to gain salvation in Mishima's *Genji kuyō.*

Nature of the Sin

Mishima's *Genji kuyō* introduces yet another reason behind the author's suffering after death. The novelist Nozoe is being punished not for writing

fiction, as established in *Genji ipponkyō*, nor for failing to pray for "Genji," as in the medieval *Genji kuyō noh*, but for having created, in her protagonist Hikaru, something that "the heavens could not." In other words, she is being punished because of her superior skills as a creative writer. I will explain this further shortly, but first, this is not to say there is no reference to the fundamental sin of writing fiction. Below, the two youths notice that, as a spirit, Nozoe appears the same as in a photo taken shortly before her death from cancer. Earlier they had commented on the physical beauty of the author as one reason for her massive popularity. Throughout the play, the spirit is referred to as "woman" (*onna*):

> Woman: Ah, yes, the photo where the illness, before I knew of it, had already etched the mark of death on my face. It's not a bad picture.… *Everyone becomes like this,* when they've been writing for a long time. To mimic reality, to make it seem like something is real when it doesn't actually exist. It's an evil prank [*itazura*]. *This is punishment* for spending an entire lifetime fooling people.
> A: But a person like Nozoe sensei….
> Woman: (Laughing) There's no reason to address a ghost as *sensei*.
> A: Then, Nozoe-san: how did someone like you end up like this...?
> Woman: *I told you that it's punishment*. I fabricated a hero that was so loved by everyone, one that readers wished to believe was a real man, and who finally became real to them. This is my punishment for not saving that man in the end.[74] [emphasis added]

The first reference to "punishment" in the passage above is reminiscent of earlier *Genji kuyō* narratives like *Genji ipponkyō.* Nozoe declares that she was penalized for fooling readers into believing her fabricated tales. But in fact, the punishment she speaks of here is not a reference to her spirit wandering after death; rather, she is explaining how her face took on a certain quality after years as a writer. She tells the youth that writers of fiction all are eventually physiologically affected, similarly punished for deceiving readers. Just as youth A earlier claimed that "all novelists have handwriting" that is scraggly and difficult to decipher, Nozoe declares that all fiction writers end up with changed faces. Her impatient words, "I told you that it's punishment" in response to youth A's question, confuses the issue and introduces the possibility that the punishment for "fooling people" and the punishment for "not … saving that man in the end" are one and the same. But if this were the case, it would mean that she was asserting that all writers of fiction end up as wandering ghosts like herself. While this is not impossible, she clearly focuses on her unique situation and her

own particular novel. The reason she is a spirit who can only visit her own memorial, with no sign of salvation, is because she did not allow her protagonist to live. She is punished for her creative prowess as an author.

Later, we hear in more detail why exactly the ghost of Nozoe is in the state that she is, a ghost seemingly tethered to her own stone memorial:

> B: You said that you became like you are because you didn't save Hikaru. I had a question about this, regarding why you made someone so blessed kill himself. Was this revenge on your part?
> Woman: (With scorn) Don't ask such a foolish question. Why should a writer have to save a character, even if that makes her go to hell? Cheap novelists offer cheap relief with a simple drug. They cleverly weave in a "guidebook for life" in their novels—that is just like shilling for drugs.… Of course, I know that to write novels, to mimic reality and fool people, that is a sin. But an author has no obligation to save a character.[75]

Satisfied that the youths are following her explanation, she continues:

> The reason I became like this is because I became the object of jealousy [*netami*] of heaven [*ten*]. I attempted to mimic reality and created a man whom the world came to believe was real. That man, Hikaru, loved by fifty-four women, was from the beginning of a different kind of existence from that of the ordinary human.
>
> How was he different? Why was his a special existence? He was like the moon, always illuminated by the salvational light of the sun. That's why the women were drawn to that light, and they loved him. They thought that by being loved by him, they could be saved themselves. Understand this: what I did was to use this light of salvation to the fullest extent, while still denying salvation itself [*kono kyūsai no hikari dake o zonbun ni riyō shiteoite, kyūsai wa hitei shita to iu koto nano*]. For this I became subject to the ire of heaven.
>
> If my novel were just a patchwork story that attached cheap salvation to some trite existence, heaven would have laughed and forgiven me. But in my case, I was not forgiven. It is because a person like Hikaru is the kind of being heaven most wishes it could create. A person that absorbs the brilliant light of salvation, but then refuses salvation [*kyūsai no kagayaki dake o mi ni abite, kyūsai o kyohi-suru yō na ningen koso*].... Do you understand? Heaven cannot make such a being even if it wants to. It is because heaven cannot deny [*hitei*] salvation, which is the root of Hikaru's beauty. Only artists can do this. Artists can insert their hand into the fountain of salvation and scoop off just the top layer of beauty from its surface. That makes heaven angry.[76]

She is being punished because heaven envies her for having the ability and will to create a protagonist whose beauty is not attached to anything deeper, and who neither grants nor accepts salvation. Heaven does not deem what she has done to be *wrong,* at least as she tells it; it is that she has done something it cannot do. Whether what I have been referring to here as "heaven" (*ten*) points to superhuman deities, some other metaphysical force, or simply the social norms of the post-war period, the point is that the author sees herself as an object of envy—a person who is capable of creating something unique.[77] She sees herself, then, as a superior agent, and she declares her own actions as a writer to be righteous.

We see here another significant point of departure from both the *noh* and earlier narratives of *Genji* supplications. Nozoe shows no remorse in anything she has done, not in the act of writing fiction, nor in having her protagonist kill himself. In fact, she apologizes for, and apparently regrets, nothing. While she admits to occasional loneliness, she is still able to enjoy tobacco using a holder gifted from one of her readers, whom she calls "devotee" or "worshipper" (*sūhaisha*). The spirit of the novelist, bound to the confines of her memorial site, claims she is suffering, but exhibits no sign of distress. Rather, Nozoe seems to "enjoy being a ghost," as Tamura Keiko put it.[78] In telling contrast, the spirit of Murasaki Shikibu in the medieval *Genji kuyō noh* repeats her shame throughout the play. "How ashamed I am" (*hazukashi ya*), she reiterates, and specifically laments being recognized and observed: "I am ashamed to be seen" (*hazukashi-nagara waga sugata*).[79]

Mishima's Nozoe displays no guilt or regret, and is pleased to converse with the literary youths and to observe, with them, her protagonist repeatedly committing his act of self-destruction. As mentioned above, in the medieval *noh* the spirit of Murasaki Shikibu initially asks for help in saving "Genji." Because "Genji" could mean *Genji monogatari* or its eponymous character Genji, there is some ambiguity as to what exactly is being prayed for. Some scholars posit that references to "Genji" in the *noh* point solely to the protagonist, rather than the whole of *Genji monogatari*.[80] This is likely how Mishima interpreted the original *noh* as well, in which case the appearance of Hikaru in his play continuously throwing himself off the cliff takes on even greater significance. Instead of trying to save him, the author watches him repeat his suicide, simply noting she herself cannot be released until "his karma runs out."[81] In Mishima's play, not only does the author refuse to save her protagonist in her novel; she also shows no indication of seeking to save

him in the narrative afterlife. And in fact, Nozoe does not try to save herself either; in contrast to Murasaki Shikibu in the *Genji kuyō noh* and earlier stories of obsequies for *Genji*, Nozoe Murasaki seeks no salvation for anyone—not for her fictional protagonist, nor herself, nor her readers.

Absence of Salvation

In Mishima's *Genji kuyō*, there is no salvation, and as such, no savior. At the conclusion of many *noh* plays the featured spirit disappears and reaches salvation, or if not, there remains strong potential for salvation.[82] In the medieval *Genji kuyō* too, the spirit of Murasaki Shikibu is saved, and before disappearing is revealed to be the bodhisattva Kannon. At the conclusion of Mishima's play the author disappears, but there is every indication that she will return, still as a ghost, perhaps to appear in front of other dedicated literary youths to repeat her justification for why she had her protagonist commit suicide. Not only is Nozoe not saved, it appears that nothing for the spirit has changed.

This return to the status quo is seen elsewhere in Mishima's modern *noh* plays. In his *Sotoba Komachi* 卒塔婆小町 (1956, translated with the title *Sotoba Komachi,* 1957), for example, there is no salvation for Komachi.[83] She is exactly the same as when she first appears: an old woman counting the discarded cigarette butts she has collected. It is unclear whether she has any recollection of the interactions she has during the course of the play.[84] Tamura Keiko argues that the lack of salvation in *Genji kuyō,* as well as all of the plays that were included in the *Kindai nōgakushū,* is tantamount to a denial of life itself.[85] In fact, Mishima has the two youths and Nozoe come together, not to bring about salvation, but to witness (and confirm) the perpetuated cycle of suffering in life and death in Hikaru's repeated suicide. This absolute denial of salvation is particularly important not only in providing insight to Mishima's views of contemporary society, as Tamura has argued, but because in every iteration of the *Genji kuyō* narrative, beginning with the first extant example of it, all who have sinned—be it the *Genji* author, its readers, or the character Hikaru Genji—are ultimately saved. Since its inception, the so-called *Murasaki Shikibu dagoku setsu,* or the legend that the spirit of the *Genji* author was condemned for writing the tale and had thus fallen to hell, has always prefigured her salvation.[86]

Readers vs the Author

The medieval *noh Genji kuyō* includes an auspicious ending not atypical of the genre, revealing that Murasaki Shikibu is the incarnation of Kannon,

and that *Genji monogatari* was composed to teach the Buddhist truth that life is but a dream.[87] Far from being divine or even reaching salvation, in the conclusion of Mishima's *Genji kuyō,* the novelist is openly mocked by the two youths. In the context of the *Genji kuyō* tradition, which may pity the author but always idolizes her, the criticism of the fiction writer becomes even more conspicuous. It is not only this final laugh that disparages her. Taken in sum, Nozoe's mannerisms and priorities paint a pathetic figure. An example is found in how she speaks of what "lifts her spirits," as it were. Below, Nozoe has just admitted that she gets lonely:

> But I also have my moments of joy. Three times a day, five times on Saturdays and Sundays, sightseeing buses come here. Foolish, superficial worshippers [*oroka na kūso na sūhaisha-tachi*]—no, I don't mean you two—I can look at their faces. They mix up art and reality, and they cannot commit to either, those blissful ordinary people. I had for long lived feeding off of those people, so even after dying I enjoy gazing at their faces.[88]

She cannot help but mock her fans—people who are easy to fool and willing to be bamboozled by her work—though only they bring her pleasure. She distinguishes the tourists from the two youths, as if they too did not wish to conjure up a real Hikaru. And while she believes she can reason with the youths—which is to say, force her intentions as an author upon them, as I will expand below—she is willing to be seen by them, at close range. But this is not the case with the sightseers; while she judges them harshly, she cannot bear to have them judge her. Before the final scene, the author's spirit hides herself away, worried about being recognized by the approaching tour group:

> Woman: (Seeing something below) Oh! Here they are. I wonder why, at this time….
> (Sound of a bus stopping. People's voices buzz.)
> Woman: It's the people from the tour bus. I can't let them see me like this. Goodbye. Let's meet again. You will come again, right? My only joy is speaking to young people. Goodbye. (Looking down again) Oh, I have to hurry.[89]

She is proud but lonely, self-righteous but plagued by a constant need to explain herself. She wishes for the youths to return—though given that after Nozoe leaves, they discard their copies of her novel and declare that they will no longer be fooled by literature, it is not likely that they will ever visit the site again.

The youths' derision of the author is obviously contrasted with the overly ornate praise recited by a tour guide at the conclusion of Mishima's play. Below is the last scene of *Genji kuyō*; Nozoe's spirit has gone, the youths have just realized that the figure they thought was Hikaru was simply an illusion, and they declare that "with this, [they] will no longer associate with literature" (*korede bungaku nanka to wa engiri da*).[90] They join the sightseers and listen in on the guide:

> Guide: (Raising his voice) Well done climbing the dark path. Here is the memorial of the famous Nozoe Murasaki. First, please take a look at this etching that has been copied from the author's own handwritten manuscript. (Shines a flashlight on the quote) It says, "Like a bird with sleek, satin wings, Hikaru threw his body towards the spring tide." This elegant iconic passage [*ryūrei naru meibun*], as you all know, is the last line from the grand conclusion of her eternal masterpiece [*senko no meisaku*] *Spring tide,* where the unparalleled beauty Fujikura Hikaru, though loved by fifty-four women, threw himself off this cliff and killed himself. From this cliff, where the spring seashore winds whistle, let us appreciate to our heart's deepest content the final words of this monumental work that will forever remain a treasure of literary history.
> A: Hahaha.
> B: Hahaha.
> (The group gives the two youths a strange look)
> Curtain.[91]

This ending is all the more significant because in writing plays, Mishima always had the last scene worked out, with special emphasis placed on the last line of dialogue uttered before the curtain is lowered.[92] *Genji kuyō* ends with the overlapping laughter of the two youths, who have lost all faith not only in Nozoe's novel but literature as a whole.

It is a long-standing tradition that those who are mocked cannot reach salvation. While the original *noh Aya no tsuzumi* 綾鼓 (attributed to Zeami, fifteenth century, translated as *The Damask Drum,* 1922) simply implies that those who are made a fool hold on to their grudge after death, Mishima's *Aya no tsuzumi* 綾鼓 (1957, translated as *The Damask Drum*, 1957) makes this explicit.[93] When a poor man who has been tricked into the impossible task of playing a drum made of damask kills himself, he promises that he will remain to haunt his tormentors. "Laugh all you like! You'll still be laughing when you die. You'll be laughing when you rot away. That won't happen to me. People who are laughed at don't die just like that.… People who are laughed at don't rot away."[94] And while we

have no indication that Nozoe's spirit became bound to the world of the living because she had been mocked, the reverberating laughter of the two youths at the end of the play suggests that instead of helping her to attain salvation, they are making it less likely that she would ever be saved.

These two youths initially function in the same way as the priest and his attendant from the medieval *Genji kuyō,* introducing an opportunity for the author's spirit to appear. But the priests are not readers of *Genji monogatari* and have no apparent connection to the tale. They display basic (albeit crucial) knowledge connected to *Genji*, namely that Murasaki Shikibu is its author. In the end, it is implied that they are converted to true believers of the power of her text, in large part via the sanctity of the author as a reincarnation of the bodhisattva Kannon. In Mishima's version, the effect is the opposite: avid fan-readers come to spurn not only the author and her text, but all literature. The power of the author and the authority of the author icon is completely negated.

The readers represented in Mishima's play are more akin to the *Genji* readers in whose dreams Murasaki appeared, as told in *Genji ipponkyō* and other early *Genji kuyō* narratives, rather than the priests of the *noh* play.[95] Instead of being indifferent or neutral, as the priest in the *noh* is, the readers are completely obsessed with the famous Nozoe Murasaki and her novel. Indeed, the youths had decided to make their own way to the monument even after the last bus from the train station had left, leading one of them to admit that "most people aren't as eccentric [*monozuki*] as we are."[96] Furthermore, it is no doubt meaningful that these eccentrically devoted young men are introduced as "literary youths" (*bungaku seinen*). In the pseudo-militia *Tate no kai* (Shield society) that Mishima founded two years before his suicide, the student-cadets did not read his works, and he explicitly declared "that 'literary youth,' and particularly his admirers, would not make suitable warriors."[97] It is not surprising that Mishima wished to keep his life as a commander of his private army separate from his career as a celebrity author, and would have found annoyance in devoted reader-fans fawning over him as a literary idol rather than as a military leader. But he also long held a certain dislike for young men who were overly devoted to literature. Speaking in his later years, Mishima noted that when he was younger, he hated the so-called literary youths with their questions about literature and philosophy. Identifying the author Dazai Osamu 太宰治 (1909–1948) as a quintessential literary youth, he spoke of his distaste for his ilk in a conversation with Nakamura Mitsuo: "Why would they destroy their youth with such banal things, I would

wonder: they should hold on to what is most beautiful at that age. But I was doing the same thing."[98] Just as he saw too much of himself in Dazai (and therefore, according to his own declaration, hated him), he also realized that he was himself a literary youth, at least at some point. It was not that he wished to simply dismiss readers altogether; on the contrary, Mishima often spoke of the responsibilities of the author towards readers, and the courtesy that the former owed the latter. "I think respect towards the reader is extremely important. If the reader defines me as something, then I'm that something," he once declared.[99] Elsewhere he cites Paul Valéry, repeating the French poet's stance that takes for granted that authors are the product, rather than the origin, of the literary work.[100] In other words, he concedes that the author is not the source of the meaning of the text, and cannot retain control over how readers might relate to it.

While the literary youths as depicted in *Genji kuyō* are indeed not explicitly disparaged, the text critiques their approach to literature. For one, the youths are foremost preoccupied not with the content of the novel itself, but everything that surrounds it.[101] They have an obsessive fascination with the author: in her looks ("it adds to her popularity"), her tragic life (a young widow who herself meets an early death), and even her handwriting. As mentioned earlier, Mishima conceded that the image of the author is constructed of more than just his or her works, but he believed this should not be.[102] The youths are also armed with specific information about the book's reception, including how many copies were sold (2.5 million, including paperbacks) and what literary critics have said, committing at least one analysis to memory. This is not to say that the two have neglected to read the novel extremely carefully. The phrase etched in Nozoe's memorial is apparently so famous that it is known by any casual reader, or in fact, anyone with minimal knowledge of the novel. But the youths have committed much more to memory, fixated on details of the novel and quick to pose questions to the author, in a desire to find out what specifics of the novel really mean. These details appear to be inconsequential minutia, and yet they turn out to be carefully constructed metaphors. Every aspect, we are told, is a deliberate choice made by the author, who assigns meanings that range from head-scratching to laughable:

> B: In the novel, Hikaru eats fried eggs and cornflakes. What does that mean?
> Woman: I just told you. Hikaru is the moon. So, he is starved for animal and plant life. That kind of breakfast is a ritual for him.

A: And the reason he likes silk suits….
Woman: Yes, of course, only silk clothes are appropriate for the moon.
B: When Hikaru sleeps with a woman, he kisses the nape of her neck and lightly bites that area to leave toothmarks.
Woman: That is the mark of the moon. You both also have, in your mouths, a pair of dead new moons. Curved like a bow, two rows of white teeth. Those are remnants of the moon.
A: There is a depiction where Hikaru can't sleep all night because in his dreams he is terrorized by the presence of a woman who had killed herself because of him.
Woman: That is the moon of insomnia.
B: Hikaru's beautiful fingers that the women praise….
Woman: Those are the rays of the moon. The fingers that can sneak into the women's underwear in their sleep.[103]

The rapid-fire questions posed by the two youths indicate that they have come prepared with them—not, we must assume, because they thought they would meet the actual author, but because they have long pondered these details. And now that they have come face to face with the "sovereign author," they have a chance to interrogate, in the words of Roger Chartier, her "primary and final intention [that contain] *the* meaning of the work."[104]

The exchange between the youths and Nozoe paint the dead novelist as somewhat absurd and comical, and sullies her rather more convincing earlier declaration that authors should not feel bound to do things (like save a protagonist) simply because it would have been easy. But the fact that the youths came equipped with so many questions is also clearly significant. Whether they have any deep understanding of the novel is another matter altogether, since they are better able to articulate the meaning of the text through the verbatim repetition of literary critics—which is to say, the opinion of other readers. Earlier, Nozoe herself had called the youths "empty headed" for being able to recite lines from her novel, but when questioned about her work, she expects nothing less than a perfect recall of her text.[105]

Having apparently exhausted their questions about the novel, or perhaps encouraged by the willingness of the author to answer them so willingly, the inquiries suddenly turn intimate.

A: I would like to ask you one question. Have you ever loved a man?
Woman: No, not once. I have never loved a man or a woman. My husband just could not ignite passion in me, and he died from exhaustion. But that

> isn't my fault.
> B: The disease that killed you, if I may be blunt, was uterine cancer—that must have been rather excruciating.
> Woman: It was excruciating…but it turned out to be a blessing. It was killing me without giving me any hint that it was. The disease did to me what no human could have accomplished. How strange. I thought that I would be able to live much longer. The disease had a hold of me deep down, so I held onto a shallow-minded hope.… I, who had never given birth, learned this for the first time. I learned of death.… In the spring, when microbes turn the surface of the sea bright red, and the red waves can be seen like a strange flag unfurled all the way to the horizon. That was my disease. Inside me, something larger than myself had budded. Taking an extremely long time, it grew so sturdily.... I suffered. I suffered. While I suffered, I was happy. The disease took hold of me, like vines that tightly bind themselves to the ruins of a stone wall…. I had never been loved that way. Not once since I was born.[106]

The devoted readers first question the author about details of her writing, then move on to interrogate her about details of her life. This sort of relationship with the novel and its author is reminiscent of the way in which devoted scholars and fans have treated canonized texts, most particularly *Genji monogatari.* Readers of *Genji* have long memorized chapter titles (such as those included in the *Genji monogatari hyōbyaku*) and poems from the massive tome, but more to the point, generations of scholars have parsed and commented on each phrase and particle in the *Genji* in many multiple exegeses. The tale has been sifted through for every detail, and scholars have theorized on meanings both large and small. Many have also long argued whether "the shining" (*hikaru*) Genji was based on a real person or not, and which historical incidents within which imperial reigns inspired parts of the tale.[107]

The above examples of *Genji* scholarship may belong to the realm of an elite group of people; of course, for most of history, only the learned and relatively moneyed could get their hands on a manuscript copy to read, let alone have time to study the intricate details of the tale. But the literary youths obsessed with Nozoe's novel also reflect the larger tale-consuming public—those who rely on a hagiographic treatment of the author and who look to reconstruct the author's life story. They also rely on word of mouth. Once a piece of writing is accepted as canonical*,* it becomes an important text that all should know.

And yet, these two youths who had been so enamored by the story, are surprisingly quick to completely dismiss their previous infatuation. In part

it is because they realize with certainty that Hikaru is not a real man, and though they always apparently knew he was fictional, their insistence that the "realistic presence" (*jitsuzaisei*) of its protagonist is the novel's biggest strength suggests that the truth was too devastating. Their sudden change in attitude also simply undermines their devotion, not only to the specific novel but to literary works in general. They were able to inquire, directly of the author, all that they had pondered, but then they conclude that everything was simply a trick because they realize that the ghost of Nozoe, along with "Hikaru," may have been a figment of their imagination. They laugh not only at Nozoe and her tale, but, we might assume, at their previous infatuation with the work. Unlike in the medieval *noh*, direct contact with the author does not make them believers, and the author cannot control the meaning or the impact of the text. This is in part a rebuke of the power of the author; the popular novelist, even one who seems to have achieved historical critical and commercial success, is in a precarious position if she is able to be dismissed so quickly by two devout readers. Nozoe needs to explain herself over and over: "I told you," she repeats to the youths in justifying why she killed off her protagonist and what various details symbolize. And while she attempts to lead the two literary youths to interpret her story exactly as she intended, she has limited authority to control the narrative (what things mean) and its reception (how people read it), despite her own self-assessment that she is superior to heaven (*ten*) in her creative powers.

But Mishima's *Genji kuyō* is not simply a critical assessment of the popular novelist and her novel. The entirety of the *Genji kuyō* tradition that began nearly a millennium ago relies on the reading of literature, as does, needless to say, the canonization of texts. Building on Serge Gavronsky's theory of translation, Haruo Shirane has noted that the "canonicity of *Genji monogatari* has been heavily indebted to the pietistic reception of scholars and critics … but the continuing popularity of *Genji monogatari* has been due in large part to cannibalistic reception" by artists and writers who create their own *Genji.*[108] *Genji* indeed has been read, studied, parodied, and adapted in nearly every way possible, by "reader-writers" who are as engaged as they come. As Michael Emmerich has convincingly argued in his work on translation and world literature, it seems prudent to speak not of the tale's passive reception, but rather, of its active replacement.[109] Mishima's *Genji kuyō* points in particular to a kind of a super-pietistic consumption of literature, one which attempts not to replace but to excavate the "true meaning" of each detail and "true intention" of the

author. This kind of excavation may be impossible or, as the literary youths find, inadvisable, for it may only lead to disillusionment. While these formerly devoted readers may never have dared to replace Nozoe's text, in the end they simply discard it, literally throwing their copies of the novel away.

The tour group that comes to visit the memorial witnesses, and is perplexed, by the laughter of the two youths. These sightseers and their guide are also, of course, another kind of reader; this sort of consumer may not care to memorize the celebrated novel, but will still enthusiastically add to the chorus of accolades. In truth they are replacing the text of the novel with effusive but meaningless praise, even if they (like the youths initially) at least intend to honor the novelist. They are not devoted literary men or women; the guide has complained of the labor of having to take the group to various sites, including the Nozoe memorial, before he recites overly laudatory and obviously rehearsed praise for the author. The group is only at the site to go through the motions of paying respect to the "timeless masterpiece," for the tourists wanted to move on to the next stop earlier than scheduled. It is entirely possible, in fact, that none of them have actually read the novel. After all, while 2.5 million copies of the novel may have been sold, and many more people likely indeed read it (through borrowing copies, as the youths earlier declared), one is able to engage in the act of consuming literature without the actual act of reading it. And this is even more so the case with enormously popular texts, like *Genji monogatari* and the fictional *Haru no ushio*, for even if one has never read them, it is almost impossible to avoid all references to such canonical works.

In the context of the *Genji kuyō* tradition, criticism can be directed not only towards the massive world of *Genji* readers—of which there are, needless to say, countless—but also towards the stand-ins for readers as presented specifically in the *Genji kuyō* narratives. While the Agui priest and his attendant in the medieval *Genji kuyō* are not quite like the literary youths nor the sightseeing group, the tour guide's effusive praise is reminiscent of the medieval *noh*'s concluding celebration of *Genji*. In Mishima's text, the praise is followed by laughter, turning the accolades into ironic platitudes. As mentioned above, the literary youths are much closer to the *Genji* devotees as presented in *Genji ipponkyō,* who, like the narrator of *Sarashina nikki* 更級日記 (Sugawara no Takasue's daughter, ca. 1059, translated as *As I Crossed A Bridge of Dreams*, 1971) dream of the tale and its author.[110] It is as if the challenge is whether an encounter with

the author in spirit would grant them their wishes, or simply lead them to disillusionment. Half a decade before Roland Barthes famously proposed in his seminal and controversial essay "The Death of the Author" (1968) that there is no Author-God who can claim a single truth, Mishima suggests that asking what we might call the Author-Ghost for that truth may be similarly fruitless.[111]

I do not suggest that Mishima's *Genji kuyō* is intended to be a critique of *Genji monogatari* or its author specifically, but of the ways in which it and other similarly canonized works have been celebrated and perpetuated. Mishima has, after all, lauded the *Genji* and identified it as literature that uniquely succeeded in capturing the abstract essence of Japan.[112] But he has also simultaneously shown a kind of indifference towards the Heian classic. For example, in the same dialogue with Nakamura Mitsuo that was mentioned above, he spoke of the *monogatari* genre, claiming: "When I read Heian period literature, I am not moved, except by *Genji*. Even *Genji* doesn't move me all that much."[113] I believe that his challenge is not specifically to *Genji* nor its readers, but to all readers of literature, particularly literary texts whose reputation precedes them.

Whether the play points to *Genji monogatari* or to his own works, Mishima's *Genji kuyō* presents a pessimistic view of literature, in its calculated production as well as in its various modes of consumption that ranges from the hyper-obsessive to the mindlessly passive. No single person is presented in a particularly positive light—except possibly the fictional character Hikaru, who, as Nozoe says, can merely reflect light rather than be a source of it himself. This is a telling contrast to the medieval *noh*, in which the author is divine, the setting of the Ishiyama temple is sacred, and the interlocutors, as members of the clergy, are divinity-adjacent. Nozoe is far from divine, and while she, like any writer, is free to assert what literary authors can or should do, still presents no apparent potential for development. The youths and the tour group equally lack any gravitas—the former for being so quick to discard their previous infatuation, and the latter for being so willing to give praise without thought. Literature and everything associated with it—be it the author, the readers, or its fans—are undermined. The laughter with which the play ends might as well be directed at them, or at us all.

Conclusion: Read against *Yūkoku*

In concluding this paper, I will take a brief look at the nearly contemporaneous *Yūkoku*, which is rather straight-forward in its sincerity

and aspiration. We can say that *Yūkoku* is at minimum doubly endorsed by Mishima—he wrote it, but also directed and starred in its film adaptation. In fact, he was intimately involved in the making of the film, even more so than the many other theatrical productions that he oversaw. In its valuation by the author, then, it is the opposite of *Genji kuyō*. If, as has been suggested by many, *Yūkoku* is Mishima's death wish articulated, *Genji kuyō* shows what he wished to avoid, in death and afterwards. Perhaps it also reveals too much of his anxiety and pessimism towards literature, and for this reason he wished to disown it.

Yūkoku was first published in *Shōsetsu chūō kōron* 小説中央公論 in January of 1961. While it garnered deserved attention as revealing insight into Mishima's final act nearly a decade later, it is only one work of many that deals with death in profound and inescapable ways, with a particular connection between beauty and suicide. As John Nathan describes it, his "erotic longing for death" was "nearly congenital."[114] In *Kamen no kokuhaku*, Mishima imagines himself as the martyred Saint Sebastian, in just one early example of a fascination with youthful death.

Yūkoku depicts a lieutenant and his wife during the 2.26 Incident, an attempted coup against the Japanese imperial army in 1936. Having been left out of the plans for mutiny by friends due to his relatively recent nuptials, the lieutenant chooses suicide over having to either attack comrades who plotted the coup, or disobey a direct imperial command to do so. The wife follows in suicide, after having witnessed the lieutenant's death. Its simple plot, obvious imperialist ideology, and idealized characters makes it, as Susan Napier put it, "an excellent example of *roman à thèse* praising the virtues of death for the emperor."[115] Perhaps it is because of this simplicity that it made for an effective translation into film, which was staged like a *noh* play.[116]

As has been discussed by many, despite the enormity of his last act and its imperialist implications, it is only in the final decade or so of his life that Mishima displayed such interest in politics, and even then, it is arguable how sincere he was.[117] The beginnings of his association with overtly political ideologies can be dated several months before his publication of *Yūkoku,* to the October 1960 assassination of the chairman of the Socialist party Asanuma Inejirō 浅沼稲次郎 (1898–1960) by a rightist youth.[118] Captured on camera, the incident inspired Mishima as well as Ōe Kenzaburō, who published *Sebuntīn* (1961, translated as *Seventeen*, 1996).[119] Some scholars declare that Mishima's politicization came even later, only in the last half of the decade and with his 1966 *Eirei*

no koe (Voices of the heroic dead).[120] He also never claimed even in establishing the pseudo-militia *Tate no kai* that he was part of any right-wing party.[121] The writer's loyalty to the emperor could be seen as a constructed persona, and many indeed have said that his ultimate faith was only in an asocial aesthetics.

In the opening of *Yūkoku*, it is made clear that the story of the lieutenant and his wife is to be the thing of legends: "The last moments of this heroic and dedicated couple were such as to make the gods themselves weep."[122] This kind of hyperbolic praise is often seen in *noh* as well as in *kabuki*, and is also a stark contrast to how Nozoe is presented. The lieutenant himself, however, says his "was a battlefield without glory," denying any heroism to an act that is itself seen as praiseworthy.[123] In adapting the story to film, Mishima turned the lieutenant into "merely a soldier, merely a man who sacrifices himself for a great cause."[124]

In *Yūkoku*, death is intertwined with vitality and eroticism; the seppuku is incredibly vivid in its portrayal. The visceral description of his entrails as they spill out from the gaping incision only adds to the lieutenant's valor: "It would be difficult to imagine a more heroic sight than that of the lieutenant at this moment, as he mustered his strength and flung back his head."[125] Only strong, healthy, and courageous men and women could have killed themselves as the lieutenant and his wife did. It is the opposite of the end of life as Nozoe experienced it, in which she is a passive victim. This passivity in death, and particularly as a victim of cancer, is something that Mishima feared, and he prized control over the end of his life.[126] Furthermore, Nozoe clearly dies as an author and cannot be anything but an author—not (even) a bodhisattva, as in the medieval *Genji kuyō*. In *Yūkoku*, the protagonist dies purely as a military man, and his wife purely as a military man's wife. In contrast, Nozoe dies at a time and in a manner not of her own choosing, weak and from illness. While she does have busloads full of admirers and a monument dedicated to her work, the two (former) literary youths, who we are to understand were the most devoted and most informed, end up discarding exactly what made her their idol. They were, in fact, exactly the kind of educated readers whose attention Mishima feared he was losing in the 1960s. *Genji kuyō*, I believe, details what he feared his legacy could be: dying not on his own will but through illness, imagined as a grandiose artist who is his own most obsessive fan, and ultimately dismissed by readers.

As the recent fiftieth anniversary of his death approached, Mishima's name once again appeared repeatedly in Japanese media. The 2017 film

adaptation of *Utsukushii hoshi* made his role as the author of its source text prominent in all of its promotions; free of any references to the cold war tensions that prompted the original novel, the contemporary setting of the film evokes the notion that Mishima could see into the future, or that his spirit lives on in the present.[127] The reported discovery of a previously unheard interview in the vaults of a TBS television station, along with the documentary *Mishima Yukio vs. Tōdai zenkyōtō* 三島由紀夫 vs 東大全共闘 (translated as *Mishima: The Last Debate*, 2020) on the notorious May 1969 debate with University of Tokyo students gave occasion for Mishima's voice and image to be recirculated again—and not just those from his short speech to the gathered Self-Defense Force members in Ichigaya during the final hour before his death.[128] This emphasis on Mishima's *nikusei* (live voice) and image is a welcome change from the usual depiction of the author. Most references to Mishima, including my own introduction to this paper, begin with his suicide, and his spectacular death has been endlessly repeated in public discourse. Just as the protagonist of the novel in *Genji kuyō* is destined to repeat his act of suicide over and again, Mishima is, in a way, forever dying.[129] This dramatic act, while aligning him with right-wing extremism, has also often been discussed as a final and excessively self-conscious performance piece, an action that has at times been mocked.[130] It is as if he died both as the lieutenant in *Yūkoku*—standing up for an idea, proclaiming an allegiance to the emperor, and by his own hands—and simultaneously as the author in *Genji kuyō*—lauded by many as a master of letters, but derided by some, all amidst endless gossip about his life.

NOTES

I am grateful to Anne Sokolsky, Patrick Hughes, Leslie Winston, Mamiko Suzuki and the two anonymous reviewers for their invaluable feedback.

[1] On November 25, 1970, Mishima and four members of his university student-comprised private militia *Tate no kai* (Shield society) took commanding general Mashita Kanetoshi (1913–1973) of the Self Defense Force Eastern Division hostage in his office at Ichigaya. After giving a short speech from the balcony of the building and failing to rouse troops to join him in a military coup, Mishima and one *Tate no kai* member, Morita Masakatsu (1945–1970), died by *seppuku*. Mishima and his young followers expected this outcome and had meticulously prepared for the ritual suicides.

[2] Dōmoto Masaki, *Mishima Yukio no engeki—makugire no shisō* (Tokyo: Geki shobō, 1977), 25–26. Mishima remarked on a "need to die a hero's death." John Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), 219. This wish was also included in his last letter to close friend Donald Keene, who noted that Mishima requested that his posthumous Buddhist name include the character for *bu* (martial). Donald Keene, *Five Modern Japanese Novelists* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 48, 46.

[3] Two of his final letters were addressed to Donald Keene and Ivan Morris, requesting that they ensure the English translation and publication of the four volumes of *Hōjō no umi* (*Sea of Fertility*), revealing, in Keene's words, that "literature was too much a part of his makeup to be rejected." The final chapter of the last volume of the tetralogy was finished already in August of 1970, but he dated the last page November 25, the day of his planned suicide, because "it was essential to Mishima that he die on the day he completed his masterpiece." Keene, *Five Modern Japanese Novelists,* 48, 64.

[4] *Genji kuyō* was first published in the journal *Bungei* in March of 1962, and is reproduced in *Ketteiban Mishima Yukio zenshū* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2004) [hereafter *KMYZ*], 23.621–636. To my knowledge there is no English translation to date.

[5] Mishima wrote plays in a range of genres, including modern *shingeki* (Western drama), musical dramas, modern *kabuki* and *noh* plays, and radio dramas. Christopher L. Pearce, "Primary Colors: A Play by Mishima Yukio," *Asian Theatre Journal,* 23.2 (2006): 224. He was considered the premiere playwright of Japan's postwar era. Mishima Yukio, *Mishima on Stage: The Black Lizard and Other Plays*, ed. Laurence Kominz (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2007), 1.

[6] The play was performed for the first time in July 1981, along with two of Mishima's other modern *noh* plays *Yuya* and *Sotoba Komachi*. Fukuda Ryō, "Mishima Yukio 'Genji kuyō' ron," *Nihon kenkyū ronshū* 14.10 (2016): 72. Almost all of the over sixty plays Mishima wrote were staged during his lifetime. Hiroaki Sato, *My Friend Hitler and Other Plays of Mishima Yukio* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), vii. The first five plays of the final *Kindai nōgakushū* were translated and published as *Five Modern Noh Plays* by Donald Keene (New York: Tuttle Publishing, 1957). *Dōjōji* was translated, also by Donald Keene, and published in *Death in Midsummer and Other Stories* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1966), 119–138. *Yuya* was translated and appears in *Mishima on Stage: The Black Lizard & Other Plays,* ed. Laurence Kominz (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2007), 223–239. To my knowledge, the last play of the official *Kindai nōgakushū* titled *Yoroboshi* has not been translated into English.

[7] 題材として、それをアダプトすることが、まちがいだった。"Mishima bungaku no haikei," *KMYZ* 40.639. All English translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

[8] It has long been accepted that Mishima considered the play a *shippaisaku* (failed work). Sakita Susumu, "Mishima Yukio saku 'Genji kuyō-ron'—"Jiko shobatsu" no mochīfu chūshin ni—,*" Niigata daigaku kokugo kokubun gakkaishi* 39 (1997): 106. To my knowledge, there has been no published English scholarship on the play. There have, however, been numerous productive studies that have gone into similarly lesser–known texts; for example, the November 2019 International Symposium *50 Years Later, Another Mishima?* held at the University of Paris focused in part on unknown or neglected texts. https://mishimaparis.sciencesconf.org (accessed October 10, 2020).

[9] The first partial English translation of *Genji monogatari* was published by Suematsu Kenchō (1882), followed by the influential and nearly complete translation by Arthur Waley (1925–33). Edward Seidensticker produced the first full translation in 1976. Satoko Naito, "*Genji monogatari* and Its Reception," in Haruo Shirane, Tomi Suzuki, and David Lurie, eds., *The Cambridge History of Japanese Literature* (Cambridge, U. K.: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 139.

[10] For an introduction and translation of the medieval play, see Janet Goff, *Noh Drama and Genji monogatari: The Art of Allusion in Fifteen Classical Plays* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 198–209, and Royall Tyler, *To Hallow Genji: A Tribute to Noh* (Charleston, S. C.: CreateSpace, 2013), 3–17.

[11] *Yūkoku* was first published in the January 1961 issue of *Shōsetsu chūōkōron.* Available as a translation with the title "Patriotism" in Mishima Yukio, *Death in Midsummer and Other Stories,* trans. Geoffrey W. Sargent (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1966), 93–118.

[12] Inose Naomi and Sato Hiroaki, *Persona: A Biography of Yukio Mishima* (Berkeley, Calif.: Stone Bridge Press, 2012), 91–92.

[13] *Hanazakari no mori* was initially serialized in the journal *Bungei bunka* from September to December of 1941. It was translated into English as "Forest in Full Bloom" by Andrew Rankin in *The East* 36.4 (2000): 6–16. Despite what Mishima says in the quote cited below that "minor, individual ideas" were allowed expression during the war, there were limitations. For example, to justify publication of *Hanazakari no mori,* he claimed that his novel was intended to highlight the cultural traditions of the Japanese empire (*teikoku no bungaku dentō o goji-shite*). Mishima Yukio, "Watashi no henreki jidai," (1963; rpt., *Taiyō to tetsu, Watashi no henreki jidai*, Tokyo: Chūō kōron shinsha, 2020),

123.

[14] これで私は、いつ死んでもよいことになったのである。Mishima, “Watashi no henreki jidai,” 123.

[15] Although Mishima, particularly in the 1960s, revered the idea of the emperor and the imperial throne, he “maintained a deep resentment toward the historical figure of Emperor Hirohito.” Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945–1970* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 190. While the emperor’s “human declaration” became a hugely problematic issue, Mishima was more deeply affected by his sister’s death in the same year. Inose, *Persona,* 139.

[16] This is despite the fact that he readily accepted a doctor’s misdiagnosis which prevented him from being sent to fight in the closing days of the war. As Mishima recalls, it was a period in which one’s own end and that of the era and society as a whole were one and the same. Mishima, “Watashi no henreki jidai,” 123.

[17] In his last interview with literary critic Furubayashi Takashi (1927–1998), Mishima agreed that life after war felt as if it were “afterlife” or “remainder of life” (*yosei*). “Mishima Yukio saigo no kotoba,” *KMYZ*, 40.775.

[18] 戦時中の小さなグループ内での評判などはうたかたと消え、戦争末期に、われこそ時代を象徴する者と信じていた夢も消えて、二十歳で早くも、時代おくれになってしまった自分を発見した。［中略］ 戦争中はかえってひそかな個人的嗜好がゆるされたのに、戦後の社会は、たちまち荒々しい思想と芸術理念の自由市場を再開し、社会が自らの体質に合わないものは片っ端から捨ててかえりみない時代になったのである。戦時中、小グループの中で天才気取りであった少年は、戦後は、だれからも一人前に扱ってもらえない非力な一学生にすぎなかった。Mishima, “Watashi no henreki jidai,” 128–129. Many writers associated with the Romantic school were condemned after the war. Beata Kubiak Ho-Chi, “Mad about Radiguet: *Tōzoku* and Mishima Yukio’s Classical Aesthetics,” *Analecta Nipponica* 1 (2011): 71.

[19] マイナス百二十点 Mishima, “Watashi no henreki jidai,” 129.

[20] “Watashi no henreki jidai,” 145. In a conversation held in 1964 with literary critics Honda Shūgo (1908–2001) and Itō Sei (1905–1969), Mishima asks, though half in jest, to be removed from the grouping of “post-war writers” (*sengoha*). “Sengo no Nihon bungaku,” *KMYZ* 39.476. See also Kubiak Ho-Chi, “Mad about Radiguet,” 77–78.

[21] The serialization began in 1945 in *Bungei seiki*, with the entirety of the story published in *Ningen* in 1947. To my knowledge there is no English translation available.

[22] *Kamen no kokuhaku* (1949) sold 20,000 copies in hardback and was a bestseller that year. Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography*, 100. It was translated by Meredith Weatherby with the title *Confessions of a Mask* (New York: New Directions, 1958).

[23] Tamura Keiko, *Mishima Yukio to nōgaku: "Kindai nōgakushū," matawa, dajigokusha no paradaisu* (Tokyo: Bensei shuppan, 2012), 246.

[24] だけどいまのマスコミの時代に小説家も政治家もスポーツ選手もみな巻き込まれている。その時代に自分のイメージをホールドして、しょっちゅうソロバンをはじいていかないと、自分の本質を侵される危険がある。"Taidan: Ningen to bungaku," *KMYZ* 40.111. The conversation with Nakamura Mitsuo (1911–1988) was held in 1968 and first published in 1969.

[25] こんなにマスコミを意識して、しかも見事にそういうものをひねりつぶして、つまり自分のペースを保っている人っていない。"Shichinengo no taidan," *KMYZ* 39.408. A conversation between Mishima and Ishihara first published in 1964.

[26] Tamura, *Mishima Yukio to nōgaku*, 246.

[27] Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography,*104.

[28] According to John Nathan, *Thirst for Love* (1950) sold 70,000 copies; *The Sound of Waves* (1954) sold 106,000 in hardback; *Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956) sold 155,000 in two months; *A Misstepping of Virtue* (1957), sold 300,000 hardbacks. Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography*, 104, 120, 131, 132–133.

[29] He also traveled to Stockholm in 1965, likely to see where the Nobel prizes were awarded. Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography*, 203–204.

[30] Donald Keene suggests that it was Mishima, rather than Kawabata Yasunari, who was meant to receive the prize in 1968. It has often been said that not winning the Nobel Prize was Mishima's greatest disappointment: "One might even say that he killed himself because he had failed to receive the recognition he desired above everything else in the world." Keene, *Five Modern Japanese Novelists*, 24–26.

[31] Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography,* 170.

[32] Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography*, 170. Mishima calls this critical rejection of *Kyōko no ie* as a turning point after which he "went crazy, probably" (*sore kara kurutchattan deshō ne, kitto*). "Fashisuto ka kakumeika ka," *KMYZ* 39.755. A conversation with film director Ōshima Nagisa (1932–2013) first published in 1968. To my knowledge there is no English translation of *Kyōko no ie*.

[33] *Gogo no eikō* is translated as *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea* by John Nathan (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965). To my knowledge, there is no English translation of *Utsukushii hoshi*.

[34] *Kinu to meisatsu* was translated as *Silk and Insight* by Hiroaki Sato (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

[35] Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography*, 192. Damian Flanagan, *Yukio Mishima* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014), 179–180.

[36] Mishima's paternal grandmother Natsuko, with whom he almost exclusively spent his childhood, took him to *kabuki*. His mother Shizue introduced him to *noh*. Inose, *Persona,* 67–68.

[37] 比較的地味 Mishima, "Watashi no henreki jidai," 160. The *noh* play *Miwa* is of unknown authorship. It has been translated as *Three Circles* by Monica Bethe in *Twleve Plays of the Noh and Kyōgen Theaters*, ed. Karen Brazell (Ithaca, N. Y.: East Asia Program, Cornell University), 1988.

[38] 能楽はたえず私の文学に底流してきた "Nihon no koten to watashi," (1968; rpt., *Koten bungaku dokuhon,* Tokyo: Chūō kōron shinsha, 2016), 11. *Kinkakuji* has been translated as *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* by Ivan Morris (London: Vintage, 1994). The short story *Eirei no koe* has to my knowledge not been translated into English.

[39] The four volumes that make up *Hōjō no umi* (*The Sea of Fertility*) were all published by Alfred A. Knopf: *Haru no yuki* 春の雪 and *Honba* 奔馬 translated by Michael Gallagher as *Spring Snow* (1972) and *Runaway Horses* (1973), *Akatsuki no tera* 暁の寺 translated by E. Dale Saunders and Cecilia Segawa Seigle as *The Temple of Dawn* (1973), and *Tennin gosui* 天人五衰 translated by Edward Seidensticker as *The Decay of the Angel* (1974).

[40] The afterword was first written after the publication of the first five plays together in 1956. Mishima Yukio, *Kindai nōgakushū* (1968; rpt., Tokyo: Shinchō bunko, 2019), 253.

[41] "Mishima bungaku to kokusaisei," *KMYZ* 39.482. On the first attempt to stage his modern *noh* plays, see Inose, *Persona,* 294.

[42] Mishima, *Kindai nōgakushū,* 253.

[43] Keene, commentary from March 1968, reprinted in *Kindai nōgakushū,* 260.

[44] Keene, *Five Modern Noh Plays* (1957; rpt., New York: Tuttle Publishing, 1967), x.

[45] Tamura, *Mishima Yukio to nōgaku,* 261. Translated by Donald Keene in *Five*

Modern Noh Plays, 69–120.

[46] Tamura Keiko, "Kirisuterareta kuyō—Mishima Yukio 'Kindai nōgakushū no chi 'Genji kuyō-ron," *Kokubungaku kenkyū* 150 (2006): 122.

[47] 近代能楽集ノ内 *KMYZ* 23.621.

[48] Fukuda, "Mishima Yukio 'Genji kuyō' ron," 73.

[49] To my knowledge, Mishima's *Yoroboshi* has not been translated into English.

[50] *KMYZ* 23.621–636.

[51] Tamura, *Mishima Yukio to nōgaku,* 245.

[52] Dōmoto Masaki calls the fictional author's contemplation of literature "superb" (*sugureta naiyō*), though he declares that, since her extended monologues read like essays, the whole of the work is not a true drama. Dōmoto, *Gekijin Mishima Yukio* (Tokyo: Geki shobō, 1994), 191. The *noh* specialist Dōmoto was involved in the film adaptation of *Yūkoku,* discussed below. Another consistent assessment is that the play is metafictional, outlining the potentials of literature. Harada Kaori, "Koenaki sakebi—Mishima Yukio 'Genji kuyō' ron—," *Yamagata joshi tanki daigaku kiyō* 27 (1995): 71; Momokawa Takahito, "Kindai nōgakushū—"Genji kuyō" o megutte," *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 31.8 (1986): 90.

[53] 五十四人の女に次々と愛されて *KMYZ* 23.624. Underscoring this reference, the number of women who loved Hikaru (fifty-four), is repeated by all four identified characters that appear in the play: the two youths, Nozoe, and the tour guide. Matsushita Michiko notes that Nozoe Murasaki is indeed Murasaki Shikibu, the author of *Genji monogatari,* with the implication that no matter how valuable a piece of literature may be, it can never overcome having committed a Buddhist sin. Since Mishima is himself a writer, she concludes that Nozoe was in part "a portrayal of himself." Matsushita Michiko, "Kindai nōgakushū 'Genji kuyō' shiron," *Kokubun kenkyū* (Kumamoto joshidaigaku kokubun kenkyūbu, 1993): 31–33. While she acknowledges that the youths' assessment of Nozoe's writing could be a critique of Murasaki's writing, Tamura Keiko notes that the massive sale of Nozoe's novel (2,500,000 copies, according to the youths) is reminiscent of sales of Gomikawa Junpei's *Ningen no jōken* (The human condition*,* 1958), rather than any of Mishima's novels. Tamura, *Mishima Yukio to nōgaku,* fn. 263.

[54] Sakita Susumu believed it to be Mishima's criticism of the lack of "presence" (*jitsuzaisei*) and "realism" (*genjitsusei*) in his own works. Sakita, "Mishima Yukio saku 'Genji kuyō'-ron," 111–112.

[55] B (碑面に顔を寄せ) これ、紫女史の自筆原稿からとつたんだろ。(携へし「春

の潮」の最後の頁をめくつて) 三百八十二頁、五行目のところだ。「光は瀟洒な編子の翼を持つた鳥のやうに、春の潮へ向つて身を投げた」……くちやくちやしたわかりにくい字だよな。A 小説家の字つてみんなそんなだよ。*KMYZ* 23.624. All ellipses are as they appear in the original, unless otherwise indicated.

[56] Incidentally, according to translator John Nathan, Mishima had clean and neat handwriting, uncharacteristic of authors of the time. Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography*, 108–109.

[57] Mishima Yukio, *Bunshō dokuhon* (1973; rpt., Tokyo: *Chūōkōron shinsha,* 2005), 225.

[58] この晴れやかな健康な顔と死との結びつきには、云つてみれば或る瀟洒なものがあつた。*Death in Midsummer and Other Stories,* trans. Geoffrey W. Sargent (New York: New Directions, 1966)*,* 102.

[59] Sakita Susumu proposed that this lack of an explanation for Hikaru's suicide was a plot hole so regrettable for Mishima that he was compelled to disown it. Sakita, "Mishima Yukio saku 'Genji kuyō'-ron," 112. The lieutenant's wife follows her husband in suicide, after carrying out the significant act of witnessing his death. While one can only speculate, there is no indication that Hikaru's suicide would have corresponded any more closely to hers than to the lieutenant's.

[60] B (水筒から紅茶をすすめつつ)それがさ、それがこの小説のへんなところなんだ。ふしぎなくらゐの実在感、あんな装飾だらけの文章のくせに、作中人物はみんな手で触れれば触れられるやうな感じがする。思想が肉感を持ち、肉感が思想を持つてゐる。彼女の言葉は、まるで汗をかき血を流す宝石だ。無意識の創作力が現実をどんどん腐蝕してゆくあの硫酸のやうな力。小説自体が、夜のあひだ黒い金巾をかけた鳥籠みたいに、外からは空中にうかんだ鳥籠の優雅な形と、その檻の冷たい骨格と、彫金のふちかざりの輪郭しか見えないのに、中にはたしかに眠つてゐる鳥のけはひ、その夢うつつの時折の羽ばたき、その小さく脈打つてゐる心臓、そのかすかにふるへてゐる強い腿の肉とがありありと感じられる。そんなふうな構造を持つてゐるんだ。A 何だ。そりやあ桑田誠の「野添紫論」の受売りぢやないか。B いやな奴だなあ。お前、読んでたのか。*KMYZ* 23.625.

[61] "Replace 'unconscious' [creative force] with 'conscious,' and we can see the praise and criticism directed towards Mishima's literature." Tamura, *Mishima Yukio to nōgaku,* 247.

[62] "Nihon bungaku shōshi" (1970; rpt., in *Koten bungaku dokuhon,* Tokyo: Chūōkōron shinsha, 2016), 172.

[63] 光の実在を疑ふ奴はゐやしない *KMYZ* 23.623. Incidentally, the youth does

not specify that he is speaking only of readers of *Haru no ushio*, implying that regardless of whether one has read the novel, they believe that its protagonist was a real man.

[64] Fukuda, "Mishima Yukio 'Genji kuyō'-ron," 86–90.

[65] Sakita, "Mishima Yukio saku 'Genji kuyō' ron," 111.

[66] "Sengo no Nihon bungaku," *KMYZ* 39.474.

[67] Attributed to Tendai priest Chōken (1126–1203). Introduced and translated by Michael Jamentz as *A Dedicatory Proclamation for The Tale of Genji.* Thomas Harper and Haruo Shirane, eds., *Reading The Tale of Genji: Sources from the First Millennium* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015)*,* 188–191.

[68] Satoko Naito, "Performing Prayer, Saving *Genji,* and Idolizing Murasaki Shikibu: *Genji kuyō* in Nō and Jōruri," *Japan Studies Review* 20 (2016): 5–9.

[69] For introductions and translations of the main texts that comprise *Genji kuyō,* see Harper and Shirane, eds., *Reading The Tale of Genji,* 177–206.

[70] See endnote 10 for information on English translations.

[71] The proclamation has been attributed to Seikaku (1167–1235). Found in various texts, one version functions as the climax of the Muromachi period (1333–1568) *Genji kuyō sōshi* translated as *The Story of Obsequies for Genji* by Thomas Harper in Harper and Shirane, eds., *Reading The Tale of Genji,* 191–201.

[72] Unlike the plays that were used as source materials for Mishima's other modern *noh* plays, *Genji kuyō* is a typical *mugen nō*, or dream play, allowing for the interaction of this world and the next. Matsushita, "Kindai nōgakushū 'Genji kuyō' shiron," 28–29. Otherworldly elements, however, abound in his other adaptations.

[73] Naito, "Performing Prayer," 13–15.

[74] **女**さう、病気が知らないうちに私の顔に死を刻んでゐたときのあの写真。(自分の顔にさはつてみて)でもわるい写真ぢやない。……みんなかういふ顔になるの、永いこともの書いてゐると。実在のまねをする、ないものをあるやうにみせかける、わるい悪戯だわ。人をだまして一生を送つた報いがこれよ。**A** でも野添先生のやうな方が…… **女** (笑ふ) 幽霊に先生でもないでせう。**A** ぢやあ、野添さんのやうな方が、どうしてこんな…… **女**だから報いだと言つたでせう。あんなにみんなに愛された主人公、あれほどみんながその実在を信じたがり、つひには実在を信じてしまつた主人公を創り出しながら、たうとうその主人公を救つてやらなかつた報いがこれよ。*KMYZ* 23.629. The reference here and elsewhere to the author's physical beauty, as well as Nozoe's

position, seated on her own memorial, is reminiscent of Ono no Komachi in the *noh* play *Sotoba Komachi.*

[75] B あなたが光を救はなかつた、だからかうなつた、と仰言いましたね。それが実は僕にも不審のたねだつたんです。どうしてあんな恵まれた主人公を自殺させたか、それはあなたの復讐だつたんですか。**女** (軽蔑して) ばかなことをきくもんぢやないわ。どうして作者が主人公を救つたりする必要があるんです、そのためにたとへ地獄へ落ちようと。安物の小説家は、安手な救済を用意します。あれは安い麻薬です。小説の中に「生きるための手引」なんぞを上手に織り込みます。あれは売薬の広告です。……もちろん小説を書くといふこと、実在のまねをして人をたぶらかすこと、それは罪だと私は知つてゐます。だからせめて私は、救済のまねごとまでは遠慮したんです。*KMYZ* 23.630–631.

[76] 私がこんな姿にされたのは、天の嫉みを受けたんです。私がまねようとした実在、その結果世間の人がみんな信じるやうになつた実在、あの五十四人の女に愛された光といふ人間は、はじめからそこらにある実在とはちがつてゐたんです。どうちがつてゐたか? どうしてそれが特別の実在だつたか? それは月のやうな実在で、いつも太陽の救済の光りに照らされて輝やいてゐた。だから女たちはその輝やきに魅せられて彼を愛した。彼に愛されれば、自分も救はれるやうな気がしたからです。いいですか。私のしたことはといへば、この救済の光りだけを存分に利用しておいて、救済は否定したといふことなの。これが天の嫉みを買つたんです。そんじよそこらの実在と安手な救済との継ぎはぎ細工なら、天は笑つて恕すでせうに、私の場合は恕せませんでした。何故つて光のやうな人間こそ、天が一等創りたい存在だからです。救済の輝やきだけを身に浴びて、救済を拒否するやうな人間こそ。 ……わかりますか。天はそれを創りたくても創れない。何故なら光の美しさの原因である救済を天は否定することができないからです。それができるのは芸術家だけなんですよ。芸術家は救済の泉に手をさし入れても、上澄みの美だけを掬ひ取ることができる。それが天を怒らせるのよ。Ibid. 631–632.

[77] Tamura Keiko asserts that *ten* represents "social rules and conventions." Tamura, *Mishima Yukio to nōgaku,* 257.

[78] 幽霊であることを楽しみ Tamura, *Mishima Yukio to nōgaku,* 254.

[79] Goff trans., *Noh Drama and Genji monogatari,* 204, 205. Nozoe's rush to hide from the sightseeing group, discussed below, could be seen as a nod to this last declaration.

[80] Momokawa, "Kindai nōgakushū—"Genji kuyō" o megutte," 89.

[81] あの男の業の尽きないうち *KMYZ* 23.628

[82] Keene, *Five Modern Noh Plays*, x.

[83] Mishima's *Sotoba Komachi* is translated by Donald Keene in *Five Modern Noh Plays,* 1–30. The medieval *noh* play *Sotoba Komachi* (fourteenth century, translated as *Stupa Komachi*, 2007) is attributed to Kan'ami, revised by Zeami. For an introduction with translation by Herschel Miller, see Haruo Shirane, ed. *Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to 1600* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 936–952.

[84] Keene trans., *Five Modern Noh Plays,* 29–30.

[85] The other adaptations of *noh* plays show the limitations of Buddhist salvation to a lesser or greater extent, but, as Tamura Keiko suggests, in *Genji kuyō* it has been eliminated altogether. She identifies the theme of the collection as being the inevitability of everyone in the contemporary age being in hell. Tamura, "Kirisuterareta kuyō," 122. Tamura also sees the significance not in associating the author's pain to Mishima's own suffering, but in tying the author and readers together in sin. Tamura, *Mishima Yukio to nōgaku,* 253. This is in fact foundational to all earlier *Genji kuyō* narratives.

[86] On the *Murasaki Shikibu dagoku setsu* 紫式部堕獄説, see Ii Haruki, *Genji monogatari no densetsu* (Tokyo: Shōwa shuppan, 1976), 154 and Itō Takako, "Murasaki Shikibu dagoku setsuwa tsuiseki kō (1)–Ima kagami to Genji ipponkyō," *Kokubungaku shiron* 10 (1985): 57. Naito, "Performing Prayer," 3.

[87] While one could argue that Murasaki Shikibu was a bodhisattva all along, narratively, it is the recitation of the prayer that effectively transforms her into the Kannon.

[88] でも、こんな私にもたのしみがないわけぢやない。毎日三回づつ、土曜日曜は五回づつ、観光バスがここへやつて来る。愚かな空疎な崇拝者たち、いいえ、あなた方のことぢやないのよ、あの人たちの顔が見られる。芸術と実在とをごつちやにし、しかも自分はそのどちらにも属さない、あの幸福な凡人たち。私は永らくあの人たちを餌にして生きてきたのだから、死んでからもああいふ餌たちの顔を見るのがたのしみなの。*KMYZ* 23.630.

[89] (下手へ何ものかを見つけて) あ! やつて来たわ。こんな時間に、どうしたんだらう。(バスの止まる音。ざわざわした人声) 観光バスの連中だわ。あの人たちにこんな姿を見せるわけには行かない。さやうなら。又会ひませうね。又来て下さるわね。若い人たちと話すのだけが私のたのしみなの。さやうなら。(又下手を見て) ああ、急がなくては。Ibid. 633.

[90] これで文学なんかとは縁切りだ。Ibid. 635.

[91] **ガイド** (声をはり上げて) 皆様、夜道を御苦労様でございます。これがかの有名なる野添紫女史の文学碑でございます。まづ女史自筆の原稿を写しました碑文を御覧下さいませ。(ト懐中電灯で碑文を照らす)「光は瀟洒な純子の翼を

持つた鳥のやうに、春の潮へ向つて身を投げた」とございます。この流麗なる名文は、皆様負承知のとほり、千古の名作「春の潮」の、大団円に於きまして、絶世の美男藤倉光が、五十四人の女性に愛されながら、ここ浦田岬の断崖から身を投じて自決いたします件の文章でございます。折しも春の浦風飄々たるこの断崖上におきまして、文学史上に永遠に残る名作の、哀韻切々たる幕切れを、心ゆくまで味はふことといたしませう。A ははははは。B ははははは。(一同不審さうに二青年の笑ひを見戍る)--幕-- Ibid. 635–636. 飄々 is written with alternate characters.

[92] Dōmoto, *Mishima Yukio no engeki*, 14.

[93] The medieval *noh* play *Aya no tsuzumi* has been translated as *The Damask Drum* by Arthur Waley in *The Nō Plays of Japan* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), 134–141 as well as Royall Tyler in *Japanese Nō Dramas* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1992). Mishima's *Aya no tsuzumi* is translated by Donald Keene as *The Damask Drum* in *Five Modern Noh Plays*, 31–67.

[94] Keene trans., *Five Modern Noh Plays,* 59.

[95] Harper and Shirane, eds., *Reading The Tale of Genji,* 178.

[96] 俺たちほどの物好きはめづらしいだけの話さ。 *KMYZ* 23.624.

[97] Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography,* 243.

[98] 青年が自分の若さをなぜあんなつまらぬことで壊すのか、どうしてその年齢におけるいちばん美しいものをキープしないのかと思っていらいらするんだけれども、自分も同じことをやってきたんだからね。"Taidan: Ningen to bungaku," *KMYZ* 40.131.

[99] 読者を考えた場合に、読者に対する礼儀というものは非常に大事だと思う。読者がもしぼくをある一点においてまともにとってくれているのなら、ある一点でまともなんですよ。Ibid., 110.

[100] "Mishima bungaku no haikei," *KMYZ* 40.629. Roland Barthes describes Paul Valéry (1871–1945) as taking after mentor and fellow French poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898), whose "entire poetics consists in suppressing the author in the interests of writing." Valéry himself "never stopped calling into question and deriding the Author." Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image, Music, Text* trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), 143, 144.

[101] Harada, "Koenaki sakebi," 77.

[102] "Taidan: Ningen to bungaku," *KMYZ* 40, 111. The two writers in dialogue, Nakamura Mitsuo and Mishima, both claim that this tendency to value authors

for more than their writings is prevalent in Japan.

[103] B あの小説のなかで、光は毎朝目玉焼の玉子とコンフレークスを喰べますね。あれはどういふわけなんですか? **女** さつき言つたでせう。光は月なんですよ。だから動物の生命と植物の生命に餓ゑてゐるの。あんな朝ごはんは、彼の儀式なんですよ。A 光が絹の背広が好きなのも……**女**ええ、月が背広を着たら、絹物しか着ないでせう。B 光が女と寝るときに、女の頸筋にキッスして、そこを軽く噛んで歯型をつけますね。**女** それは月の印形なの。あなた方も口のなかに死んだ一対の新月を持つてゐる。弓なりに彎曲した、白い歯の上下の列を。あれは月の名残なんですよ。A 光が夢のなかで、むかし自分のために自殺した女の面影におびやかされて、朝まで眠れなくなる描写がありますね。**女** あれは不眠症の月です。B 女たちがほめる光の美しい指は…… **女** あれは月の光りです。女の寝床の中、下着の下にまで辷り込むことのできるあの指は。*KMYZ* 23.632.

[104] Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), 28.

[105] 頭のからつぽな青年たち *KMYZ* 23.627.

[106] **A** 一つききますが、あなたは男を愛したことがおありですか? **女** いいえ、一度も。私は男も女も愛したことはありません。良人は私をどうしても燃え立たせることができなくて、疲れ果てて死んだのよ。でもそれは別に私の罪ぢやありません。**B** あなたを殺した病気、はつきり言つてよければ、子宮癌ですね、あれはずいぶん苦しかつたでせうね。**女** 苦しかつたわ。……でもあれは恵みだつた。あれは私に少しも気づかれずに私を犯してゐた。人間が誰もできなかつたことを、病気がやつてのけたんだわ。ふしぎだこと。私はもつと生きられると思つてゐた。病気が深いところで私をつかんでゐたので、浅墓な望みを持つた。……一度も子供を生まなかつた私が、あのときはじめて孕んだの。私が孕んだのは死だつた。……春、海のおもてが微生物で真赤になつて、紅い潮が沖のはうまでふしぎな旗をひろげたやうにみえる、私の病気はあれだつたの。私の中に、私よりも大きなものが芽生えてゐた。何といふ永い時間をかけて、それが健やかに育つたこと。……私は苦しんだわ。苦しんだわ。苦しみながら仕合せだつた。廃墟の石垣に、蔦かづらがしつかりと根をひろげるやうに、病気が私をつかんでゐた。……私はあんなに愛されたことはなかつたわ。生れてこのかた一度もなかつた。*KMYZ* 23.632–633.

[107] On the long history of *Genji* reception, see, for example, Haruo Shirane, ed. *Envisioning The Tale of Genji: Media, Gender, and Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), and Harper and Shirane, eds., *Reading The Tale of Genji.*

[108] Shirane, ed., *Envisioning The Tale of Genji,* 40–42. The medieval *noh* play can be seen as a “cannibalistic translation” of *Genji,* and Mishima’s *Genji kuyō,*

along with every modern *noh* in his collection, are similarly cannibalistic of medieval *noh*.

[109] Michael Emmerich, *Genji monogatari: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 10.

[110] *Sarashina nikki* has been translated by Ivan Morris as *As I Crossed A Bridge of Dreams: Recollections of a Woman in Eleventh-Century Japan* (London and New York: Penguin Classics, 1971) and as *The Sarashina Diary: A Woman's Life in Eleventh-Century Japan* by Sonja Arntzen and Itō Moriyuki (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[111] Barthes, 142–148.

[112] "Taidan: ningen to bungaku," *KMYZ* 40.174. For more of Mishima's opinions on *Genji*, see Tamura Keiko, "Futatsu no 'Genji kuyō'—Mishima Yukio no gikyoku to Hashimoto Osamu no essei o megutte," in *Kindaibungaku ni okeru Genji monogatgari* (Tokyo: Ōfū, 2007), 291–293.

[113] 僕は例えば平安朝の文学を読んでも感動しませんよ、「源氏」は別として。「源氏」だって大して感動しませんが "Taidan: ningen to bungaku," *KMYZ* 40.89.

[114] Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography,* 48.

[115] Susan J. Napier, "Death and the Emperor: Mishima, Ōe, and the Politics of Betrayal" *The Journal of Asian Studies* 48.1 (1989): 75.

[116] Mishima had the support of avant-guard director and *noh* specialist Dōmoto Masaki. Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography*, 200. The film was first shown in Paris in September 1965.

[117] While facetious, Mishima made statements like "I just chose communism to be the enemy because I needed the illusion of having something be an opponent." "Tōron: Mishima Yukio vs. Tōdai zenkyōtō" 1969, *KMYZ* 40.452.

[118] Napier, "Death and the Emperor," 74.

[119] January 1961 issue of *Bungakukai.* Translated as *Seventeen* by Masao Miyoshi in *Two Novels: Seventeen, J* (New York : Blue Moon Books, 1996).

[120] Flanagan, *Yukio Mishima*, 194.

[121] Ibid., 176–178.

[122] Mishima Yukio, *Death in Midsummer and Other Stories,* trans. Geoffrey W. Sargent, 93.

[123] Ibid., 104.

[124] As John Nathan put it, "To reduce the hero's individuality even further, he wore his soldier's cap down over his eyes, as if it were a [n]ō mask." Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography*, 199.

[125] Mishima, *Death in Midsummer*, 115.

[126] In a discussion with novelist Nosaka Akiyuki (1930–2015) in the last year of his life, Mishima remarked: "I can die at any time, but I wouldn't like cancer." おれは、いつポックリいってもいいと思っているよ。だが、ガンなんかはイヤだな。 "Ken ka hana ka," *KMYZ* 40.607.

[127] *Utsukushii hoshi* (released with the English title *A Beautiful Star*), 2017. Directed by Daihachi Yoshida, distributed by GAGA.

[128] *Mishima Yukio vs. Tōdai zenkyōtō: 50 nenme no shinjitsu* 三島由紀夫 vs 東大全共闘—50 年目の真実 (released with the English title *Mishima: The Last Debate*, 2020), Directed by Toyoshima Keisuke, distributed by GAGA.

[129] Or, as Kirsten Cather put it, "Mishima Yukio is a man who just won't die." "Scripting Suicide: Mishima Yukio's The Rite of Love and Death" (Japan Speaker Series, University of Maryland, College Park, November 15, 2012).

[130] In the words of Yoshikuni Igarashi, Mishima, while attempting to "'unsuture' the ideological closure of Japanese society" in the 1960s by killing himself, managed only a "farcical death" that was "absolutely ineffectual." Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory*, 181, 197.