



Dying in Two Dimensions: *Genji emaki* and the Wages of Depth
Perception

Reginald Jackson

Mechademia, Volume 7, 2012, pp. 149-172 (Article)

Published by University of Minnesota Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/488601>





• • •

REGINALD JACKSON

Dying in Two Dimensions: *Genji emaki* and the Wages of Depth Perception

The Gotō Museum’s “Yomigaeru *Genji monogatari emaki*” exhibit of 2005–6 was an ambitious attempt to “resurrect” (*yomigaeru*) the museum’s legendary illustrated handscrolls of *The Tale of Genji* (the *Genji monogatari emaki*) by analyzing the flaking, faded twelfth-century scrolls scientifically and having artists paint a series of new, more polished and more vibrant but ostensibly “faithful” copies to be exhibited alongside the originals. In its apparent attempt to make the scrolls more accessible and appealing to modern audiences, the exhibit was nothing less than an attempt to produce a contemporary viewing public in relation to art of the Heian period (794–1185).¹ But such a desire to consolidate the audience’s impressions of the artwork does away with facets of the scrolls that might endanger the construction of a unified viewership. In particular, the refabrication of the scrolls strategically excludes the narrative calligraphic *kotobagaki* sections that in fact compose the lion’s share of the extant *Genji* scrolls, effectively severing an intimate bond between narrative text and narrative image. Even more significantly, the redacted reproduction fails to account for the calligraphic performance of dying that figures so prominently in the climatic deathbed scenes of the *Tale of Genji* protagonists Kashiwagi and Murasaki no Ue. In this article, I would like to consider some of the potential

implications of this omission. My primary goal will be to think through the spatial and temporal dimensions of artistic representations of death in relation to the composition—and decomposition—of the *Genji emaki*. Specifically, I want to examine some of the consequences involved in “resurrecting” the twelfth-century scrolls within the context of the twenty-first-century gallery in order to critique a contemporary insistence on the flatness of images and the displacement of text that results.

Murasaki Shikibu’s *The Tale of Genji* (1008, *Genji monogatari*) is commonly regarded as the highest achievement within the canon of Japanese literature and stands as a powerful icon of Japanese cultural identity. *Genji* comprises fifty-four chapters and centers primarily on the affairs of the title character, a preternaturally talented courtier of the Heian period. It holds the reputation of being a paragon of classical literature and can be said to symbolize a peak of Japanese cultural achievement in the premodern era. The *Genji monogatari emaki* (ca. 1140, Illustrated handscrolls of *The Tale of Genji*), which represent the oldest surviving copy of the *Genji* text, have thus by association earned the status of a sacred relic to be enshrined and “resurrected” in order to preserve or renew a sense of national pride. The “Yomigaeru” exhibition works to bolster this sentiment not by restoring the bleak, deteriorated paintings but by replacing them with entirely new, dazzling, repainted versions.

The *Genji monogatari emaki* are a set of illustrated handscrolls composed in an alternating text and painting format in which the *Genji* scenes deemed most compelling by five groups of artists were excerpted from the narrative and rendered in incredibly lavish, deeply interrelated, calligraphic and pictorial forms. Most of the scroll sections have been lost, but it is thought that at one time, sections that corresponded to each of *The Tale of Genji*’s fifty-four chapters existed. Each scroll section consists of a painted interpretation of one scene from a particular chapter from *Genji*. Each of these is preceded by a calligraphic preface, or “*kotobagaki*,” excerpted from the *Genji* narrative that relates the scene depicted in the painting. These *kotobagaki* were done in five different hands, with the most skilled calligrapher writing for the most famous scenes.² Sponsored by competing aristocrats, groups of artists worked closely as ensembles to produce the scrolls in an elaborate “built-picture,” or “*tsukurie*,” system of artistic production, based on the layering of planes of ink and color to build up the painting in distinct stages. A head artist would see to the *shitagaki* or “under-sketch” for each scene (basically an outline of characters and architectural shapes), and then other painters proceeded to successively overlay the pigments (e.g. crushed-shell white, malachite green, ferrous red, etc.).³ There were also craftsmen who designed various ornate

THE WAY IN WHICH THE EXHIBIT
UNDERScores THE TWO-
DIMENSIONAL PROPERTIES OF
THE IMAGES DISPLAYED SPEAKS
DIRECTLY TO THE EXTENT TO
WHICH THE MOST GRAPHIC
TRACES OF DEATH HAVE BEEN
REMOVED FROM VIEW.

papers upon which the calligraphy for each scene would be choreographed.

These papers could involve special dying techniques with substances such as pomegranate juice or indigo, and often included striking overlays of mica powder, or sprinklings of cut gold or silver foil, “wild hairs” (*noge*), or silver dust, which oxidizes to an ominously gray

color. These materials were coordinated to suit the thematic and emotional tenor of the chapter (as decided by the artists), and could be likened to the visual equivalent of a movie soundtrack⁴—nondiegetic but still crucial for setting the visual mood of the calligraphy and conveying meaning in ways more diffuse and less linearly communicative than the calligraphic script itself.

Each painting in the *Genji emaki* was originally preceded by a *kotobagaki*, and each *kotobagaki* provided a framing narrative to contextualize and foreshadow the scene depicted in the painting.⁵ The textual portions were excerpted by the craftsmen’s patrons for their emotional interest, entertainment value, and poetic or aesthetic appeal, and then the principal artisan would decide on how best to render in pictorial form the scene described in the writing.⁶ The patron would also select a particular calligrapher to write the text.

Under sponsorship from rival aristocratic factions, the groups of artists worked collaboratively, but in competition with other similarly funded groups, to produce graphic interpretations of the *Genji* narrative that were both familiar to the Heian elite and yet striking in their own right as creative translations of the narrative into a more spectacular context. An important result of this transposition of the narrative excerpts into the *emaki* format is that the narrative is unrolled by the viewer and read progressively from right-to-left, moving forward through the narrative arc of each section as one moves leftward along the scroll’s horizontal axis. There are, however, particularly captivating moments at which this standard narrative flow appears to shift dramatically, even seeming to break down. These are the instances of *midaregaki* calligraphy, or “tangled script,” that I will discuss later in the essay.

One of the things I would like to argue is that the exhibition of the resurrected scrolls insists upon a two-dimensionality in order to ensure the smoothest identification possible on the part of the contemporary Japanese audience. This two-dimensional emphasis stems from a desire to streamline the scrolls for public consumption. Moreover, this desire to promote through *Genji* an aesthetic sense of Heian culture sets the ground for a systematic

reconfiguration of the scrolls' shape and significance. I would posit, first, that the triumphal "resurrection" proclaimed by the exhibit's title privileges a certain flatness—in both the reproduced paintings themselves and the imaging technologies that contribute to the precision of those reproductions. Furthermore, I would argue that the way in which the exhibit underscores the two-dimensional properties of the images displayed speaks directly to the extent to which the most graphic traces of death have been removed from view. These traces take the form of calligraphic performances of dying characterized by a columnar overlap, velocity, and centripetal torsion that combine to give an otherwise flat surface of inscription a distinct three-dimensional contour, as seen in the *midaregaki* passages. In the exhibit this calligraphy is given much less prominence than the scroll paintings. Despite comprising roughly 80 percent of the extant scrolls, the calligraphy appears more as a decorative addendum to the exhibition, with only a handful of sheets being displayed among the more than seventy that survive. This marginalization carries over to the exhibition catalog, where the calligraphy debuts only on the 138th of 157 pages, and then only as computer graphics or CG renderings rather than handmade artworks. By contrast, every one of the nineteen extant paintings confirmed to have been part of the original set of scrolls had the flaked, drained pigments of their deteriorated surfaces redressed by an ensemble of technologists and painters, and every one of them was displayed alongside its "original" incarnation in the gallery. As a consequence of this process, any residual coarseness present in either the *text or the image* that might skew the impression of Heian constancy endorsed by the exhibit had been scraped away.

By examining closely the aesthetic and political implications of this removal, I hope to present a reading of depth in Heian-period illustrated handscrolls that might also contribute a helpful analytical perspective to broader discussions of narrative art in modern genres such as manga and anime. Indeed, we might see the exhibition as being just one particularly elaborate example of a broader recent desire to reinvigorate premodern illustrated handscrolls by recasting them as the natural ancestors of contemporary Japanese comics and animation. Books like Studio Ghibli director Takahata Isao's *Jūni seiki animeeshon* (Twelfth-century animation), published in 1999, and a 2002 issue of *Nihon no bi o meguru* called "The Beginnings of Anime," which posits the famous *Chōjū giga* scrolls (Comic illustrations of birds and animals) as a twelfth-century anime prototype, both exemplify this phenomenon.⁷ More significantly, the Takahata publication ignores entirely the textual written elements of illustrated handscrolls in lieu of the pictures. This forms part

of a larger project to force a twenty-first-century anime template onto the twelfth-century illustrated handscrolls, which results in gross oversimplifications being made about the primacy of images in illustrated handscrolls, and questionable equivalencies being drawn between the two media. It would seem that such a reductive account overlooks the narrative *kotobagaki* writing as a matter of convenience. To incorporate the text into a discussion of the specific narrative strategies employed in narrative scrolls might well necessitate a revision of the transhistorical catchphrase “twelfth-century animation,” if not a reevaluation of the boundaries of “animation” itself. Rather than risk such a disruptive rethinking, Takahata’s volume opts instead to merely recast the premodern textual peculiarities of illustrated handscrolls within the confines of a contemporary lexicon that, while vivid, is nonetheless ill equipped to render fully the intricacies of the twelfth-century productions.

In contrast to this trend, I will emphasize the importance of understanding text and image as intimately intertwined, if not inseparable. While I will focus here on the *Genji emaki*, I believe that many of the points I’ll make concerning the symbiotic relation between text and image and the techniques through which the appearance of two- or three-dimensionality is produced artistically will also engage those interested in contemporary visual culture. Insofar as I develop my critique of an idealized flatness enforced in the twenty-first century out of a particular instance of three-dimensional writing produced in the twelfth century, the approach put forth here is meant to challenge notions of flatness that elide more textured historical and material considerations of the artwork.

QUALITY CONTROL AND THE PROBLEM OF PERSPECTIVE

The Gotō Museum’s “Resurrected Genji Scrolls” exhibit aimed to flatten any potentially disruptive visual elements. Smoothness of the image intimates a refinement of execution at both the scientific and artisanal levels: the patent lack of any roughness marks the overall quality of the reproduction as extraordinarily high. More specifically, the planar uniformity of the images reflects the aims of legibility, accessibility, and enjoyment that pervade both the exhibit’s didactic tenor as well as its unabashedly rich palette. The focus on popular accessibility and marketability bears directly upon how the art object is shaped for display within the space of the modern museum. Admittedly, the handscroll format is in many ways ill suited to the presentational demands of

the standard rectangular, encased, exhibition protocol. In the case of the *Genji monogatari emaki*, specifically, they are too long for their own good, which is to say that their length might make them difficult to segment and arrange pragmatically within the Gotō's gallery space. Their lopsided ratio of sheets of calligraphy to paintings—the latter being both far fewer in number and yet recognized far more legibly and desirably as “art” proper—makes them less attractive from a curatorial perspective that privileges a vibrant image over an unwieldy text.⁸

In considering the problem of perspective as a problem of both institutional priorities and disciplinary proclivities, it is helpful to note briefly two important contributions to theorizing perspective within the context of premodern Japanese narrative and art: Takahashi Tōru's concept of “psychoperspective” (*shinteki enkinhō*) and Sano Midori's notion of “pluralistic perspective” (*tagenteki na shiten*). In elaborating his concept of psychoperspective, Takahashi outlines a narrative perspective that avoids both Cartesian and diametrically anti-Cartesian poles. By introducing the concept of a “*mononoke no yō na*” viewpoint, a narrative perspective that roves the tale “like a possessing spirit”—untethered to a single consciousness or fixed site of enunciation—Takahashi provides an intervention that loosens the hold of Cartesian principles on our understanding of how premodern narratives function.⁹ The value of Takahashi's critique should be understood in relation to a broader politics of reading that resists capitulating to either a purely Cartesian sensibility or to a similarly extreme “native” Heian mode of composition.¹⁰

Sano Midori develops her own concept toward related ends and focuses attention on the spatial design of pictorial narratives in her discussion of the *Genji emaki*. Approaching similar narrative phenomena from an art historical standpoint, Sano's notion of “pluralistic perspective,” too, dislodges any sense of absolute perspectival certainty. Sano also points out the impression of instability caused by the absence of a horizon line and the diagonal arrangement of the architecture in the “Yadorigi 3” section to stress the lack



FIGURE 1. Yūgiri's visit to Kashiwagi's deathbed. "Yomigaeru *Genji monogatari emaki*" (Resurrected Illustrated handscrolls of the *Tale of Genji*) exhibition catalog, "Kashiwagi 2." Painting detail. Artist: Katō Junko. Courtesy of Japan Broadcasting Corporation, Tokyo.

of centralized linear perspective as an organizing spatial design principle within the *Genji emaki*, in particular.¹¹ Moreover, we can read her discussion of “zero-focalization” as suggesting a kind of flatness insofar as it implies a normalization of pictorial elements into a visual field undifferentiated by either modulated planes of color or the stabilized focus that a single vanishing point might establish.

Rather than think of the handscroll as being merely a static art object, I would like to conceptualize it as an interactive spatial and temporal site within which subjectivity is negotiated through corporeal contact. Distinctions between viewing, reading, and feeling—distinctions whose stability depends in large part on the ways in which one understands a notion of spectacle and the overlapping haptic and affective labors it involves—become especially porous at such a site. Through the redaction of the handscroll format to a set of individuated frames, the malleable temporality once coupled to the viewer’s tactile interface with the object is replaced by a fixed temporality that is less beholden to the motions of the reading body. The “Yomigaeru” exhibit thus reprises the cuts made more than a century before, when the scrolls were remounted, and later, when they were split again to protect them during the Pacific War. This abridgment amounts to a translation of the objects’ material format that marks a shift from the semi-private, viscerally *haptic*, space of reading to a more expansive public sphere of viewing. We could posit that within such a space, a more somatically immediate rapport between an individual reader and the text they seek to apprehend might interfere with the promotion of an anodyne condition of collective viewership. Members of the audience are united as consumers by their shared inability to handle the texts, coupled with their equalized access to retooled images of the paintings.

The modern project of affirming the delicacy and the ephemerality of Heian culture serves as a rationale for preserving its images and for supervising the location, rate, mode, and extent of their representation, reproduction, and sale. The images produced are radically flattened for public consumption by means of the x-rays, infrared scans, and other technological apparatuses of detection and imaging used to analyze and reproduce the paintings. This translation continues past the backlit cases into the Gotō Museum gift shop, where catalogs, bookmarks, stationery, and postcards all extend the proliferation of commodified images instigated by microscopic scans. Specifically, the “Yomigaeru *Genji monogatari emaki*” exhibit showcases technology’s capacity to disclose the internal mysteries of the Heian cultural artifact and to recuperate its withered appearance. The process of assaying the scrolls results in images thoroughly evacuated of the aura tethered to premodern mystery, but are

images that nevertheless remain infused with a magnified sensation of awe that could only emerge from the alchemical amalgam of safflower pulp and infrared lenses.¹² In contrast to Walter Benjamin's account of the consequences of the technological reproducibility of artworks, in which the art object's prehistoric cult value loses out to the exhibition value favored by modern mass culture, my sense is that the "Yomigaeru" exhibit strikes a balance between these two values.¹³ On the one hand, it optimizes their respective proportions such that the technological and artisanal components of the recomposed scrolls are aligned; on the other hand, it effectively splits the difference between the values so that the cult value of the work can be preserved without compromising an efficient distribution of its exhibition value among spectators.

RATHER THAN THINK OF THE HANDSCROLL AS BEING MERELY A STATIC ART OBJECT, I WOULD LIKE TO CONCEPTUALIZE IT AS AN INTERACTIVE SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL SITE WITHIN WHICH SUBJECTIVITY IS NEGOTIATED THROUGH CORPOREAL CONTACT.

AURA AND ITS ASYMMETRIES

We should think about how the more palpably performative aspects of experiencing the scrolls are amputated in order to preserve a perspective that fuses the recessionary present to a halcyon past.¹⁴ One thing to point out is that the intimately physical experience of engaging with the handscroll—unrolling it, holding it before one's eyes, carefully spooling the narrative forward or backward through time within one's hands at a span of approximately a torso-width at a time—has vanished. This modern version offers a far less haptic experience for the viewer, as the capacity to touch the narrative is withheld. Even if we account for the reasonable insistence that ancient works of art should not be molested by spectators, one still has to wonder about the decision to abandon the handscroll format for the new reproductions. By ditching the "*maki*" (scroll) of *emaki* and keeping just the "*e*" (picture), the images take on a veneer of self-sufficiency that belies the illustrated narrative's once palpable attachment to the human body. Another point to mention is that without the calligraphic text to accompany the new images, the embodied interaction of vocalizing the narrative excerpts interposed between paintings is also blocked. In the communal context of a Heian-period salon, different participants could read aloud as listeners pitched their own comments to supplement the story; this form of Heian entertainment, along with any modern

THESE TECHNOLOGIES GENERATE IMAGES BY DECODING THE PAINTINGS THROUGH CALIBRATED EMISSIONS OF INFRARED AND X-RAY WAVELENGTHS THAT FORCE THE SECRETS OF THEIR COMPOSITION TO LIGHT.

analogue, is effectively foreclosed as the format and focus narrow to extol the paintings at the calligraphy's expense. Together, these changes combine to push into the background the precarious physical contingency that attends these elements of the illustrated narrative handscroll.

I would like to suggest here that the exhibit privileges certain lines of sight above others, both in terms of the type of narrative it promotes and in terms of the ways in which the material forms of the objects displayed attest to a radical compression of the depth of the visual field. This compression, I would argue, references a historical materiality through imaging technologies, but does so to only a superficial degree and only insofar as those diagnostic images try, in their empiricist zeal, to recoup some measure of the paintings' dwindled aura. The exhibit traffics in a two-dimensionality linked directly to the technological imaging apparatus used to probe the scroll paintings. In fact, the infrared scans and x-ray photographs epitomize the exhibit's insistence on a two-dimensional plane. While this might seem counterintuitive, since one normally thinks of x-rays as allowing a three-dimensional insight into the object examined, it is important to note that in this context, these technologies (1) collaborate to veil the natural (if inadmissibly grotesque) topography of the heavily flaked scroll surface and (2) focus singularly on the goal of penetrating the paintings in order to rid their reproductions of any debris that might tarnish an optimally smooth façade.

The resurrected scrolls look flatter because the wholly repainted images erase signs of the extensive blistering borne by the time-ravaged originals. One consequence of this is that visual elements that were once hidden below the topmost painted layer but later exposed to view as the scrolls deteriorated (such as stray lines of the under-drawing for a character's head or even scribbled directions noting the placement of pictorial elements like pieces of furniture or a garden) are swept away. Along the same lines, the provisional traces of the multiple twelfth-century artists who worked on different aspects of the scroll sections have been distilled to the hand of a single artist who repaints the scene, executing the design deduced and prescribed by the hi-tech sensors. By the same token, the diagnostic images' conspicuous presence within the exhibition attests to a desire to showcase a set of images that might serve a compensatory function in supplementing any deficit of aura caused by the removal of the scrolls' coarsest remnants.

These technologies generate images by decoding the paintings through calibrated emissions of infrared and x-ray wavelengths that force the secrets of their composition to light. This production of knowledge relies not on a preservation of premodern remnants but instead on a host of cutting-edge images designed to call forth for the viewing public an *idealized optical impression of premodern fidelity*. It is this matrix of images that will serve as a virtual proxy for the original scrolls' *tsukurie* ("built-picture") process, whose aura and palimpsestic depth are deserted by the reproduced images.¹⁵

If the aura, as described by Benjamin, is a "strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be," then the reproductive process carried out in this context might be said to normalize unevenness in the tissue's surface to extinguish the breadth of this interval.¹⁶ In a sense, the resurrected scroll paintings collectively represent an image that refuses the status of a palimpsest. Indeed, given that the *tsukurie* process is a defining feature of the twelfth-century paintings, this refusal of a similar degree of tiered depth—which I would argue reduces the three-dimensional quality of the image and thus produces an accentuated two-dimensional appearance—represents a suppression of the material vagaries that had accrued to give the painting its distinct historical form: a three-dimensional texture stemming as much from calligraphic overlap as from the decrepit paintings' peeling surface. While the new paintings appear to retain



FIGURE 2. A portable x-ray machine being used to scan the handscroll painting, from the "Yomigaeru *Genji monogatari emaki*" exhibition catalog. Photograph courtesy of Japan Broadcasting Corporation, Tokyo.

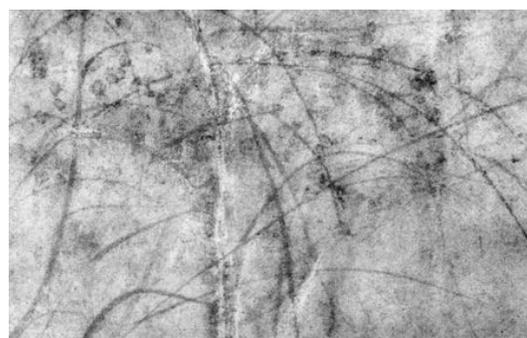
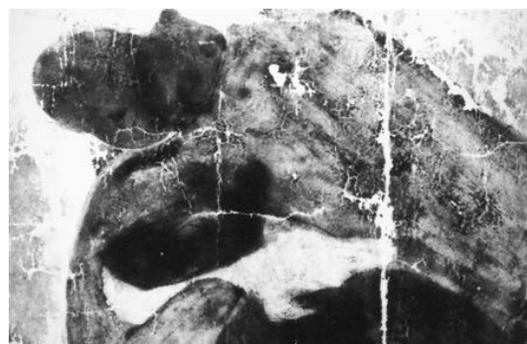


FIGURE 3. Infrared (*above*) and X-ray (*below*) diagnostic photos of twelfth-century scroll paintings depicting autumn grasses and Genji cradling Kashiwagi's son, Kaoru, respectively. Photo courtesy of National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo.



the precise chemical composition of the original pigments, they nonetheless redact the *system* of composition by collapsing the multiple layers of inscription into a single uniform plane. Consequently, what had been a field stratified unevenly by applications—and successive, conflicting, *reapplications*—of ink and color, has in this case been cleared to secure a more tractable, valuable vision of the Heian past within the recessionary present.

By stressing the primacy of the two-dimensional pictorial plane, the most benign and most mimetic properties of the artwork are emphasized such that attendees of the exhibit might identify more readily with the bygone image of Heian Japan coveted by the recuperative project. This emphasis entails an enforcement of a particular mode of viewing. The main way this happens is through the use of imaging technologies that are designed to penetrate the topmost layer of the paintings in order to expose the precise composition of their stratified pigments. The coloration of clothing and architectural appointments are important, but arguably they matter only insofar as they contrast in hue with the white faces of the protagonists. As others have argued, these faces, with their remarkable uniformity of depiction, might have allowed pre-modern viewers to identify more readily with the fictional characters: to see themselves reflected in the shell-white paint and more easily project their own desires upon the protagonists portrayed, as though facing a mirror.¹⁷

The exhibit works to protract (and protect) a vector of filiation that connects the twelfth- and twenty-first-century artworks, and goes further: to project a futurity that has been technologically secured by the “Yomigaeru” exhibit’s gloss of Heian culture. The “Yomigaeru” exhibition treats the painting as an organism to be reconstituted and propagated. We should note, though, that this expansion, which proceeds alongside a rise in exhibition value, also advances a mythic legacy for public consumption. Each iteration of images produced recapitulates, in the same instant, the remoteness of the original objects as well as the facsimiles’ sleek modernity. To the extent that both of these qualities are underscored simultaneously, a continuum is drawn. In this regard, the presentational logic of the exhibition, which juxtaposes past and present images, plots the iconic points between which an unwavering transhistorical lineage can be traced. I would point out, however, that this metaphorical line’s horizontal extension contrasts with the static placement of the actual images within the exhibition.

The images of the twelfth-century paintings are cut and placed side by side with the newly “resurrected” *Genji* paintings to install a spatial syntax that conveys an equivalence between the images. The complementary orientation of the past and present paintings invites the viewer to look back and forth

between the images to establish (freely, for themselves) a commonsensical—if not geometrical—correlation between them. This manner of presentation effectively holds out the promise of being able to not only redeem the decrepit image and restore its luster but, moreover, to successfully reproduce in the present a history more vibrant and attractive than the original. Such an arrangement lends an air of natural correspondence between the fabricated artistic products, a correspondence that the calligraphy would most likely perturb.

This arrangement of reproductions dispels with its compensatory vibrancy the insistent but unsavory truth that all art atrophies with time. It is arguably this deterioration that carries with it the potential disclosure of the image's material, and *corporeal*, depth. Along these lines, I think immediately of the painting of Onna San no Miya in the "Suzumushi" section. The textual memos to the artists specifying where to paint architectural and landscape elements that can be seen where the pigments have worn away attest not only to the presence of another plane of inscription below the painted surface, *but index an entire hierarchal network of artisanal labor* as well. The flaking mineral pigments divulge the presence of strata initially orchestrated in such a way as to understate (but not necessarily erase) the painting's impression of depth.

Substratum elements such as these, which help scaffold the surface of the image, are exteriorized and arrayed as separate diagnostic images, with the result that they can then be consulted to consolidate a more streamlined impression of Heian luxury. This exteriorization treats the multiple contingencies of sketched guidelines and scribbled notes found throughout the twelfth-century scrolls, which were fundamental aspects of their composition, as debris to be swept away in order to usher in an unblemished pictorial façade. The *tsukurie* process of layered inscription of a single painting by multiple artists has been leveled in favor of a single painter's hand emulating a computer-assisted projection. This decision effaces a central feature of the original *emaki*: the provisional tenor underwriting the painting's surface. Consequently it also undercuts what I would term the interrogative capacity of the scrolls. Indeed, it is this interrogative capacity—the scrolls' potential to pose (and interpose) questions about the politics of their formation and framing by dint of their medium's material composition—that the change in format suppresses. I consider this interrogative potential to be a quality that is brought to the foreground in the three-dimensional overlap of the *midaregaki* calligraphy.¹⁸

IMPRESSIONS OF DEPTH AND DEAD LINES

The other manner in which the exhibition's two-dimensional insistence takes shape is through the suppression of calligraphic elements. The question of discipline enters the scene here, as well, insofar as the presentational logic of the exhibition entails the systematic displacement of disruptive visual elements in order to foreground qualities of order, linearity, and a clarity borne of high-resolution imaging. Even if this impression of uniformity is in practice cast less as a production than as a preservation, it becomes immediately apparent that what is allegedly preserved, or "resurrected," is not the actual twelfth-century object but rather the *sense* of it: a kind of essence, conveyed by the affective impression the image is fashioned to transmit. The *midaregaki* writing, however, embodies a three-dimensional capacity at odds with the flattened portrayal of Heian culture endorsed by the exhibition. The particular type of two-dimensional plane established by the "Yomigaeru" paintings, then, might be interpreted as a space of quarantine that shields the exhumed image from contagion by a morbid calligraphic hand.

Five calligraphic hands have been identified in the *Genji emaki*, and both the "Minori" and the three "Kashiwagi" sections are categorized together as having been done by the same person—considered by scholars like Akiyama Terukazu to have been the most skilled (and most staunchly traditional) calligrapher of the group.¹⁹ The sections "Kashiwagi" and "Minori" stand out for the *midaregaki*, or "tangled-script," that occupies their final sheets. This special type of writing, characterized by extremely rapid brushwork in which the brush rarely leaves the paper to create long sequences of connected characters whose vertical columns overlap such that they seem to "tangle," represents a distinctive feature of the *Genji emaki*. While this mode of writing is employed in both the "Murasaki" and "Kashiwagi" sections of the scrolls, I will focus on the Kashiwagi section, named for the character whose death it depicts.

In the climax of the chapter, a frail and suffering Kashiwagi tries desperately to write a letter to his love, the Third Princess, with whom he has fathered an illegitimate child, Kaoru. Genji passes the child off as his own son, concealing the truth of the matter and causing Kashiwagi, his rival, even further grief. Sensing his final days drawing near, Kashiwagi tries to write to the Third Princess, but with his hand trembling and his will unsteadied by the visceral—and, it should be noted, *textual*—fact of his own mortality, his writing collapses. Seeing his own writing fractured there on the page before him only demoralizes Kashiwagi further, as he realizes that he cannot convey all that he wishes to his estranged lover; he dies soon after his failed writing attempt.

I have argued this point at length elsewhere,²⁰ but I'd like to revisit the language of this scene as a point of departure here: “[Kashiwagi’s] tears flowed faster now, and he wrote his reply lying down, between bouts of weeping. The words made no sense and resembled the tracks of strange birds [koto no ha no tsuzuki mo nō, ayashiki tori no yō nite]. . . . He felt even worse after this confused effort at writing.”²¹ In a narrative utterly saturated with scenes of writing and reading, this instance, in which Kashiwagi confronts the brute materiality of his illegible script, still attains status as a primal scene. The description of the writing later in the narrative as “lumpy” or “pulpy”

(“*tsubu-tsubu*”) suggests a coagulation of script that lures the reader closer even as it bears ill portent. Such a description attests to the clotted texture of the writing, which in turn suggests to my mind a thickening materiality that exceeds a two-dimensional plane: something denser, indeed *chewier* (especially given Kaoru’s indulgence in “gruel and steamed rice” as he visually consumes through the letters the traces of his dead father’s hand).²²

To the extent that the prefaces not only recount but calligraphically *perform* certain elements of the narrative, we can read in the phrasing a gesture toward a more dynamic form of writing. In one sense, to have no clear linear progression, no successive arrangement that would lend legible meaning to an arrangement of written characters, suggests an absence of order. But taken another way, this absence also marks a repletion insofar as it opens possibilities for other configurations, other modes of writing, reading, and viewing to take shape. When considered in conjunction with the calligraphic performance of overlapping columns, we can understand the phrasing as referencing a lack of succession along a horizontal plane, in particular. While this might imply a kind of disarray along the horizontal axis of the sheet, it does not however appear to preclude an altered arrangement of script along the front-to-rear or z axis.

This altered mode of inscription takes shape as *midaregaki*, or “tangled-



FIGURE 4. Image from the twelfth-century *Genji monogatari emaki* (Illustrated handscrolls of *The Tale of Genji*) showing Yūgiri’s visit to Kashiwagi’s deathbed (Kashiwagi on left, Yūgiri on right). “Kashiwagi 2.” Courtesy of the Tokugawa Museum, Nagoya.

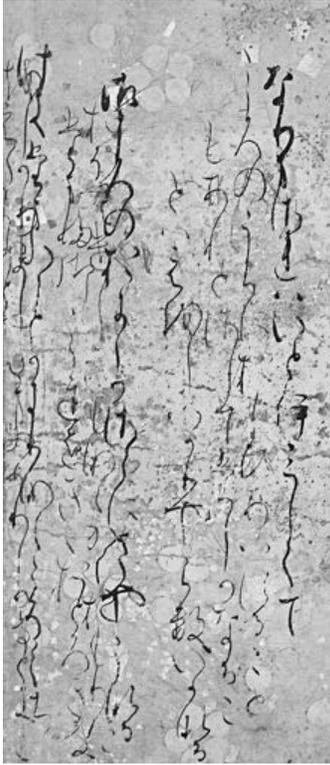


FIGURE 5. An image of *midare-gaki* calligraphy from the “Kashiwagi 2” section of the *Genji monogatari emaki*, not reproduced as part of the “Yomigaeru *Genji Monogatari Emaki*” exhibition. “Kashiwagi 2,” sheet 8, detail. Courtesy of the Tokugawa Museum, Nagoya.

script,” which enters the frame at the climatic death scenes of Kashiwagi and Genji’s beloved, Murasaki no Ue. At these charged junctures, in which ill characters palpably approach the limits of mortality, the inexorable question of what comes next visibly galls the protagonists, even as it amplifies the drama of *Genji*’s deathbed portrayals. In this sense, the lack of a clear succession connects with the interruption in the standard spatiotemporal progression of Kashiwagi’s failed letter, a communicative misfire that should also be read as disrupting the broader system of patriarchal lineage within which the protagonists subsist and make meaning. But in addition to this, the description of the broken script also marks a break in the handscroll’s narrational schema and in the steady leftward spatial movement synced to that narrative development.

That the standard linear progression of the scroll should come to be interrupted by death is no surprise when we consider the tenor of finality death carries. What deserves our attention, however, is the way in which what I term the calligraphic performance of dying visibly transforms the surface of the scroll and thus refracts standard vectors of viewing. I would argue that the calligraphic performance of dying in the “Kashiwagi” and “Minori” sections transfigures the narrative *kotobagaki*, moves against the normative spatial and temporal framework of the scroll

format, and, more significantly, can be said to gesture beyond that format’s standard two-dimensional principle of linear writing. Call it a striation of the once-smooth space of narration, or a swell of energy that roils the sheet’s surface.²³ I read this *midare* movement as a pulsion that produces a fissure along which the calligraphy constricts against the grounding plane to take on a conical inclination. The sheer speed of the script, the contraction of columns’ width across the sheet, and the graduated superimposition of columns, all accrue to lend a torsion to the writing—as though the topmost stratum of writing buckled to embed deeper currents of inscription.²⁴

This mode of writing produces an effect of calligraphic depth, not between planes of inscription in which decorated paper merely grounds calligraphic writing, but an effect of depth wrought by *the successive superimposition of calligraphic columns alone*. This layering of script represents a juncture at which writing’s movement does more than merely narrate: it reworks the standard

grid of lineation and exploits the modulation of ink tone to knead the two-dimensional surface toward a three-dimensional contour. It is at this focused point that the *midaregaki* exceeds the task of simply portraying the deathbed scenes to instead perform kinesthetically the labor of trying to outstrip death's hold on the body straining to write.²⁵

We could interpret this performance's intensity as potentially magnifying the Heian viewer's affective investment in the portrayal: for instance, does it incur sympathy or disgust on behalf of the abject protagonists? The choreographed modulation of the writing along the z axis might well be read—which is to

say here, “misread”—to figure some simple depth of feeling. But I do not think this mode of calligraphic writing should be subsumed by the discourse of pure feeling, which has a habit of casting the more violent and politically charged aspects of Heian society in a superficial light. While feeling might be said to matter to these calligraphic scenes of dying, our critical engagement with the art objects would be served far better by concentrating our energy—much as the scroll sections themselves do—on the sites at which the *performative materiality* of the script intersects the affective inducement to look more closely.

In my reading, what the writing Kashiwagi produces and the *midaregaki* sections of the scrolls have in common is that they both represent challenges to reading in habituated ways. That Kashiwagi's writing is described as having no *tsuzuki*, or “continuous line,” signifies that it makes no sense because it does not proceed along a linear vector that would presumably ensure its comprehensibility. What this lack of *tsuzuki* might imply, then, is that Kashiwagi's writing, in its splintered, “pulpy” form, also has no history—that it possesses nothing *but* a present in its deviation from a teleological alignment of future and past. In this sense, his “senseless” writing becomes radically present precisely to the extent that, in its grotesque materiality, it exceeds a normative

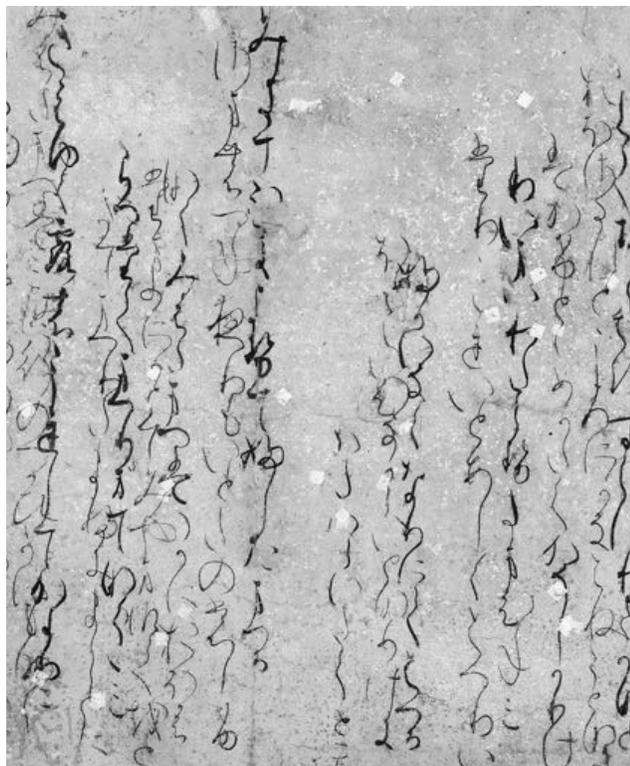


FIGURE 6. An image of *midaregaki* from the “Minori” section of the *Genji monogatari emaki*. “Minori,” sheet 5. Courtesy of the Gotō Museum, Tokyo.

framing of time. It seems to stand outside of history insofar as it perforates such a strict temporal frame. The writing manifests a punctum, in the terms of Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, puncturing the field of representation with a performative force that prompts the onlooker to contend, in a more corporeally invested way, with the textural poignancy of the object.²⁶

The medium through which the viewer encounters the punctum shapes its emergence. As such, the force of the calligraphic hand manifests itself differently in the handscroll format than in the photograph. If, for Barthes, the punctum pricks up past the surface of the photo, then we might understand the calligraphic punctum as materializing here with a less explicitly vertical aspect: not necessarily as an individuated perceptual peak rising off of the image's flat surface *but rather as a fold that reworks the planar, two-dimensional orientation of the inscribed sheet*. The calligraphic gesture I am most interested in here materializes as a persistent but tremulous hand, denied both the cultural status and central physical placement granted the paintings within the exhibition. This irruption, which emits affective energy less predictably than the paintings, threatens to disarticulate the essentialist discourse underwriting the exhibit. (Perhaps it elicits a flinch from viewers or imparts a ripple to the surface of perception that perturbs the images' triumphal finish.)

By removing the calligraphy and accentuating the significance of the technologically aided "resurrections" of the *Genji* scroll paintings, the exhibit holds out the promise of a clean, clear link to the mythic Heian past from which, it is implied, modern Japanese rightfully and naturally derive their cultural inheritance. Painting is assigned a status above calligraphy because, unlike calligraphy, the images let this problematic rapport appear both valid and seamless. With their vivid colors, the juxtaposed reproductions appear to remedy the decrepitude of the Heian-era product; they effectively cast what is really a full-scale recreation as the proper, unadulterated incarnation of a long-lost original. In so doing, they satisfy a desire for historical and cultural unity by presenting in high-resolution a whole and straightforward version of a complex object whose multilayered, circuitous composition resists a superficial rendition.

CONCLUSION: DWELLING ON THE DEAD

The particular brand of two-dimensionality pursued by the "Yomigaeru" exhibit showcases a cleansed depiction of Heian cultural inheritance that is as stunning as it is insufficient. In terms of their dimensional depth, we

might say that the painted planes offered for view—in their refurbished incarnation—are too thin to encompass the kind of embodied labor figured by the *midaregaki*. This two-dimensional emphasis is subsidized by desires for

WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO ATTEMPT
TO APPREHEND—AS OPPOSED
TO TECHNO-SCIENTIFICALLY
ASCERTAIN—THE TRACES OF
DEAD FIGURES?

utter clarity in the heavily mediated, yet ostensibly stable, Heian-era image: a vision that has been streamlined into its most serviceable incarnation. When the artistic figuration of dying is limited to just two dimensions—as it is when the painted image is highlighted in lieu of the calligraphic text—the visceral, motile features of death’s encroachment slip from view.

This suppression of potentially disruptive writing from the frame optimizes the transmission of Heian opulence reanimated to offset the somber reality of a prolonged recessionary present. This is a writing that I believe prompts us to read more deeply, in the most figurative and literal of senses. Moreover, in considering the relation between the twelfth-century version and the twenty-first-century one, the performative movement of the calligraphy should encourage mistrust of any frame in which the two-dimensionality of the artwork is concentrated to index historical fidelity and a fully recuperable materiality.²⁷

At the heart of my larger project lies a concern with legibility’s relation to dying and the ways in which legibility is managed, enforced, or undercut through the performative movement of writing. As I close this essay, then, it is within this vein that I would like to put forward the notion of dwelling on the dead as a kind of critical practice. What would it mean to attempt to apprehend—as opposed to techno-scientifically ascertain—the traces of dead figures? How should we view figurations of dying, particularly when they beckon us to engage them both within and beyond a register of pure surface? To “dwell on the dead” suggests a topographical relation as well as a durative engagement with forms that have perished. It conforms to the spatiotemporal schema of neither mourning nor melancholia; its critical gesture traces no straightforward sequence toward release, nor does it circuitously defer the acknowledgment of loss.

We should read the drive to substantiate the material truth of the scroll via techno-scientific images as stemming from a fear that the artwork’s passage into the space of the modern market has hollowed out its aura. As a result, the imaging apparatus proposes an archival remedy to the problem of a lapsed capacity to rouse feeling—even as the script unhinges its positivistic bent. The technical probing exacts confessions from the paintings, sifting

through the slivers of their aura to fabricate an evacuated vista that strives to awe the viewer. This scientific inquisition narrows its focus to the vivid reproductions in order to institutionalize a practice of looking trained to furnish comfort through the medium of a depthless surface. To the extent that the exhibition marginalizes the *midaregaki* calligraphy and thus limits the depiction of dying to two pictorial dimensions, it censors an undesirable breed of feeling at the same time that it dilates a space for the painted images to be continually retouched—without being menaced by the calligraphic hand. By maintaining such an aperture, the exhibit calibrates the degree to which the mimesis of the paintings is allowed to overshadow the alterity embodied by the script, with the result that the calligraphy is barred almost entirely from entering the frame. Such an entrance would carry with it not just a more three-dimensional contour but, more suggestively, the promise of a kinesthetic contact too unsettlingly intimate to admit. If, as Michael Taussig claims, “The swallowing-up of contact we might say, by its copy, is what ensures the animation of the latter, its power to straddle us,” then the resurrection of Heian images pledged by the “Yomigaeru” exhibit ostensibly succeeds in its reproductive efforts precisely to the extent that it consumes the troubling brushwork’s most palpable residue.²⁸

Within the calligraphic context I’ve discussed above, I would like to suggest finally that the wages of depth perception are death, by which I mean this: the process of perceiving the dimension of depth in these works entails an engagement with visceral figurations of dying, figurations whose gestures potentially interrupt routines of feeling and dislodge habituated readings. Indeed, the exhibit might in fact foreclose the potential to perceive certain depths *through* the calligraphic performance of dying, as a gestural medium with its own material, affective, and ethical investments. How should we theorize the relationship between desire, dying, and the materiality of art’s affective work? In what ways might the cultivation of a depth of feeling literally undercut the material dimensions of an image? How might artistic figurations of dying not only alter the morphology of an image but, moreover, reshape our sense of the political stakes involved in reanimating lapsed aesthetic forms?

The ample kinesthetic charge of the *midaregaki* intensifies a precariousness of reading that tends to go unacknowledged. This performative energy has the potential to compel alternate modes of reading in response to its movement. As it calligraphically performs dying, the writing eludes the pictorial plane’s enforced consistency (even as the script’s conservative style betrays territorial ambitions of its own).²⁹ This tangled script might call upon us, in a certain way, to reckon with the coarser strands at work within the

overlapping gestures of literary and pictorial narration. To press further: it might inspire less myopic disciplinary approaches that lend more breadth to critical engagements with the material, affective, ethical dimensions of dying. *How, then, should we dwell upon the dead, as a crucial element of a more generative creative and critical practice?* In other words, how should we grasp not only dead hands and dead styles of writing or painting but also come to grips with decrepit paradigms? How to counter frames of thought and practices that were forged in the Cold War and in its wake still lie poised to be revived at a moment's notice?

Confronting these questions will pose a host of challenges—methodologically and ethically—for the frames through which we seek to secure our objects of study. Indeed, the path to any truly transformative answers will likely be barred by the debris of our own disciplinary investments: entrenched artifacts of analysis whose promise of efficiency and stability has allowed them to linger largely unchallenged. *How should we dwell critically upon the dead?* Our capacity to reshape conceptions of the critical work that an engagement with Japanese visual culture can and should perform might well hinge upon our capacity to embrace this morbid question's risks.

Notes

1. This exhibit was held at the Gotō Museum in Tokyo in 2006.
2. See Komatsu Shigemi, ed., *Kohitsu to emaki* (Ancient script and picture scrolls) (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1994), 29–44, for a detailed account of the calligraphic groupings and stylistic traits of the script in relation to other Heian calligraphy.
3. For information on women's involvement in Heian painting and their possible role in the production of the *Genji emaki*, see Akiyama Terukazu, "Women Painters at the Heian Court," trans. Marybeth Graybill, in *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting*, ed. Marsha Weidner, 172–76 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990).
4. Egami Yasushi has emphasized the sonic qualities of the scrolls in his article "Genji monogatari emaki no ryōshi sōshoku to 'Genji monogatari' honbun" (Paper design of the Illustrated *Tale of Genji* handscrolls and the original *Tale of Genji* text), *Sophia International Review* 19 (1997): 1–29. Kevin Carr has also underscored the sonic qualities of the paper design in relation to the "Suzumushi" (Bell cricket) section in a personal communication. Yukio Lippit has likened the paper design to a cinematic soundtrack; see his "Figure and Factice in the Genji Scrolls," in *Envisioning the Tale of Genji: Media, Gender, and Cultural Production*, ed. Haruo Shirane (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 63.
5. Many of the *Genji Scroll kotobagaki* have been lost. Twenty-nine *kotobagaki* sections remain; ten of those are fragments, most of which were at some point culled from larger sections of the text and used as private calligraphy samples.

6. It is believed that nobles competed for the opportunity to choose which paper was most appropriate for a certain scene. See Akiyama Terukazu, *Nihon emakimono no kenkyū* (Research on Japanese picture scrolls), vol. 1 (Tokyo: Chūōkōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2000), 90–93, and Sano Midori, *Chūsei Nihon no monogatari to ega* (Medieval Japanese narratives and paintings), (Tokyo: Hōsō Daigaku Shuppan, 2004), 87–100, for background on the production and composition of the scrolls. For more on the materials used to produce the *Genji emaki*, plus a filmed reenactment of particular aspects of their composition, see Video Champ's *The Illustrated Handscroll: Tale of Genji*, VHS (Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 1993).

7. *Anime no hajimari: Chōjū giga* (The beginnings of Anime: The Comic illustrations of birds and animals scroll), *Nihon no bi o meguru* 8/6 (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2002); Takahata Isao, *Jūni seiki no animeeshon: Kokuho emakimono ni miru eigateki, animeteki naru mono* (Twelfth-century animation: Film and anime elements in national treasure picture scrolls) (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1999).

8. It is difficult if not impossible to make a hard-and-fast distinction between these two categories, especially within the context of Heian inscription. My usage of the terms “image” and “text” here is provisional and only meant to designate broad and permeable categories along the following lines: “text” here refers to the calligraphic prefaces (*koto-bagaki*) and “image” refers to the paintings. For an exhaustive account of the problems involved in delineating the boundaries of what constitutes an image, see James Elkins, *The Domain of Images* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), especially 3–12, and 95–119.

9. See Takahashi Tōru, *Monogatari to e no enkinhō* (Perspective in narrative tales and painting) (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1991), 9-73.

10. For an in-depth discussion of the modern narratological history of Heian literature see Tomiko Yoda, *Gender and National Literature: Heian Texts and the Constructions of Japanese Modernity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 146–53.

11. On this point, see also Watanabe Masako, “Narrative Framing in the *Tale of Genji Scroll*: Interior Space in the Compartmentalized *emaki*,” *Artibus Asiae* 58, nos. 1–2 (1998): 115–46.

12. This image of the hands in safflower pulp represents but one symbolic instance of the fetishization of manual labor that recurs throughout the exhibition's materials. It seems to me noteworthy because of its juxtaposition to an X-ray analysis graph (and a lone safflower), reminding us of the natural connection that has been lost and yet rescued through this technological undertaking, and indicative of a nostalgia for a simpler, earthier mode of production. The value of this type of anachronistic labor increases precisely in relation to the accrual of a technological analytical apparatus surrounding it. We might add that this apparatus submits the more primitive labor to a rigorous program of scientific management and quality control.

13. In taking up the relation between cult and exhibition value here, I reference the following passage from Walter Benjamin: “The scope for exhibiting the work of art has increased so enormously with the various methods of technologically reproducing it that, as happened in prehistoric times, a quantitative shift between the two poles of the artwork has led to a qualitative transformation in its nature. Just as the work of art in prehistoric times, through the exclusive emphasis placed on its cult value, became first and foremost an instrument of magic which only later came to be recognized as a work of art,

so today, through the exclusive emphasis placed on its exhibition value, the work of art becomes a construct [*Gebilde*] with quite new functions.” “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 3, 1935–1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 106–7.

14. My sense of the representational and political implications attending “recessionary” Japanese culture is informed by Marilyn Ivy’s essay, “Revenge and Recapitulation in Recessionary Japan,” in *Japan after Japan: Social and Cultural Life from the Recessionary 1990s to the Present*, ed. Tomiko Yoda and Harry Harootunian, 195–216 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006).

15. For a description of the *tsukurie* process see Yukio Lippit, “Figure and Factice in the Genji Scrolls,” in *Envisioning the Tale of Genji: Media, Gender and Cultural Production*, ed. Haruo Shirane (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 49–80.

16. Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version,” 104–5.

17. For more on the theory of how painting techniques used for the faces of characters in the handscrolls promote viewers’ ability to project their own feelings onto them, see Mitani Kuniaki and Mitamura Masako, *Genji monogatari emaki no nazo o yomitoku* (Solving the mysteries of the Illustrated Tale of Genji handscrolls) (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1998), 22–28.

18. I detail this idea of recursive reading in my forthcoming manuscript, *To Mourn the Legible: Calligraphic Performance, Mortality, and the Ethics of Reading*.

19. The telling irony of this is that only the most skilled calligrapher was allowed to simulate such a maladroit hand as Kashiwagi’s.

20. See Reginald Jackson, “Scripting the Moribund: The *Genji* Scrolls’ Aesthetics of Decomposition,” in *Reading the Tale of Genji: Its Picture Scrolls, Texts, and Romance*, ed. Richard Stanley-Baker et al., 3–36 (Kent, U.K.: Global Oriental, 2009).

21. The Japanese text reads as follows: “. . . いとど泣きまさらたまひて、御返り、臥しながらうち休みつつ書いたまふ。言の葉のつづきもなう、あやしき鳥の跡のやうにて. . .” Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji monogatari*, ed. Abe Akio et al., *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Complete anthology of classical Japanese literature), vols. 12–17 (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1970–76), 15:286; translated by Royall Tyler as *The Tale of Genji*, 2 vols. (New York: Viking, 2001), 2:677.

22. The scene in which Kaoru finally has the opportunity to read his father’s letters proceeds as follows: “The first thing he did when he got home was to inspect the bag. It was sewn from Chinese brocade and had ‘For Her Highness’ written on it. The knot of slender, braided cord that tied it shut bore his [Kashiwagi’s] signature seal. To open it was terrifying [開くるも恐ろしくおほえたまふ]. Inside, he found sheets of paper in various colors, including five or six replies from his mother. In his hand there were five or six sheets of Michinokuni paper that evoked at length, in letters like the tracks of some strange bird, how extremely ill he was [病は重く限りになりたるに]; how he could no longer get the slightest message to her, which only made him yearn for her the more; how he supposed that by now she must have assumed the guise of a nun; and other such sorrowful topics. . . . It was all quite untidy and it just seemed to stop [書きさしたるやうにいと乱りかはしうて]. On it was written ‘To Kojijū.’ The paper was now inhabited by silverfish and smelled of age and mold, but the writing was still there, as fresh as though just set down, and the

words stood out with perfect clarity [こまこまとさたかなるを見たまふ]. Yes, he thought, if this had ever gone astray . . . ; and he trembled and ached for them both.” Murasaki, *The Tale of Genji*, 2:846; *Genji monogatari*, 16:156–57.

23. Deleuze and Guattari discuss the concepts of smooth and striated space within the context of their broader concept of nomadology. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 474–500. For a reading of the properties of Heian paper and calligraphy that follows Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the smooth and striated, see Thomas Lamarre, *Uncovering Heian Japan: An Archaeology of Sensation and Inscription* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 93–101.

24. This written movement should be thought of as marking a spatial interior different from the kind established by the *fukinuki yatai*, or “blown-off roof” architecture.

25. For a fascinating reading the narrative depiction of Kashiwagi and the “bodily depth” (*mi no fukami*) he figures, see Matsui Kenji, “Kashiwagi no juku toshintai: Fukamari-yuku mi, mi no fukami e” (Kashiwagi’s passion: Deepening bodies, deep into the body), in *Genji kenkyū* (*Genji* research), vol. 2, ed. Mitamura Masako et al., 60–71 (Tokyo: Kanrin Shobō, 1997). While an extended discussion of it exceeds the focus of this article, it is crucial to note the gap between the paintings’ and calligraphic prefaces’ respective depictions of bodies. I would argue that in the case of the *Genji emaki*, the most visceral portrayals of bodily phenomena, particularly in terms of physical strife, are actually provided in the *kotobagaki* sections, not the painted images.

26. See the discussion of punctum in Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981): 26–27.

27. Compare Norbert Bolz’s claim that “Modernity was an organized distrust of the senses. Today we are told by depthless surfaces to trust our senses again.” As quoted in Janet Ward’s *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (London: University of California Press, 2002), 5.

28. The quotation appears in Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 22.

29. Sano Midori considers the calligraphy used for the *kotobagaki* of the “Minori” and “Kashiwagi” sections of the scrolls to be an archetypal example of the “*jōdai wayō*” style. She refers to it as “[a style] that has inherited the gracefully delicate classic Japanese style perfected by Fujiwara no Yukinari.” Sano Midori, *Jikkuri mitai Genji monogatari emaki* (Looking closely at the *Genji emaki*) (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2000), 42.