

Concerning the Uji chapters

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Introduction

The Tale of Genji was written about a thousand years ago, around the year 1010. Little is known for certain about it except that it already consisted of its present 54 chapters in the 1020s. Very few scholars dispute that Murasaki Shikibu wrote the first 41 chapters, concerning the aristocrat Genji's life. The chapters afterward have been the object of great debate, due to the difference of rank of the characters in the Bamboo River chapter and thereafter and also due to the seeming contradiction in the order of events. (12-6) Many scholars have cited these contradictions, claiming that these later chapters were written by another author. I am taking the position, more widely held, that Murasaki Shikibu wrote the entire work and that any contradictions are the result of her making a few false starts before settling on the Uji theme.

The first 41 chapters are largely about romantic love and success; but the Uji chapters have a darker theme. The word *Uji* immediately connotes the word *ushi*, which means gloom. None of the characters are as perfect as the more idealized characters of the first section, and the Buddhist theme of transience pervades the section. The characters try to escape bonds to this floating world by reaching out to Buddhism, but they fail miserably and remain trapped in the spider's web of worldly desires. No man is a saint, Murasaki Shikibu seems to say. This marked change in theme has been attributed to Murasaki's aging, to a possible retirement from her position in Fujiwara Michinaga's household, even to a possibility of Murasaki having taken Buddhist vows and having become a nun. Her personal experience with death may have changed her, or maybe she developed some ailment. Many scholars have made their guesses, but we cannot know with certainty as 1000 years have passed. The Genji chapters are said to have a historical base, but the Uji chapters seem to express a personal message of Murasaki Shikibu, the conclusions she made about life from her own experience.

The Oigimi-Nakanokimi chapters

After Genji's death, *The Tale of Genji* could be retitled *The Tale of Kaoru*, set off by *Niou*. Kaoru is supposedly Genji's son, but he is actually the illegitimate son of Genji's

wife the Third Princess and Kashiwagi, a passionate aristocrat who died of stress. Kashiwagi's stress was caused by the pregnancy of the Third Princess, for which Genji knew he was not responsible. Genji was of course angered and turned the cold shoulder on Kashiwagi, causing Kashiwagi to become ill and die from within. In modern medical terms we might think of it as an ulcer problem, or another stress-related disease. In any case, Kashiwagi died without ever seeing Kaoru, and Genji died fairly soon afterwards. The Third Princess was an overprotected darling of an earlier emperor, and her sin was not enough to kill her. It was enough to make her take Buddhist vows and renounce the world, although she seems to be using the Buddhist walls as a protective device. Because nuns aren't supposed to be tied to this world, Kaoru is effectively parentless. It would be tempting to point out that he did not receive sufficient parental love during the formative years 0-3, but it would seem that all court aristocrats were raised by nursemaids whether their parents were present or not, and Kaoru was not alone in this respect. When Genji was preparing to die, he asked the Reizei emperor to look after Kaoru. Kaoru was such a perfectly-behaved child that the Reizei emperor's childless empress Akikonomu effectively adopted him. Kaoru was intelligent, handsome, and of royal blood; and with his solid backing from the emperor he was treated as a VIP wherever he went. Most young aristocratic men who are raised in this manner become impossibly self-centered playboys, but Kaoru was saved from this pitfall by his constant suspicion of his parentage. Precisely because he is standing on his high-ranking pedestal presenting a perfect demeanor to the world, he envisions himself becoming a laughing stock and falling from grace. Kaoru has received favors as Genji's son, not as a bastard. This knowledge that the ground could fall from underneath at any point gives his life an impermanent, illusory quality which attracts him to Buddhism. In the world of Buddhism, all honor, disgrace, success and suffering of this world are merely transient steps between a previous life and a future life. So even as a child we see Kaoru thinking about Buddhism, wishing that he could clear up the mystery of his birth by clairvoyance as Prince Rahula did in the ancient Buddhist texts. And Kaoru is marked by an incredible body odor, said to be the smell of lotus flowers and sandalwood spoken of in the Medicine King chapter of the Lotus Sutra. (3-258) It also helps that his mother is a nun, spending her days contemplating the Lotus Sutra, although she considers Kaoru a father figure rather than a son due to the seeming maturity that his intense seriousness suggests.

Kaoru's friend and rival Niou is the third son of the present emperor. Niou was raised in

the same house as Kaoru, and they were both handsome and well-thought of children. Niou was not illegitimate and had no shadows over him, so he grew up to be "a headstrong young man who did exactly what he wanted to do," as Seidensticker has it.

(1-736) Kaoru's name means 'natural smell;' Niou's means 'artificial smell.' This refers to Niou's endless attempts to smell better than Kaoru by blending rare and expensive perfumes. The two are perpetual rivals in everything and are said to have each inherited half of Genji's excellence. Niou has the lineage, the charm, the looks, the polish and the ability to seduce women. Kaoru has the good manners, the sensitivity, the seriousness. The lacking characteristics of the two play as big a role as the present characteristics in determining their behavior, and at every turn one can see how Genji would have done it better.

The first character presented in the Uji chapters is Prince 8. Prince 8 is Genji's younger brother, but their destinies were very different. Genji was made a commoner because of the lower class of his mother; Prince 8's mother was of high rank and so he was a candidate for emperor. He was used as a puppet in a coup-de-etat attempt which failed. This failure resulted in a sudden loss of supporters and rejection from the inner circle of court affairs. Cast aside by the elite, Prince 8 became a faithful, even clinging husband and a caring father. After his wife died at the birth of their second child, the prince was left without a partner, without a job, with great insecurity. He would like to become a monk and bury himself in Buddhism, but he is bound to the world by his two young daughters. When his house in Kyoto burned, he was not in the position financially to rebuild it, and so he moved to a house he owned in Uji. We see the prince happiest in a small circle, first with his wife, then with musicians, then with the ajari (a type of monk) who lives in the Uji mountains and teaches the prince the basics of Buddhism. As a person who was raised in the most materialistic, the richest environment in the land, but was cast aside, he "became more immediately aware of what was meant by the transience and uselessness of this world." (1-780) The Uji house provides a perfect setting for the Buddhist theme: "The house itself was like a grass hut put up for a few days' shelter, and as for the furnishings, everything remotely suggesting luxury had been dispensed with. There were mountain villages that had their own quiet charm; but here the tumult of the waters and the wailing of the wind must make it impossible to have a moment free of sad thoughts." (1-782) The house being like a grass hut put up for a few days' shelter clearly indicates impermanence, a central theme of Buddhism. The tumult of

the waters and the wailing of the wind reflect man's suffering in this world. The lack of luxury is straight out of the Lotus Sutra, in which it is written that a man who is blessed is content with few desires and dwells secluded, ever studying the sacred texts. This world is but a step to the next, and no matter how many treasures a man piles up, he will be judged by his conduct, not his wealth.

Kaoru, in the capital, hears reports of Prince 8. It is rumored that he is a saint among men and is well versed in the teachings of Buddhism. Because "no one knew better than he the futility of this world," Kaoru asked the ajari to introduce him to the prince. (1-780) They exchange letters, and Kaoru begins to take trips to Uji to meet his teacher. This continues peacefully for three years. Then one dark night Kaoru visits to find that the prince is absent, out at a temple. Kaoru happens to see the two daughters, now in their twenties, playing the lute and the koto. Kaoru is not particularly interested in women, but he watches anyway. Suddenly the moon comes out, and one of the sisters holds up her plectrum saying, "This does quite as well as a fan for bringing out the moon." (1-785) The allusion is to a well-known passage in the Threefold Lotus Sutra. (3-250) With their first appearance, the sisters show that they are not only capable of playing instruments but are also well acquainted with Buddhist texts. Of course this type of woman interests Kaoru. Skipping a millennium to modern psychology, it is said that love consists of four parts: friendship, trust, desire, and respect. Kaoru had found few women that he thought he could respect up to this point. Because the princesses are of royal blood, they are socially acceptable partners for Kaoru, and of course he feels a bond to them because he has such a great friendship with their father.

Being interested, Kaoru sent off a note, as propriety of the time demanded, to the elder sister Oigimi. First daughters of the time were commonly called Oigimi. Although he is presented as a devout Buddhist, Kaoru uses a Shinto legend in his note, referring to Oigimi as the goddess of Uji Bridge who cannot meet her beloved prince as she wishes. Her wailing is said to be the cause of the Uji River's roar, and her shrine was built in 646. (13-208) The Japanese are famous for their ability to mix and match religions, and it would seem that Kaoru is no exception. In her response, Oigimi writes, "my whole being is at the mercy of the waters." (1-791) This response puts the Shinto love theme back into Buddhist waters by comparing the powerlessness of the goddess in the face of the waters to the powerlessness of man in the constant stream of worldly affairs. Kaoru observes that her writing is good, and thinks her faultless. After that he slips off his pedestal and is an

ordinary silly young man in love for a while. "He sent off a letter, taking care that every detail distinguished it from an ordinary love note." (1-792) He is trying to pretend that he isn't in love, because he doesn't want to lower his image to the level of the common man. He wants to maintain his superior saintly image but at the same time get his girl. This sort of thing turns male readers against Kaoru - they think that if he were a real man he would pitch a straight ball and not a fork. But despite his seeming maturity in other aspects, Kaoru is still a child when it comes to romantic affairs. In child psychology it is said that the 8-12 year old wants a lot of rules to follow and wants things to be clearly black or white. A child of this age often stresses himself out by trying to live up to idealistic standards which are not realistically possible. The Kaoru who threw himself into Buddhism would seem to be this sort. Then at age 13-18, the average child gets out of rules and starts to wonder who he is and where he's going, taking steps of his own into new territory. This is the next step for Kaoru, leaving behind the good little boy and having to cope with the natural human desire that he is surprised to find coming out. In this day and age we are always hearing about children who mature too quickly due to an excess of information. With Kaoru, we can say the opposite: he was overprotected in his life in the capital, so it took outside influence to cause him to mature. By getting out from under the wing of the emperor and going off to Uji, he could at last catch up in maturity with his years.

An important factor pushing Kaoru towards adulthood is the revelation of the events surrounding his birth. It so happens that a woman named Bennokimi who works at the Uji house was the daughter of Kashiwagi's nursemaid. When Bennokimi's husband died, she began to work in Prince 8's household because her father was the uncle of Prince 8's wife. The people who work in aristocratic households in the Heian period often seem to be distant relatives. Murasaki Shikibu herself was related to her employer Fujiwara Michinaga six generations up through her mother. (12-92) Both women were of branches of an aristocratic family that had fallen to the rank in which members have to work under others for a living. Murasaki's brother Nobunori is also seen doing Buddhist errands for Fujiwara Michinaga in Michinaga's diary. (3-250) Before Bennokimi's mother died she had been entrusted with a secret packet of letters that Kashiwagi and the Third Princess had exchanged, and she passed this on to her daughter. These letters clearly show that Kaoru is Kashiwagi's son by blood. (Seidensticker writes "real father," but I would contend that the Reizei emperor is Kaoru's only real father, although one could make a case for Prince

8 or in a pinch Genji.) Needless to say, when Kaoru reads these letters, he receives a great shock. Murasaki has Nature reflecting Kaoru's emotions: the waters are roaring, the wind is whipping the trees. The sound "invited gloom and even despair," (1-794) and the revelation sent Kaoru into such a tizzy that he couldn't go back to work for a while.

Having spent a good many pages just developing the character of Kaoru, Murasaki returns to her theme of Kaoru vs. Niou. The two happen to be talking, and Kaoru brings up the Uji sisters. Some have pointed out that if he had kept his mouth shut he would have been able to avoid the tragedy that befalls them. Others have pointed out that bragging about a woman is just the sort of thing that young male rivals do, and Kaoru doesn't have to put up his good boy front in front of Niou because Niou is a peer and not an elder. One thing leads to another, and the two get together in Uji. Murasaki introduces Niou to the princesses by not introducing them, in a titillating scene in which she has Kaoru and Niou go to a mansion across the river from the princesses' Uji house. Kaoru happily goes over to play with the girls, but Niou is not allowed to go because of his high status. Of course this is just the thing to get Niou (or anyone) interested. If a person is told he can't do something, he wants to do precisely that thing. Niou deeply regrets not having been allowed to meet the princesses and sends them many letters thereafter. This overwhelms Prince 8, who is not accustomed to such a suitor. "Was this a bond from a former life?" the prince wonders. (1-804) In Buddhism, a person's acts (因) cause a result (果) which comes out in lives to follow. This theory is behind the word sukuse (宿世), a very popular word in the Heian period that roughly means "destiny" and to which all unexpected events were attributed. Aristocratic suitors of the time were accustomed to explaining that their sexual desire was due to sukuse and it had been determined from a past life that sexual bonding would occur. Oigimi doesn't put much stock in sukuse - obviously any intelligent woman of the time would be able to see through the ruse. Prince 8 doesn't trust Niou either, and on his deathbed he entrusts the princesses to Kaoru. Of course they aren't children and can take care of themselves physically, but they need an economically sturdy standby in case of need. Indeed Kaoru supplies them generously at every turn. The speech the prince makes when entrusting the girls is a compact explanation of the position of women at the time: "Women are the problem, good for a moment's pleasure, offering nothing of substance. They are the seeds of turmoil, and it is not hard to see why we are told that their sins are heavy. I wonder if you have ever tried to imagine what a worry a child is for its father. A son is no problem. But a daughter -

there is a limit to worrying, after all, and the sensible thing would be to recognize the hopeless for what it is. But fathers will go on worrying." (1-805) The first sentence about women being only a moment's pleasure refers to sexual desire, which is considered illusory, as all human desires are. There is a famous Buddhist saying that a person is a mirror, and emotions are but reflections in the mirror. "We are told that their sins are heavy" comes from Buddhism also; it is written in the Lotus Sutra that "the body of a woman is filthy and not a vessel of the Law...a woman by her body still has five hindrances." (2-213) These five hindrances make her unable to become a buddha. Just about every modern woman who reads this section gets angry and points out that Buddhism is one of the many religions created by men for men, and if a woman had created it she would have seen men as the ones leading a person astray. But the idea of male superiority is deeply rooted in most cultures of the world, due to the physical superiority of men. Having discussed women from the standpoint of Buddhist philosophy, Prince 8 next goes to a personal level, speaking of his own feelings for his daughters. He asks Kaoru if he has ever tried to imagine the worry a parent has for a child, in an obvious appeal for help. Worry is a common emotion for Kaoru; he worries that the relationship between the Third Princess and Kashiwagi will be known, he worries that he has not executed proper rites for Kashiwagi's soul, he worries that he is not making the right move in his relationships with women. But it is a bit much to ask a childless person to understand the emotions of a parent. At best the prince can hope that Kaoru will see that he is suffering, and want to appease the suffering of this man who has been a mentor to him over the years. The prince's worry is quite natural as women of the time who were without strong financial and political backing tended to be used as toys and thrown away. Many such women appear in Genji. Even Kaoru is depicted spending a night of play with a low class woman named Azechi, who is a truly unimportant character in his life. Prince 8 doesn't want his darling daughters to be defiled and made to suffer in this way. One could argue with great conviction that he has Niou in mind and doesn't say so in so many words because Kaoru is Niou's friend. The Prince being unable to rid himself of this worry is a failure from a religious standpoint. In Buddhism one cannot reach the heavens without removing bonds to this world. That is why many characters in Genji become monks or nuns in their last days. It was a common practice of the time followed not only by ordinary aristocrats but also by most of the emperors of the time. We see here one of the many gaps between the realistic and the ideal that appear in the Uji chapters.

Although Prince 8 firmly believes in Buddhism, has studied it for years and is considered a saint among men, he cannot put theory into practice.

Also in preparation for death, the Prince leaves his daughters instructions for when he is gone. He warns: "Men who are not worthy of you will try to lure you out of these mountains, but you are not to yield to their blandishments. Resign yourselves to the fact that it was not meant to be - that you are different from other people and were meant to be alone - and live out your lives here at Uji. Once you have made up your minds to it, the years will go smoothly by. It is good for a woman, even more than for a man, to be away from the world and its slanders." (1-806) These admonitions are generally taken as dying words, although the Prince actually dies at a temple. We can see again that he is quite worried about men, very likely Niou in particular but also conceivably men of lower rank who would be considered unacceptable as a match for a princess of royal blood. "Not worthy" could be taken from a sociological point of view or equally from a spiritual point of view. The tone of his warning verges on the incestuous - his insistence that they live alone in Uji without men could easily be taken as a suggestion that the Prince would be jealous were they to engage in sexual relations with a husband. It would be more in character to view his remarks in line with the Buddhist effort to keep worldly ties at a minimum, however. Manaka Fujiko considers Prince 8 a mother figure rather than a father figure and a reflection of Murasaki Shikibu herself. This makes great sense as both Murasaki and the Prince were left to raise daughters by themselves after the death of their spouses. And Murasaki, as the Prince, obviously has a great stock of Buddhist knowledge, but there is no record of her taking Buddhist vows. This could quite possibly be due to her attachment to her daughter, as it was in the case of Prince 8. (3-294) Looking at the Prince's last words as a mother's comment directly reflecting Murasaki's personal experience, they come out "I don't want my daughter to suffer at the hands of men as I have. I would rather she not marry and so avoid repeating the worst parts of my life." Without strong backing, Oigimi and Nakanokimi would have no chance of becoming the #1 wife of a high class aristocrat. Murasaki herself was not a #1 wife, and parents always wish that their children will have a better life than they did. The odd thing about the Prince's last words to his daughters is that they directly contradict the Prince's last words to Kaoru. He told Kaoru he was leaving the girls up to Kaoru, which any man would consider an OK for marriage. Then he told the girls not to marry. Oigimi is at a loss what to do.

When the prince actually dies, Kaoru sails in like the knight in shining armor of a Western fairy tale. He takes care of all the funeral matters and pays for everything, ensuring that everything possible is done to help the prince along toward a better life. Of course this earns points with the daughters. But since he lives in Kyoto, he can only do so much. The everyday snow, hail and roaring wind continues to pronounce sadness at the prince's death whether Kaoru is in Uji or in Kyoto; and gradually the spirits of the Uji household progress from panic to deep gloom.

Nothing much happens until the next autumn. Kaoru is busy, Niou is at court, the Uji princesses are living quietly on. But the coming of autumn brings an end to the period of mourning, and suddenly the princesses are cast back into a worldly dilemma. Kaoru tries to convince Oigimi to marry him, pointing out that Prince 8 had asked him to look after the daughters. When she refuses, he protests, "He asked me to look after his daughters in whatever way seemed best. I have tried; and now it comes as something of a surprise that they should be disregarding their own father's wishes." (1-824) He also points out that everyone thinks that Kaoru and Oigimi are already married, and it wouldn't change the world's view of them to actually consummate their relationship. Kaoru is 100% safe here. Oigimi is obliged to obey her parents, and mentions elsewhere that if her father had arranged a marriage for her she would have unthinkingly obeyed. And there is the problem of backing. From a sociological point of view marriage to Kaoru is the right answer. He's spent a lot of money on her family. He has a bright future. And for a Heian man, he doesn't force himself on a woman sexually. Besides which he's supposed to be intelligent and handsome. So why doesn't she marry him?

The explanation she gives Kaoru is that her father told her not to leave the mountains. This is not a bad explanation as it fits in with moral standards of the time. It would seem, however, that the real reason lies not in her father's last words but in the way she was raised. The Lotus Sutra tells us many times that a person should renounce sensual desire and live in a quiet place. Sexual desire is considered a block to religious advancement. For example, it is written in the Lotus Sutra that "Because the evil world of the five decadences/ Only delights in sensual attachments,/ (Its) creatures such as these/ Never seek the Buddha way." (2-75) Having read the sutras and been educated in them, Oigimi is afraid that if she permits herself to enjoy sexual desire she will lower herself to the level of the barbarian. She is in effect brainwashed by Buddhist ideals, making her unable to cope with behavior that is out of line with the idealistic. When

Kaoru tries to touch her she flees, closing the door tightly. And as her father has told her many times that as a royal princess ordinary suitors are beneath her (1-824), she places herself on an unattainable pedestal of virtue and high class. Perhaps few people can sympathize with her, although the feminist camp is on her side and holds her up as a woman who doesn't want to marry because she knows men cause trouble in a woman's life. Komashaku Kimi writes that Oigimi is a woman for whom marriage is not the right answer. (10-159) I find this debatable. If the man were someone other than Kaoru, someone she could feel comfortable with, someone she wanted to marry, the case might well have been different. To support this position let me point out the obvious fact that she enjoys her life with Nakanokimi and she enjoyed living with her father. We don't see her avoiding companionship as long as she is comfortable with the companion. But it is impossible to be comfortable with Kaoru because he is a stiff, distant cold fish. And she reflects his stiffness automatically. He molds her actions by his actions, shaping her to fit his ideal. Trying to match him spiritually, she is always stressing herself out with impossibly high standards made for buddhas, not for humans. Both Oigimi and Kaoru seem to be waiting for someone to pat them on the head and say, "What a good little child you are!" But it might not have been that way if the man were not Kaoru.

Oigimi doesn't want to marry, but she hopes that her sister will. Her repressed desire to lead the life of a wife and mother causes her to attempt to make a match between her sister and Kaoru. She thinks that this would solve her problems neatly and provide both Kaoru and Nakanokimi with stable happiness. Of course this is a ridiculous, self-centered idea which reveals how little she understands either of the two parties concerned. Nakanokimi, angered, says: "You are missing the point completely: the point is that we will not be lonely as long as we have each other." (1-831) Oigimi agrees with Nakanokimi and apologizes to her. But she asks Bennokimi to plead her case with Kaoru anyway. Bennokimi knows it is pointless and refuses, telling Oigimi what a fool she is not to marry him herself. She says, "If you send him off in the name of this Buddha of yours - well, I doubt that you will be rewarded with assumption into the heavens. You will still have the world to live with." (1-833) Because Oigimi has become head of the household after her father's death, she is responsible for the welfare of the staff. And her employees certainly know that marriage to Kaoru would ensure them a stable lifestyle, as Kaoru is at the center of politics, in the section of aristocrats who have maximal money and power. So of course they want her to marry him. Again, it is the right step from a sociological point

of view. After this attempt, Oigimi realizes that it is impossible to gain allies among her staff and determines to do the job of pushing Kaoru in the direction of Nakanokimi herself, sneaking out of the room one night when Kaoru comes in to visit her, leaving him alone with Nakanokimi. Needless to say, Nakanokimi is angered and afraid. After all, a man has suddenly appeared at her bedside in the night. And her sister is responsible. Fortunately for her, Kaoru realizes that this is Nakanokimi and doesn't make any sexual advances. He just talks to her and reassures her that it was not his intention to rape her. Setouchi Jakucho finds the whole affair foolish and writes, "If he's not going to have sex, why does he have to sneak into girls' bedrooms at night?" (15) She has a good point there. Since he never has sex with the Uji sisters, he should let them sleep soundly instead of sneaking in at night and giving them bad dreams. It is an extremely embarrassing situation for Nakanokimi, and she feels that her sister has thrown her to the wolves. Kaoru is also extremely angry, as he should be, because it's a nasty trick to play. If Oigimi doesn't want to have sex with Kaoru she should tell Kaoru so directly and stop playing these silly games. Even if she risks losing financial support, it's her own decision and she has no one to criticize but herself. I have always thought that if it were Genji instead of Kaoru, he would have gone about wooing much better. Because the whole setting in Uji, from the natural wilderness to the dusty Buddhist tomes, defies pleasure and is enough to make anyone gloomy, Kaoru should have taken them to the capital, not necessarily permanently but long enough for them to recover their spirits. What the sisters need first and foremost is to regain the sense of security and stability that they had when they lived with their father. They need to stop dwelling on the past and get on with their lives, moving toward whatever future awaits them. Genji was always self-assured and made women feel safe when he was wooing them, but Kaoru is insecure and cannot give Oigimi the peace of mind that she had had previously.

At a loss trying to think of a way to get his girl, Kaoru decides to bring in Niou. Niou is not the type to waste time and immediately consummates his relationship with Nakanokimi. They go through the wedding process quickly and effectively. Kaoru is filled with self-disgust at his inability to do likewise and decides to stay out of the whole thing. Oigimi's reaction is fascinating: "Oigimi feared that she too was passing her prime. Each day she saw a more emaciated face in her mirror." (1-846) She goes on to think of her aging maidservants who make vain attempts to disguise their age with hair and cosmetic techniques. She thinks that she certainly does not want to become ugly like that. Her

half-sister Ukifune has a similar reaction to old age later in the book. Both of these women are supposedly steeped in Buddhism, which sets conquering fear of old age as one of its goals. Observing sickness, old age and death taught the Buddha that life is full of suffering and started him on his way toward achieving enlightenment. But observing the aging process does not enlighten Oigimi, it makes her fear that she is passing her prime. The idea of a woman passing her prime in appearance automatically connotes marriage and again reflects a repressed mating desire.

Nakanokimi is healthier than Oigimi psychologically as well as physically, and doesn't try to bury her emotions. She takes her marriage in stride, becoming a wife rather naturally. It helps that Niou is the self-assured man that he is. Nakanokimi thinks that "Strangely, she felt more at ease with Niou, though she was dazzled, than she had with Kaoru, the only other young man she had known. Kaoru was a chilly young man whose thoughts always seemed to be elsewhere." (1-847) While Kaoru sets up a wall of feigned indifference to cover up his insecurity, Niou presents himself as an ardent lover who will always stick by his beloved. This display of confident passion makes Nakanokimi believe in his steadfastness even when Niou cannot visit for long periods of time because he is busy at court. But Oigimi, who does not hear Niou's affirmations of affection directly, takes his absences to be a sign of lack of affection. She reaffirms her decision not to marry, thinking that Kaoru would leave her in the lurch in the same way. Actually Oigimi should feel a great relief of pressure at Nakanokimi's marriage, because Niou certainly has enough money to pay for the upkeep of the Uji household. He is after all a royal prince. But Oigimi is the worrying type, and she gets increasingly worried at every turn. One day Niou gets to Uji, across the banks, but cannot visit Nakanokimi because he is under stern observation. This proves to be the straw that breaks the camel's back for Oigimi. Inexperienced in love, she overreacts. Her fright causes her to develop anorexia. Kaoru says, "Do be patient, and try not to worry." (1-858) But having her sister be stood up for a date seems to be even more of a shock for Oigimi than it is for Nakanokimi herself. Anorexia can be caused by psychological trauma in any age - in this age Karen Carpenter is probably the most famous example - and from the beginning Oigimi is the type to worry herself to death. It could be called suicide, although it is pushing the term. On her deathbed Oigimi says to Kaoru, "There are many things I would like to say to you, if I could only get back a little of my strength. But I am afraid - I am sorry - that I must die." (1-865) So she does love him a little, though she didn't show it much. In this day

and age she could be saved with IV transfusions, but in the Heian period all they could do in such a case was to make medicines and call in Buddhist monks who prayed for recovery. So she died. Symbolically, "Even the last rites had been faltering, insubstantial; very little smoke had risen from the pyre." (1-867) This reflects the Heian Buddhist theory in which the whole Universe is regarded as the body of the Buddha Vairocana, made of earth, water, fire, air, ether and consciousness. (7-340) The Lotus Sutra has the body composed of earth, water, fire and wind. (2-315) In any case, fire and air are included. Oigimi, a tiny presence in a great Universe, may have had tiny troubles and worries, but they are insignificant on the grand scale and her existence transforms into only a small amount of smoke. Her evanescent life underlines the Buddhist point that bonds to this world cause suffering. As Kashiwagi died because he feared the opinion of others, Oigimi dies because she fears the outcome of romance. She fears that she and her sister will become the butt of other people's jokes, princesses treated as concubines, and literally worries herself to death. As her maids explain it, "She lost her grip on herself because she took the prince's (Niou's) odd behavior too seriously. The whole world was laughing at them, she was sure; but she kept it all to herself. She did not want our other lady to know how worried she was. With everything shut up inside her she just quietly stopped eating, and that was that." (1-869)

Nakanokimi, left behind, remembers Oigimi as a mother rather than as a sister. "She thought how much she would have preferred to put on the deeper weeds with which one mourned a parent, but she kept the thought to herself, for it went against custom." (1-876) Without Oigimi, Nakanokimi has no protector, and is powerless against Niou. As he commands, she moves to his house in Kyoto. She calls the move a "wave" she is riding on, connotating that she may drift and be cast aside when his favors are given to another. (1-880) But her reception in Kyoto is actually very good. Things are well prepared for her and everyone accepts her as Niou's wife. For a while she has a happy, peaceful marriage. But then Niou is forced to marry Yugiri's daughter Rokunokimi as his main wife, and Nakanokimi is suddenly reduced to subordinate status. Rokunokimi is three steps away from the direct imperial line; her grandfather Genji's brother was an emperor. Nakanokimi's father's brother was an emperor, so in status Nakanokimi is certainly not of a lower class than Rokunokimi. But to be a #1 wife requires money and power. Rokunokimi's father is very much alive and in power; Nakanokimi's father is dead and was not a politically powerful man. So Nakanokimi becomes #2 automatically. This causes her

great suffering and makes her remember Oigimi. If Oigimi had married Kaoru, she would have been the #2 wife after the Second Princess, a daughter of the emperor whom Kaoru married in a political move similar to Niou's marriage to Rokunokimi. Both Oigimi and Nakanokimi would have been married for love, not for money, which sounds good in this age but was consider a stupid apolitical thing to do in the Heian period. And there is no way Nakanokimi can cover up for her lack of money and power, because she simply hasn't got any. So she has to put up with waiting while Niou goes off to have sex with her rival, imagining how difficult this would have been for Oigimi, who was a proud woman. It is a good thing for Nakanokimi that she is pregnant at this time. "Though she had no great wish to live on, the thought of death saddened her, and the sin would be great if she left behind a motherless child." (1-902) Live on, Nakanokimi. Pregnancy and motherhood are big responsibilities, not to be cast aside lightly in favor of suicide. As the majority of mothers would, I put the health of the baby first on the priority ranking. Murasaki Shikibu was also a mother and no doubt felt similarly. We see a clear contrast to the illusory mother - daughter relationship of Oigimi and Nakanokimi; Oigimi could become anorexic and die, essentially a self - centered act, because Nakanokimi is in fact a sister and not a daughter. But Nakanokimi has a real child and cannot bury herself in her worries. She isn't allowed the luxury of purely self-centered actions anymore. The best she can do is to call in Kaoru and ask him to take her to Uji, but even this plan fails miserably as Kaoru declares his regrets that he let Niou marry Nakanokimi, saying that he wishes he had married her himself as Oigimi had wished. Just another problem for the pile. Nakanokimi refuses his advances without a moment's hesitation, determined to stick with Niou no matter what. Even when Niou catches Kaoru's scent on Nakanokimi and accuses her wrongfully of having an affair, she refuses to join in a fight and cries, ending it immediately. She doesn't want to rock the boat; although she certainly could think of excellent retorts (Who are you to accuse me when you're going off to have sex with Rokunokimi? etc) she holds it all back and determines to live for the future of her child.

In the introduction to Niou we were told that he is a headstrong young man who does exactly as he wishes. Here we are told "Niou knew all too well what his own inclinations would have been, and he was always ready to judge others by himself." (1-912) In other words, if Niou had gone to visit another man's wife, he wouldn't have returned without making a pass at her. So he felt sure that Kaoru must have made a pass at his wife in his absence. And he searches through Nakanokimi's things for evidence of a physical

relationship. Needless to say, he does not discover any.

In the world of Buddhism, the lowest rank of man has only animal desires such as hunger and sexual desire. The next stage has social and ethical education. The next has religious awakening. Then one moves up toward the Buddha state. Niou should have social and ethical education, but he always seems to be floundering in the first rank. As a prince, he was undoubtedly taught to behave appropriately to his position, but he follows the whims of his libido increasingly until we see him ignoring his social responsibilities and living only for sexual pleasure in the Ukifune section. Murasaki Shikibu writes that as Niou, Kaoru "too was the spoiled pet of the great." (1-913) Both are accustomed to getting their way and being praised and acclaimed no matter what they do. They are certainly not accustomed to situations that don't work out as they would wish, and they are at a loss what to do in such situations. Niou expects women to naturally think only of himself and be always waiting for him, seeing no other man. So he doesn't know how to cope with the relationship between Kaoru and Nakanokimi, which although it is platonic existed prior to the relationship between Niou and Nakanokimi and is in its way stronger as it is directly connected with Prince 8. Niou never really knew Prince 8 and leaves the care of the Uji household in general to Kaoru, so he has no way of competing and cannot expel Kaoru from his wife's chambers. In any case jealousy was considered an attribute of women, very unmanly. Genji took great pains to hide his feelings and appear unconcerned when his wife the Third Princess was discovered having an affair with Kashiwagi. In the same way, Niou cannot show jealousy to the outside world, although he displays it clearly in his wife's chamber. Even today squabbles between a man and his wife are usually hidden from the neighbors. And Kaoru, who is also termed a spoiled pet, has the same problem but with the shoe on the other foot. He gave Nakanokimi to Niou, so he can't complain, but he doesn't know how to cope with his overpowering emotions for Nakanokimi. He can send presents, he can visit, he can take care of the Uji house for her, but she will never be his wife. In the abovementioned Buddhist ranking, Kaoru had a good start in the third rank of the religiously awakened, but he keeps lowering his rank. This climaxes in the Ukifune chapters.

The Ukifune chapters

I wonder if Murasaki Shikibu intended to create the Ukifune character from the beginning. It seems more that she had started on the theme of men causing trouble for women and wanted to develop it further, so she added the character on. She has

Nakanokimi mention Ukifune as someone she had suddenly remembered. But if Ukifune had been in her head from the beginning, she would have mentioned it earlier in the description of Prince 8, because the story of Ukifune completely changes the image of the Prince. Ukifune is the illegitimate child of Prince 8, borne by his maid. It really blows his image as a saint to have an illegitimate child, but Murasaki Shikibu seems to have wanted the new character to be a sister of the Uji girls in order to develop her theme to perfection. She didn't care about blemishing Prince 8's character enough to daunt her from creating an illegitimate child, but she cared enough to add that Ukifune was born "before the prince came to these mountains to live, and shortly after he lost his wife." (1-920) She wants us to know that the affair was not extramarital and was conducted in a time of psychological distress, when the prince was in the limbo between his quiet life with his wife and his saintly life at Uji. This does not quite work chronologically as Ukifune is five years younger than Nakanokimi. Without question, the affair is after the death of his wife, because she died immediately after bearing Nakanokimi. But the five years in between should have assuaged his suffering and led him closer to his religious awakening. Let's just say that Murasaki was on a roll with her storyline and didn't want to be bothered with details. She is also working on a Buddhist theme, perhaps in preparation for the age of the latter-day Dharma (mappo, said to have started in 1062) and she has it reported that "It was self-loathing, I should imagine, that turned him into the saint he became in his last years." (1-920) She has Kaoru starting as a saint and lowering himself, so it is somewhat in line that Prince 8 should have refused to accept Ukifune as his daughter although she obviously was. Prince 8 sent Ukifune's mother and the baby away, refusing to help financially or spiritually. Now Ukifune's mother could have had a DNA test done to prove parentage and forced the Prince to make monthly payments for Ukifune's upkeep, but in the Heian period she had to swallow her tears and try someone else. And so we have Ukifune.

Ukifune is a really conclusive character. Whether Murasaki Shikibu intended to end the novel where it ends or not is anybody's guess, but she certainly wraps up the Uji themes with the story of Ukifune. First there is the question of class. Ukifune is of lower class, being the adopted daughter of the vice-governor of Hitachi, far, far away from the capital. The Tale of Genji begins with the line, "In a certain reign there was a lady not of the first rank whom the emperor loved more than any of the others." (1-3) and continues to tell us what a hard time this lady had because of her low birth. Utsusemi and Yugao are

also major female characters of low class who are troubled by their relationships with Genji. So it can be said that Murasaki has been working on the theme of low class women troubled by high class men from the beginning. And while all the other characters put up with it, Ukifune is the first and only character to throw them off definitely of her own will. Tanabe Seiko writes, "It is one theme of Kaoru's story that he looks up to women of high class (Oigimi and Nakanokimi), but patronizes Ukifune (of low class)." (8) This is a natural result of Kaoru having been raised by an emperor. He spent his youth with royal princes and princesses who had servants waiting to answer their every call; he thinks of this as the norm, and so Ukifune, of the servant class, naturally seems inferior. But it goes against the wave of Buddhism at the time. As Charles Eliot explains about the Heian Buddhist religions of Tendai and Shingon, "Though according to the standards of later times their doctrines seem complicated and their ceremonies elaborate to excess, yet they offered residence in some paradise to everyone who tried to obtain it, whereas the older Nara sects denied the possibility of such high destinies to the 'common man.'" (7-234) Tendai is based on the Lotus Sutra, and it is written in the Lotus Sutra that haughtiness is one of the 14 causes of falling into hell, along with self-centeredness, shallowness, sensuality, irrationality, doubting, and other causes not related to this story. However, I do not think that Murasaki Shikibu intended Kaoru to fall into hell for haughtiness. I think she wants us to suspect that Niou will fall into hell for self-centeredness, shallowness, sensuality and doubting. Her Niou is like Elvis Presley at his peak - irresistibly charming but not reliable, except that he can be relied on to go astray whenever he sees a pretty girl. Kaoru is not so much a princely playboy and although he strays, he executes all the necessary Buddhist rites with great seriousness and at heart wants to be good. Manaka Fujiko writes that the phrase 罪深き身 (tsumibukakimi, a person of great sin) in Genji refers to a person who doesn't read the Sutras and doesn't behave as a proper Buddhist. (3-260) Certainly Kaoru does not fit these qualifications. But the clear-cut difference in his behavior toward Ukifune and his behavior toward Oigimi really underlines the value he sets on class.

Ukifune is also a conclusive character from a Buddhist point of view. Ukifune dives into the world of Buddhism, as we will see, but by no stretch of the imagination can we call her a devout Buddhist. She uses Buddhism as an escape route, going through the motions without true fervor. Countless characters in the tale become monks or nuns, but we are told very little of their lives after taking vows. With Ukifune we get a fairly detailed

report of her life as a nun, and it's not what it ideally should be. Looking at Murasaki Shikibu's Buddhist characters, we remember that Prince 8 was supposed to be a saint, but he was actually hiding the Ukifune affair. Kaoru was said to be saintly too, but he spends a night of pleasure with a maid named Azechi. Everyone has skeletons in their closets. Murasaki Shikibu was surrounded by devout Buddhists, both lay and professional, because she lived in the residence of Fujiwara Michinaga. Michinaga writes about Buddhist rites he executed again and again in his 『御堂闕白記』. Just to name a few citations, Michinaga went up to a temple in 1004; he had Murasaki's brother Nobunori help out with Buddhist activity in 1007; he lists many 8-day services he conducted and also a 30-day ceremony. He also writes about how he tried to get a famous monk of the Tendai sect from Yokawa to come and failed, instead getting a disciple of the 18th head of Tendai. (3) Since this paper is not about Michinaga I will skip the details - suffice it to say that Murasaki Shikibu was surrounded by Buddhists. But she doesn't seem to have had much faith in their devoutness. Perhaps she saw people who seemed very proper and solemn during Buddhist rituals committing sinful acts at other times. Or maybe she was influenced by the pessimistic wave that was engulfing the intellectuals as they prepared for the latter-day Dharma, the age of decadence.

The third major break that we see in the Ukifune chapters is that women get on the move. In the beginning of *The Tale of Genji*, we see female characters as men see them - objects of pleasure with no voice, no rights. With the Uji section and the introduction of Oigimi and Nakanokimi, we hear the inner voice and understand the emotions of the women, but they are incapable of taking positive action of their own. They can only take negative actions such as refusing to eat and refusing to cooperate. With Ukifune, at last a woman makes her own decisions and decides her own actions. She makes many mistakes, but for better or for worse, they are her own mistakes and she doesn't let the rich powerful men push her around ad infinitum. Of course it can be argued that the rich powerful men in this sections are not up to the level of excellence of Genji, and so women are not as willing to obey.

But back to our story. Kaoru was told about Ukifune. Nakanokimi told him in an attempt to deflect his unwanted attentions, and he gradually switched over his affections. One very important factor in this switchover was the birth of Nakanokimi's child. While pregnancy did not deter him, having a child present means that Nakanokimi will be totally unable to provide the companionship that Kaoru is seeking. Also, Kaoru married the

Second Princess of the emperor, who is a very minor character despite being Kaoru's main wife. She shares this lack of distinction with Rokunokimi, Niou's main wife. No doubt they were pampered aristocrats. They have great polish but not enough charm to keep their men away from the Uji sisters. Murasaki writes, "Kaoru regularly and dutifully waited on his bride, but his heart was still in the past." (1-927) Just what one would expect from Kaoru. Dutiful but cold. Nakanokimi again reflects that if Oigimi had married Kaoru, she would have been the #2 wife, subservient to the Second Princess, because Kaoru would have been unable to avoid this political marriage in any case. And Oigimi would have had to face daily confrontation with her rival.

But Oigimi is dead, and Kaoru seems to be quietly married. He could perhaps have lived peacefully for the rest of his days if he had not caught a glimpse of Ukifune. Ukifune looks like Oigimi and her voice is like Nakanokimi, so she brings back all his memories of lovelorn suffering. And Kaoru determines to make her his own. Like a possession. He told Nakanokimi that he wanted to have a portrait made of Oigimi to have by his side when he felt lonely for her. Here he has found a moving, living portrait that is just right to make into his doll and play with. He worries though; "He had his good name to think of. It would be indiscreet even to write to the girl." (1-936) Because Ukifune is not of high enough rank to be considered seriously for a match, Ukifune's mother has grave doubts about the outcome of such a relationship and would prefer to forego involvement with Kaoru. She says, "The only man you can trust is the man who is willing to make do with one wife. I know that well enough from my experience. The prince at Uji was a fine, sensitive gentleman, but he treated me as if I were less than human." (1-934) And she certainly doesn't want Ukifune to repeat that experience. Ukifune had one marital near miss, but she was stood up on her wedding night because her proposed husband refused an adopted daughter and switched over to a natural daughter. The man was only interested in the vice-governor's money. Ukifune was terribly hurt by this experience, as she had completed the marriage preparations of washing and dressing and was thrown over as she waited for the man to come. It would be a shock for any girl in any age. Certainly it teaches Ukifune a lesson about the corruptive power of money and power.

Ukifune's mother, terribly upset by the bridegroom's betrayal of her beloved daughter, decided that she had to get Ukifune out of the house. Because the man married Ukifune's half - sister, he comes daily. It would be just too painful for Ukifune to have to watch him come to happily have sex with her sister every day after he had promised to marry

Ukifune. For lack of a better proposition, Ukifune's mother decides to send Ukifune to live with her half - sister on the other parental side, Nakanokimi. Nakanokimi is consistently a good listener throughout the novel, and of course she is appalled by Ukifune's story and takes pity on her, as any woman would. Ukifune also has the great fortune of seeing the man who threw her over side by side with Niou. In comparison, Niou is wonderfully handsome and powerful, while the man who threw her over is an ugly, unimportant yesman. And so Ukifune is greatly relieved of her pain. She can unburden herself on Nakanokimi, and she is young enough that the man's unimportance socially and unimpressiveness physically render him uninteresting as a sexual partner in any case. He's just not the kind that young dreaming women dream about.

Nakanokimi, who can usually be relied on as a reporter, says that Ukifune is "certainly attractive and seemed to have a pleasant disposition. She was quiet and composed and yet not excessively shy," and "not wanting in intelligence." (1-949-950) It would seem from her description that Ukifune fits most of the basic qualifications for marriage at the time. So excepting the class problem, there was no obstacle preventing Ukifune from marrying normally. Kaoru later finds fault with her education, especially with her lack of musical ability, and he also finds her somewhat lacking in sensitivity. But Kaoru has excessively high standards, and it may be pointed out that these minor faults of hers do not prevent him from making Ukifune his lover in any case. So we can say with great conviction that Ukifune would have been an acceptable marriage prospect for a man of appropriate class, had fortune presented her with such an opportunity.

So Ukifune is staying at Nakanokimi's house, observing the grand Niou dandling his child and thinking that Niou and Nakanokimi are an ideal couple enjoying perfect marital bliss. Niou's handsomeness and power are the epitome of what young girls in the Heian period dreamed about. Nothing like a real prince. And Nakanokimi is so sweet as a wife, mother and friend that she seems almost like a goddess to the still childlike Ukifune. Ukifune seems to be quietly and happily enjoying her visit to a little paradise. And then one day the trouble begins. Kaoru comes to visit, and Nakanokimi tells him that Ukifune is there. Kaoru sees it as an excellent chance to finally catch hold of Oigimi, albeit a reflection, and asks for "The permanent loan, if you please, of a useful image,/ A handy memento, to take away the gloom." (1-951) Clearly he is not interested in Ukifune as Ukifune. He has never met the girl properly and doesn't know anything about her faults and virtues. He just wants an Oigimi doll to play with at will. But Nakanokimi tells

Ukifune's mother that life as Kaoru's mistress is a better choice for Ukifune's future than life in a nunnery. She knows that Kaoru has a #1 wife, and with her Buddhist background it may seem odd that she opts for the Kaoru plan. There are two factors that may have affected her judgment: first, Buddhism didn't make Oigimi as happy as marriage made Nakanokimi. Overadherence to Buddhism killed Oigimi. And secondly, Ukifune is so young and alive that it seems a waste of her youth to go straight to a nunnery without ever having experienced the joys of this world. Ukifune is described as having thick, strong, young hair. Hair in the Heian period was a real marker of a woman's age because women grew their hair to incredible lengths. In these days elderly women usually cut their hair short to disguise the sparseness of old hair, but Heian women attempted vainly to pull their hair around to the front to hide sparseness. Oigimi and Ukifune both find this obvious indication of old age somewhat disgusting. Ukifune is way at the other end of the spectrum - later in the novel, when her hair is cut, it is so firm and elastic that it is almost impossible to cut.

Just when Ukifune seems to be moving in a positive direction, Niou, the prince of sensuality, discovers her hiding in a corner of his house. He has nothing to do while Nakanokimi washes her long hair, and so he checks out the women in the mansion. And he finds this pretty girl he doesn't know, and naturally wants to test drive her. Of course everyone in the house goes into a flurry, as they know his habits. They realize that if they don't get her out quickly Niou will get into her kimono in no time. And so she drifts on to the next house, a secret hideaway in a rustic cottage. Kaoru tricks Bennokimi into taking him there, and swoops Ukifune up in his arms and carries her off to Uji. No objections accepted. It's amazing - with Oigimi, he was a callow youth in puberty; with Ukifune, he seems to be a Persian cat in heat. As they go on their way, "The rocky stretches might be difficult, he said, and took her in his arms." (1-968) No holds barred this time. Ukifune's lower class renders her easy to touch for the imperially raised Kaoru. He tells his wife and his mother that he's in retreat because he doesn't feel well while he fondles Ukifune as he wishes. It is really surprising how easily lies come to him. Perhaps the custom of lying rubbed off from Niou. And Ukifune is caught in the spider's web. She can never escape Kaoru afterward.

If Ukifune had been allowed to live quietly in Uji, then Kyoto, as Kaoru's mistress, she would have survived. She would never have been able to escape the oppressive walls of his affection, but she could have mothered his children and led a stable life. But she was

not born under such lucky stars. In *Nihonryoiki* (日本靈異記), written in 822, there are many stories of women who are destined to give up this world and become nuns because they were born under such unlucky stars. (4) Events in general were considered to be determined from previous lives, and so when something went wrong, it was said that it was destined because some bad action was taken in a previous life. It would seem that Murasaki had such tales in mind and was heading Ukifune toward renouncement of the floating world from the beginning. At every turn, there is a possibility for happiness that goes askew. In Uji as well, Ukifune meets with disaster. Niou spies Ukifune's New Year's note to Nakanokimi and guesses that this is the girl he's seeking, the one who disappeared suddenly before he could appreciate her properly. And he sneaks off to Uji in an unseedy incognito outfit, really unacceptable attire for an imperial prince. Were his royal mother to see him he would get the scolding of his life. Unfortunately she doesn't. And he sneaks inside Ukifune's coverlet, imitating Kaoru's voice and behavior. In a modern novel we would find this bit highly questionable, but Murasaki Shikibu has everyone believing 100% that it is Kaoru. Niou and Kaoru were raised together and have similar voices and accents. Besides, it's dark, in an age without great lighting inventions. So it's not incredibly hard to swallow the idea of Niou being able to impersonate Kaoru in the dark. It's just the kind of dumb talent a man like Niou might cultivate to make people laugh.

All the blame for the original adultery is on Niou's shoulders, although Ukifune becomes a partner in sin later. Psychologists often remark on a particular relationship that can develop between a woman and her rapist. They become odd accomplices, covering up for each other. It is like that with Ukifune. In the first sexual encounter, Niou puts his hand on Ukifune's mouth so she can't scream, lets her know who he is, then rapes her. "Horrified at the thought of what was being done to her sister, she could only weep." (1-980) Ukifune has never had good luck with men - she was betrayed by her first lover, then forced to become Kaoru's secretly hidden mistress - so she doesn't think about men in a pinch. Nakanokimi and Ukifune's mother have been kind and caring consistently, and Ukifune can only think how she is betraying the women in her life. In return for all Nakanokimi's kindness, Ukifune is sleeping with her husband. Poor Nakanokimi. Her slut husband, meanwhile, is thinking, "Let them raise any sort of commotion they wished. He would not go back today. One loved while one lived." (1-981) In character as always, he gives himself up completely to sexual desire. There is no saving him from the Buddhist standpoint. He never repents and prays for forgiveness, he just increases the number and

degree of his sins. Proving the point, he forces Ukifune's women to lie and say that Ukifune can't come out because she has her period. Just because he's not finished satisfying himself sexually, he makes everyone around him lie to accommodate him. "Ukon did not like it at all. She was not a natural liar." (1-982) But she learns, as Niou teaches all those around him the corrupt ways of the floating world. Niou's man also says, "Here we are, the merest bystanders, and we get pulled in, and end up telling lies." (1-984) One by one, Niou lowers the level of ethical propriety of all the people around him. And Ukifune is no exception. Kaoru is not sexually stimulating and Uji is a gloomy place, but "today she had interesting company, and begrudged the passage of each moment." (1-983) She is at the age when women are at their peak sexually from a biological point of view, and Niou never leaves her side when he is visiting. He titillates her by drawing an erotic picture of lovers and by swearing his eternal fondness. They seem to be excellent sexual partners, and one wonders briefly if Ukifune would not have been happier if Niou had succeeded in consummating their relationship while she was at his house in Nijo. It would have saved her from Kaoru. But no, Niou is famous for picking women up and then casting them aside - Ukifune would have grown old and been discarded. It would seem to be symbolic of Niou's equality spiritually with the man who discarded Ukifune in favor of her half-sister that as she was stood up for marriage on the night that she had taken great pains to prepare herself for marriage, Niou raped her on the night before she was to go on a pilgrimage, after she had finished preparatory fasting and purification. The similarity of the two events is remarkable. In both cases, Ukifune is happily looking forward to a morn that will never come because the man blows it. And Ukifune is pushed toward her destined future as a nun.

While Kaoru's unconsummated sexual relationship with Oigimi was thrilling and always on his mind, Ukifune is too easy for him. She enjoys sex too much to be interesting. Kaoru enjoyed stretching the limits of an asexual relationship - it was exciting to see how far they could go without specifically compromising Buddhist vows. And so while in the Oigimi chapters Kaoru was always writing to Oigimi, visiting her or thinking of her, in the Ukifune chapters he puts business first, thinking that he can sleep with Ukifune any old time. Niou feels sorry for her; "Such a sweet girl, and he keeps her off in the mountains all for himself, and leaves her waiting week after week." (1-987) He seems to be forgetting that he did the same to Nakanokimi. While he is playing with Ukifune, he accuses Nakanokimi of flirtation with Kaoru, to keep her mind off of his actions.

While Niou has been teaching Ukifune the ins and outs of sex, he also seems to have taught her how to scheme and calculate. Kaoru has a house almost ready for her in the capital, and she knows she should move there. "She was sure that he would be a more reliable support, over long years, than Niou. It would be a great loss if he were to catch word of the strange turn her affections had taken." (1-988) She knows she can't expect anything better than good sex from Niou, and worries about her future. But she can't get Niou off her mind, and Niou is also offering to put her up in a house in Kyoto. She seems like a reckless teenager of today in many ways. She is able to fly off the handle because she has a firm base - her mother is still alive to fall back on, and Kaoru seems to be easily deceived and willing to pay for her upkeep as long as she continues cooperating with his plans. In this regard she seems to be treating Kaoru as a parent rather than as a lover. Of course, his serious demeanor invites people to consider him maturer than his actual age, and Niou, with all his self-confidence, always feels himself inferior to Kaoru. "Drawn to such a man, could the girl possibly shift her affections to a trifle like himself?" (1-990) He is wrong, though. Ukifune was never drawn to Kaoru. Kaoru forced himself on Ukifune because he wanted an image of Oigimi, and Ukifune considers him her keeper rather than her lover. She feels she has a duty towards Kaoru, but she never expresses love for him. Because he keeps showing off his superiority and proving that he is of higher class lineage than she is, she never once feels that she is his equal. She doesn't need to play his game and compete with him, but it is Kaoru's great talent that his very presence makes people feel that they must obey him, and he ensnares women, making them play by his rules. Oigimi is a classic example. Although she seems to be a perfect match for Kaoru superficially, she is seen saying, "Things might have been easier had she found herself in superficial dalliance with an ordinary man...his obvious superiority and aloofness, coupled with a very low view of herself, had left her prey to shyness." (1-829) Kaoru lords it over women, pretending that he is above such worldly matters as love and emotion. Even Nakanokimi comments that "Strangely, she felt more at ease with Niou, though she was dazzled, than she had with Kaoru, the only other young man she had known. Kaoru was a chilly young man whose thoughts always seemed to be elsewhere." (1-847) In the case of Oigimi and Nakanokimi, they can hold their own somewhat better as they are princesses and are somewhat better educated than Ukifune. Ukifune is not worthy of being presented socially, and so Kaoru tries to work her into his schedule without failing in his other duties. She comes after his job, after his wife and

mother, perhaps even after Nakanokimi in priority. It is no wonder that she doesn't love him and is easy prey for Niou.

Niou knows just how to make women fall for him. One day he visits Uji despite deep snow, braving the half day trip. Of course it is flattering to have an imperial prince go through physical hardship for Ukifune's sake, and she is impressed duly. Niou takes Ukifune up in his arms and carries her off to a boat on the river. Going across a raging river in a small boat on a snowy day must have been terribly frightening for Ukifune, knowing that she could not possibly swim with her many kimonos on. Even naked an aristocratic woman in the Heian period probably could not swim. Naturally frightened, "She clung to Niou...He was delighted." (1-991) How nice to have a woman act according to his plan. The scene has everything in common with a modern day haunted house. Many a modern man has taken advantage of the powers of a haunted house, hoping that his girlfriend will cling to him in fright. Of course Niou is experienced with women and can guess what Ukifune's reaction to his every move will be. And since he is always treated as the unreliable unmanly prince he is, he greatly enjoys this chance to play the role of the strong protector of the weak woman. As usual, he swears his constancy, saying, "A thousand years may pass, it will not waver/ This vow I make in the lee of the Islet of Oranges." (1-991) He always has the accustomed set of ready promises at the tip of his tongue. Ukifune is not accustomed to hearing these promises and thinks it an event of great seriousness, imagining that she is the woman most loved by him. Niou cooperates with her fantasy by carrying her all the way into the house. He then takes off her outer robe and gazes at her in what we might consider her pajamas, rather shocking for a woman in a time when being seen was considered extremely embarrassing. Of course Niou has already seen all there is to see of her. He also tries an apron on her, wondering what she would look like as his sister's maid in the future he sees for her. It is not exactly a bright future, but one could do worse. As the maid of a princess, food and shelter would be ensured. And it would be much busier and more interesting than waiting in Uji for men to come. Of course it lacks somewhat in self-respect. Many women would prefer to be their own keepers.

Ukifune's mother knows nothing about Niou and is looking forward happily to the day when Ukifune will be installed in Kaoru's new house in Kyoto. "Then they would be able to look the world square in the face!" (1-994) she thinks. Naturally a mother has high standards for her child. I would prefer my daughter to become a wife rather than an illicit

mistress, and Murasaki probably felt the same way about her daughter. The voice of the mother is eternal. And so two separate camps rise up around Ukifune. The older generation, represented by Ukifune's nurse and her mother, are clearly pushing for Kaoru. They want a secure bond to wealth and insurance for the future. The younger generation is in Niou's camp. Ukifune's maid Jiju is having an affair with Niou's man Tokikata, and Ukon, while she personally prefers Kaoru, has grasped that Ukifune herself prefers Niou and wants Ukifune to be happy. The younger generation of peers in any age usually considers love more important than stability.

And what is Ukifune herself thinking? Although Murasaki is much stricter regarding the propriety of the behavior of the Uji characters than she is regarding the Genji characters, she seems to be somewhat charitable towards Ukifune. "She was still young and rather flighty, and these avowals of love set up increasingly strong tremors in response. Yet she could not forget the other gentleman, a gentleman of undoubted depth and nobility, perhaps because it was he who had first made her feel wanted. Where would she turn if he were to hear of this sordid affair and abandon her? And her mother, who lived for the day when he would give her a home, would certainly be upset, and very angry, too. Prince Niou, judging from his letters, burned with impatience; but she had heard a great deal about his volatility and feared that his fondness for her was a matter of the passing moment. Supposing he were indeed to hide her away and number her among his enduring loves - how then could she face Nakanokimi, her own sister? The world kept no secrets, as his success in searching her out after that strange, fleeting encounter in the dusk had demonstrated. Kaoru might bring her into the city, but was it possible that his rival would fail to seek her out there too? And if Kaoru were to turn against her, she knew that she would have herself to blame. Her thoughts had reached this impasse when a second letter came, this one from Kaoru. Ranged side by side, the two letters seemed to reproach her. She went off and lay down with Niou's, the longer of the two. Ukon and Jiju exchanged glances; so the game was over, and Niou had won." (1-994-995) In this somewhat long passage we are given probably the best summary of a character's thoughts in the novel. And the really outstanding, fascinating point of this passage is that it begins by telling us that she prefers Niou because she is young and flighty, goes through every reason why she should prefer Kaoru and give up Niou, and ends by her preferring Niou anyway. Oigimi was always trying to do the right thing as others had prescribed it - she was a good girl to the point of being boring - but Ukifune goes with what feels good. Without question

Ukifune is representing the masses, Oigimi the odd one out. As we always hear our elders say, "the old days were the good days," in preparation for the coming of the age of the latter-day dharma Murasaki's contemporaries thought that the best was over. In this the story reflects Murasaki's own aging. When she wrote about Genji she was rather idealistic; when she has reached Ukifune she knows that ideals have little base in reality. Her Ukifune lives for the moment, making mistakes of her own will. If she had been a woman of propriety she would have had nothing to do with Niou. But she is not. She is an impressionable child who does not believe in the future, she only believes in the truth of the moment she is experiencing.

When comparing the sisters Oigimi (literally "elder sister") and Ukifune (literally "floating boat"), it is easy to overlook Nakanokimi. But Nakanokimi's name means "middle daughter" and it is not by chance that her behavior provides a standard to judge the other two by. Nakanokimi has the ordinary, standard ethical sense - she marries, has children, refuses to have an affair with other men. If Oigimi and Ukifune had followed her pattern, they would probably have been much happier. Oigimi restrained herself too much, trying to pretend that she was above human emotion. Ukifune can tell you every common sense reason why she should dump Niou, but she doesn't do it because he's such a skilled lover. Here we see the value of having made the appended character of Ukifune a sister, albeit by somewhat unnatural means. Being a sister makes the reader compare.

While Uji was the perfect setting for Oigimi, the restrained sister, it is inappropriate for Ukifune. The Buddhist objects that cram the house only underline her submission to sensual desire, and the loneliness of the place makes her feel like a caged lion. When the day on which Kaoru is to take her to Kyoto approaches, she begins to break down. She desires Niou as much as ever, but it would be difficult both physically and psychologically to have sex with Niou in Kaoru's house. Her maids, with whom she had previously been able to discuss anything, are all lined up in one camp or another and don't provide relief or comfort. And so it is easy for the Uji River to seduce her. The Uji River is the only part of Uji that really becomes Ukifune - its roaring and raging reflect her burning passion, and the river constantly moving on symbolizes the evanescence of this world. And of course it was the site of her famous boat ride with Niou that gave her the name Ukifune. Before Niou got to her she was not "uki" (floating). She was waiting for her destiny to come. And the river brings it. In Shinto objects have souls, and there is no question that the Uji River is Ukifune's friend. It encourages her love affair and helps her

out when no one else can, as we will see.

Ukifune's thoughts turn conclusively to suicide, and of course the river is there. It presents itself to Ukifune as an escape from Kaoru, Niou, Jiju, Ukon, her mother and everyone else who is applying excessive pressure on her. Suicide in young people is usually an escape - it seems an easy way out of whatever is bothering them. Today bullying in school might well be the most popular reason, although love problems are always present in any age. And then the bomb explodes, the straw that breaks the camel's back and conclusively pushes Ukifune toward death - Kaoru finds out about her affair with Niou. As Ukifune herself said in the long explanation of her emotions cited above, the world keeps no secrets. Niou's man is discovered delivering a letter, and Kaoru sees Niou sighing over Ukifune's response. And suddenly he knows.

Murasaki Shikibu depicts his reaction wonderfully. He experiences a set of emotions, beginning with anger. "Niou could have as many ladies as he wished if they were his alone; how could he be so unfeeling towards the friend who had acted as guide and intermediary, indeed almost as procurer, in the Uji days?" (1-1002) His words reflect his private opinion that he is superior to Niou. Niou is a playboy, a flirt, so he has many women. I would never act in such an immoral way, his words suggest. He supports this by adding, "Kaoru had kept his longing for Nakanokimi under tight control, and now his forbearance seemed merely stupid." (1-1002) If you're going to take my woman, I can take yours, in other words. But we know he won't; even if he tried, Nakanokimi would reject him. She thinks he's a cold fish in any case. Giving up on the thought of revenge, Kaoru looks at the situation coolly, "So charming and quiet on the surface, she was a good match for Niou. They were meant for each other. Perhaps he should withdraw in Niou's favor." (1-1002) Exactly. Both Ukifune and Niou are on the surface calm adults but are in fact passionate children. It is a credit to Kaoru's intelligence that he can see this even in his turmoil. "But he had never, not in his most sentimental moments, thought her the only one for him. He would leave her to other affairs as she chose to have them, and take her for what she was. He knew that a decision to send her away would not come easily." (1-1002) Because Ukifune is of somewhat lower class, she could never be Kaoru's wife and is only a mere concubine. A man can't ask a prostitute to only have sex with him. It wouldn't be fair unless he were really willing to marry her. Kaoru's initial anger is based on the betrayal of a man, and his final conclusion shows us clearly that he holds the popular view of the time that only men were of importance. His thought pattern is the

opposite of Ukifune's - she only ever really worried about women.

Kaoru being Kaoru, of course he lets Ukifune know that he knows. He also lets Niou know that he knows. His plan is to squelch the affair by applying pressure. It is just the sort of roundabout thing he would think of. Ukifune "was in despair...the strangest, unhappiest of fates was pressing down upon her." (1-1003) I don't think she can get away with that. She made the decision herself to encourage Niou's affection - nobody is going to accept it as fate that Kaoru is angry with her. If fate is pressing down upon her, it is a fate that she brings upon herself. She is under fire from all sides at Uji - Ukon says, "I wish the prince would just go away and stop trying to snatch you from under the general's nose," while Jiju protests, "I say you should go to the one you like best." (1-100-4) All the pressure is too much for a child like Ukifune. She reacts by saying, "Leave me alone, please. Please - just let me die." (1-1005) And she begins to burn love notes. This worries Ukon greatly. Ukon was raised with Ukifune and has been in on every turn of Ukifune's heart. She would rather have Ukifune alive with Niou than dead, and so she says, "Tell him you will go to him, if that is what you want. I will not leave you." (1-100-7) Jiju seconds her in loyalty, saying, "I will do everything I can, even if it means ruining myself." (1-1009) They are much kinder to Ukifune than Oigimi's servants were to Oigimi. Of course, from an objective point of view, either Niou or Kaoru would have enough money to keep them alive. Whichever. But their declarations of loyalty are not enough to save Ukifune.

In preparation for suicide Ukifune's first thought is of her mother. "Let my sin be light, she prayed, for going ahead of my mother." (1-1010) Her last thought is of her aged nurse. "The woman was still alert and perceptive enough, but she was old and hideously wrinkled. Yet another one who should have been allowed to die first - and where would she go now?" (1-1011) As the women around Ukifune have cared for her, so Ukifune cares for them and worries about their future. Niou and Kaoru will be fine without a low class concubine like Ukifune - they can always find another - but how will her mother be able to overcome Ukifune's death? If Ukifune had any sense left this thought would have stopped her, but Murasaki Shikibu has already put Ukifune's soul in the hands of the evil spirit of a monk who broke his vows. And so she goes ahead with her plan.

Then Ukifune is gone, and everyone panics. Demonstrating the persistence of Shinto in an age of Buddhism, both Kaoru and Ukifune's mother blame the Uji River for seducing Ukifune. Ukifune's mother thinks, "So the child had fallen victim to this awful River." (1-

-1016) The Uji River is historically a symbol of the wildness of nature and of love trauma, and so it is an easy scapegoat. Kaoru sees it the same way: "Here was the river, beckoning, and she had given in to it." (1-1025) It is in character for Kaoru to blame himself for this disaster. "He had chosen the wrong place, an abode of devils, perhaps. Why had he left her there all alone?...He was angry at his own carelessness and his inability to behave like other men." (1-1017) Again we see the self-hatred that lies at the core of Kaoru's personality. With this self-hatred always comes cowardice, and Kaoru's cowardice is quickly revealed. When he sees Niou grieving terribly for Ukifune, he realizes that their relationship extended beyond letter writing and is suddenly glad that Ukifune suicided before Kaoru was made a public laughingstock. He decides to put it behind him, thinking, "perhaps it was the Buddha's way of making him see his own inadequacies." (1-1023)

Our faithful reporter Nakanokimi comments, "her sisters had died so young, no doubt because they had both of them been of a too introspective nature." (1-1021) She is very kind. She could have said with perfect honesty that Kaoru had killed them both. But she is not the type to hold a grudge.

Both Kaoru and Niou forget about Ukifune quickly and start chasing after other women again. There must be an unfulfilled need in their lives. Although they are both properly married, they again chase after the same low class girl, this time named Kosaisho. History repeats itself. Buddhism is full of cycles. This time Kaoru wins rather soundly, but he is still unsatisfied because he has found another unapproachable ideal woman in the character of the First Princess. She is so thoroughly unapproachable that it excites him just to think of her. It is clear that he has learned nothing from his Uji experience. "Always he came to the same conclusion: Oigimi would have had the whole of his affection. He would never have taken a royal princess for his bride." (1-1035) I would bet against that. Kaoru is drunk on an illusion. In reality he bores of a woman after she falls into his hands. The chase is the interesting part. Every kind of true love eternally escapes Kaoru, including self-love. And as for his royal bride - he is such a snob that if the emperor said to take her Kaoru would have taken her anyway. Kaoru is unable to refuse an imperial request. He hasn't got the guts.

The concluding chapters

And so the story might end. But Murasaki Shikibu wasn't finished with her conclusions. So she added the last two chapters. In the first, At Writing Practice, we hear that

Ukifune was saved by the bishop of Yokawa as she was about to commit suicide. Let me precede any discussion of detail by explaining that the bishop of Yokawa at the time was an extremely honored, high level position in the Tendai sect of Buddhism. Murasaki modeled this character after Genshin (原信, 942-1017), a famous monk who wrote *Oujouyoushuu* (『往生要集』). 『往生要集』 is a book depicting the terrors of hell - for example, eating feces - and the glories of heaven. This book was a bestseller of the time, copied by many and read by the aristocrats of the time. It led to a Buddhist boom, because obviously no one wants to eat feces or suffer any of the other terrors of hell after death. (16-228) Genshin was commonly called the bishop of Yokawa and Heian contemporary readers of the Tale of Genji immediately drew the connection. (11-110) Murasaki Shikibu is taking a shortcut by using a paragon, an absolute, easy example of pure and perfect Buddhism. Her patron Fujiwara Michinaga also had great respect for the man.

So what is this great paragon doing in our story? His mother becomes ill, and it is his filial duty to do what he can for her. So despite his vow not to leave the mountain where he trains in Buddhism, he goes to Uji to help his ailing mother. And he finds Ukifune. There is some dispute as to when she was discovered, but Iimura Hiroshi's opinion that she must have been discovered on the night of her disappearance because she would have died if she had been rained on by cold March rain for a prolonged time seems acceptable. Iimura also points out that the description of her hair as shining and the discussion of her lovely scent would be out of place if she had been discovered wet. (9-205-238) This theory sounds rational. Finding Ukifune, the bishop decides that she is not a fox and must be rescued. "She has all the proper limbs," said the bishop, "and every detail suggests that she is human. We cannot leave her to die before our eyes. It is sad when the fish that swim in the lake or the stag that bays in the hills must die for want of help. Life is fleeting. We must cherish what we have of it, even so little as a day or two. She may have fallen into the clutches of some minor god or devil, or been driven from home, a victim of foul conspiracy. It may be her fate to die an unkind death. But such, even such, are they whom the Blessed one will save." (1-1046) And although his men try to dissuade him from caring for this distasteful half-dead girl, he does not waver in his decision to save a life where he can and does not leave her to die. The bishop's determination to save Ukifune is the decisive factor in her salvation. If he had left her to die, she would have had to suffer in full for her adultery in hell. While Murasaki does not

save Niou, who is equally sinful, she extends a helping hand to Ukifune. Because she is a woman herself and understands the complex emotions of a woman seduced, her sympathies lie with the seduced Ukifune and not with the seducer.

The bishop's sister became a nun when her beloved daughter died. Just before Ukifune comes into her life, she dreamed that her daughter would be replaced, and she thinks that Ukifune has been brought to her in answer to her prayers. Poor Ukifune. She is loved first for her stepfather's money, next for her resemblance to Oigimi, then as Niou's sex slave, and now she is loved as the reflection of a stranger's dead child. It is her destiny to always provide someone else's pleasure, never fulfilling her own desires.

Ukifune does not recover by ordinary means, and so the bishop is called in to incant spells for her. The spirit that possesses her is no match for the bishop, and the spirit leaves her body, telling the bishop that Ukifune was possessed because she wanted to die. Ukifune's desire to commit suicide created an opportunity for the spirit. When he leaves her body she suddenly awakes. "She looked up and saw ugly, twisted old people...she could not remember where she had lived or who she was." (1-1050) As mentioned in the Oigimi section, the sight of old age was considered repulsive. Heian people preferred to die before they reached the stage of ugliness. And it must have been a shock for a girl accustomed to the fabulous garments and the youthful splendor of Kaoru and Niou to be surrounded by old hags in subdued Buddhist robes.

At first she cannot remember who she is. She only knows that she wanted to die. "Please let me be one of you," she said to the nun. "Then I can go on living. But not otherwise." (1-1051) But she does not really know what she is doing. Murasaki Shikibu writes three times that Ukifune's fate is to live on - once as the bishop's opinion, once in the nun's letter, and again in a descriptive paragraph. So it is clear that Ukifune is not meant to die. She keeps thinking negative thoughts. "It had been cruel of them to save her. The future filled her with dread." (1-1053) Who will force her to do what next? Indeed, there is a threat almost immediately - the nun's dead daughter's husband sets his sights on Ukifune. She is never safe anywhere. Life is hard for the extremely beautiful women of this world. Of course Ukifune refuses to answer the man's letters - she has learned her lesson from her experience with Niou. If a man gets his foot in the door, he is sure to open it. The only defense is to allow no advances. And while the nuns try to push her toward him, she refuses to budge.

As mentioned in the introduction, the Buddhists in the Uji section are with the

exception of the bishop not ideal Buddhists. The nuns here offer an excellent example. They should be uninterested in love affairs, but they keep trying to push Ukifune into having one. Whatever emotions they have repressed appear in their enjoyment of this affair. When Ukifune does not answer the man's letters, the nuns write answers in her place, enjoying the task immensely. If they had truly cut their ties with this world they would behave with more restraint and not meddle in other people's business. As nuns, they should lead people to salvation; but they keep objecting when Ukifune asks to take Buddhist vows and become one of them. It is a credit to Ukifune that she doesn't give in to them. Her mind is still full of negative thoughts, but she is determined to head in a positive direction. And so the nuns finally give up their futile efforts to change her. "She's very pretty, I'm sure, but she lives in a world all her own. None of our little frivolities for that one, I can tell you." (1-1061) the eldest nun complains, and continues showing off her skill at koto playing, much to the distaste of the others.

The nun is right. Ukifune is not interested in frivolities. "She quite gave herself up to her preparations, to study and prayer and invocation of the holy name." (1-1061) The Lotus Sutra offers many chances of salvation for sinners, and Ukifune is working toward the positive goal of spiritual recovery. To quote some examples, "If good sons or good daughters keep, read, recite and copy the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, ...they will realize the way of great bodhisattvas though they cannot yet be delivered from all the faults of an ordinary man and are still wrapped in delusions." (2-22) Another section says that if they keep, read, recite, copy and spread the sutra, "they will instantly destroy the heavy barrier of sins resulting from previous karma and be purified." (2-24) Or they can take a different path. "If any living beings much given to carnal passion keep in mind and revere the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, they will be set free from their passion." (2-320) It is also written that one who doesn't feel shame in adultery should read and recite the sutras and think of the first principle. (2-369) It seems clear that Ukifune can make up for her sins if she tries. But it must be hard to concentrate on Buddhist ideals when she is pressed by the nuns around her to return to the world of love and sex.

The nun whose daughter died tries to convince Ukifune to accompany her on a trip to Hatsuse. She claims, "You may say that one holy image is very much like another, but Hatsuse does seem to produce very special results. Do come with me.'

Her mother and nurse had said exactly that, she remembered, and had more that once

taken her to Hatsuse; and what good had their efforts done? In those last desperate days, she had not even been allowed to dispose of her own life." (1-1062) Her opinion is very revealing. Although she is trying to be a good Buddhist and recompense for her sins, she does not actually have much faith in Buddhism - or at least in the temple at Hatsuse. All those trips have done nothing for me, she scoffs. Is that so? You could have died in Uji, one is tempted to respond, without a second chance. One could think of worse possibilities. In any case, she doesn't believe in the power of the Hatsuse temple, and so she doesn't go.

While most of the nuns are at Hatsuse, various people make their moves. While the cat's away, the mice will play. The first to move is the man who is after Ukifune. He tries to sneak in to begin a love affair, but Ukifune finds refuge in the room of the ancient nuns. No matter how bent he is on getting into her skirt, every law of propriety forbids him from entering the elderly nuns' chamber. So she is safe from him there. But she has to spend the night listening to the nuns snore thunderously. She is terribly afraid. Even the Buddha himself was shocked by the ugliness of old age. Ukifune, a mere child really, fears that these aged women are demons who are going to devour her. This fear of imminent death causes her to look back on her life. "The memory of her ultimate disgrace, brought on by his attentions, revolted her. What idiocy, to have been moved by his pledge and that Islet of Oranges and the pretty poem it had inspired!" (1-1065) Realizing what a stupid mistake she has made, she reaffirms her decision to leave the floating world. By chance the bishop is coming by, and Ukifune seizes the opportunity. "She must summon up her courage, thought the girl, and have the bishop administer final vows. Today there were no meddling women to gainsay them." (1-1066) The bishop tries to dissuade her, but her resolve is firm. She tells him that she is ill, may die soon, and wants to take vows before dying. It is not right to dissemble so, and although the actual ceremony of taking vows requires her to confess her sins, she doesn't let the truth come out. She shows some honesty by saying that she has remembered her past, but she does not lay her sins on the line. So while the bishop is correct in administering vows to a person who is really bent on leaving the world, Ukifune cannot be considered to have taken all the steps that she should have and can be condoned for the following points: 1) not receiving parental consent; 2) not receiving consent from the nun who is acting as her stepparent; 3) concealing her past sins; 4) pressing the bishop to administer vows by pretending to be on her deathbed. Perhaps Murasaki Shikibu wanted us to think that the

details of Ukifune's vow-taking were skipped over due to the haste with which the ceremony was conducted. Since Ukifune was considered to be an unimportant presence, it was not perhaps necessary to press all the fine points. Even so, Setouchi Jakucho points out that the scene is much more detailed than other scenes of vow taking in *Genji*. For example, Ukifune cries when she is told to make obeisance to her mother because she does not know what direction her mother is in; and Ukifune's hair is so thick and strong that it is difficult to cut. The details of the scene lead Setouchi to believe that Murasaki Shikibu herself might have taken vows before writing this section. But if so, the vow taking that Murasaki experienced would seem to have been somewhat perfunctory.

Having finished, "She was happy now. They had all advised deliberation, and she had had her way. She could claim this one sign of the Buddha's favor, her single reward for having lived on in this dark world." (1-1069) The vow-taking episode is the only time we see Ukifune succeeding in achieving a desired goal. At peace at last, she writes poem after poem to herself. The pent-up voice of her soul is finally freed.

When the other nuns come back from Hatsuse, they "could not find strong enough words with which to condemn the bishop's recklessness and irresponsibility." (1-1071) Again, one would expect that as nuns they would welcome Ukifune's desire to join their numbers and join in their devotion to the Buddha. However, they condemn the bishop using 'strong words' for allowing her to take vows. The usual interpretation is no doubt that they want her to enjoy her life before rejecting it; but the intensity of their anger leads one to suspect that they might have a repressed desire to return to the floating world themselves. Their enjoyment of dalliance would certainly support this. Or maybe they don't think of Ukifune as a team player that they would want to join their team. Certainly she has behaved as a lone horse until now.

Regardless of the sentiments of the other nuns, Ukifune thrives. "The gloom of the last months lifted a little, now that she had had her way. She would joke with the bishop's sister and they would play Go together. She turned to her studies of the Good Law with a new dedication, perusing the Lotus Sutra and numbers of other holy texts." (1-1074) Finally she has achieved a bit of peace and happiness. We recall that Ukifune became a nun in order to escape men, not because she was especially devout. But as mentioned above in the bishop's speech, "She may have fallen into the clutches of some minor god or devil, or been driven from home, a victim of foul conspiracy. It may be her fate to die an unkind death. But such, even such, are they whom the Blessed One will save." (1-104-

6) And Ukifune proves his point by being saved through the works of the Blessed One. What she meant to be an escape proves to be a way to salvation, to peace of mind and recovery of heart. Psychologically speaking, it was good for her rehabilitation to get into a routine without the fear of men bringing passion and trouble into her life. We see Ukifune peacefully copying the characters of the sutras, concentrating her mind on the minute points of each shape. "She seated herself at the inkstone and turned to the one pursuit in which she could lose herself when her thoughts were more than she could bear, her writing practice." (1-1069) Her complete concentration seals her mind from the scary thoughts that had been creeping in previously and upsetting her so. When she is doing nothing, or when she is sleeping, the terror comes back to her. To the objective-oriented Westerner, it might seem that she is flailing without a clear-cut goal. But the process, not the goal, is what heals her. And so the title is not 'Salvation' or 'Enlightenment,' but 'At Writing Practice.'

The climax of this chapter comes with an indirect message from Kaoru. A relative of the nuns comes to pay his respects and asks them to prepare an offering for the ceremony in memory of Ukifune's death. Ukifune hears that Kaoru has not forgotten her, and indeed blames himself for her suffering and final suicide. Of course this confuses her - she seems to be 30% saved but 70% still afraid. She has found some measure of salvation in her studies of the sutras, but when asked about her mother she still pretends that she doesn't remember. Actually it would do her good to contact her mother, both from a psychological aspect - she has been suffering internally at her failure to tell her mother that she is alive and appease her mother's suffering - and from a spiritual aspect - we recall that filial piety is an important characteristic of the good Buddhist, and Buddha will not smile on Ukifune causing her mother undue suffering. The best thing Ukifune could do for herself would be to tell her mother that she was alive and had become a nun, and hope that her mother would understand and encourage her. Ukifune's mother was fonder of Ukifune than of her other children, and we can imagine that she would welcome Ukifune in any form. Certainly I would welcome my daughter back in any form were she to be lost. Perhaps her figure as a nun might be less than desirable, but at least it would be a glad tidings to hear that she was alive. Then if contacting her mother led unwanted men to discover Ukifune, she could have faced up to them. She is a nun now and doesn't have to have sex with them anymore.

In an event that would seem unrelated to our story, the empress becomes ill and the

bishop of Yokawa is called in to pray for her. We recall that his praying is especially effective and was necessary to drive the demon from Ukifune. While he is praying, he chitchats to her, and happens to mention Ukifune. It was an unusual occurrence and therefore newsworthy. The empress, being a woman of great intelligence, immediately knows who Ukifune is; but she hesitates to tell Kaoru. It is a complicated situation, after all. Many pages later she makes up her mind and has Kosaisho relay the story. Kaoru panics, fearing that Niou "would no doubt seek ways to block the path the girl had chosen," and in an unprecedented example of frankness asks the empress directly not to tell Niou. She agrees emphatically. Both of them see Niou as a Devadatta figure, always trying to block others' spiritual progress. But while Devadatta was forgiven because his evil acts served to strengthen the Buddha, we do not sense that Niou will be forgiven. His acts may have indirectly led Ukifune to salvation, but they do not lead others to a better life. For example, his wife Nakanokimi is always troubled by him, but she remains a lay Buddhist to the end of the novel.

The Writing Practice chapter ends with Kaoru thinking of visiting Ukifune on the way back from his usual offering at the sacred Mt. Hiei, and we enter the final chapter. The title of this chapter is "The Floating Bridge of Dreams." A floating bridge meant a bridge made by placing boards from one side of a river across the center of a boat to the other side, then walking on the boards to cross the river. This is considered to be an unusual title. Although most chapters take their title from the text, there is no mention of such a bridge in the text, and so scholars have to guess what the title refers to. Suggestions include love, marriage, and the life one receives in this world. It is characteristic of great literature that readers can infuse the words with their own personal meanings and enjoy a private understanding of the words. Comments about the bridge of dreams reflect this. People who concentrate on love take it to be love, and people who think the Uji section is all about marriage take it to be marriage. I think Murasaki meant a more overall picture - she wants us to see Ukifune spreading her tiny hopes and dreams over the unstable boat of the Buddhist establishment, hoping to cross the torrents that this world has beset her with to the opposite side, where she will reach happiness through her faith. This interpretation probably proves that I am a goal-oriented Westerner.

The chapter begins with Kaoru visiting the bishop and asking about Ukifune. The bishop tells him, "I was reminded of stories I had heard of people who had come back to life at their own funerals...I would imagine from what the others told me that some goblin or

wood spirit had led her astray...she was afraid that the evil spirit, whatever it might have been, was still after her, and she wept and begged me to let her take vows. She had to escape, she said, and look to the next world for happiness. I have taken vows myself, and it was natural for me to encourage her, and I did as she asked." (1-1082) Using classic Buddhist tact, the bishop is not blaming Kaoru. A wood spirit or some such was after her, he explains. Of course Kaoru knows perfectly well the wood spirits' names and what they have done. From his early appearances in the novel Kaoru has been excellent at playing the role of the good boy before his elders, and he is in character here. "Duties pile up, there is no avoiding them; but I have tried not to let my affairs, which I keep to a minimum, bring me in conflict with the holy injunctions, or such small fragments of them as I am not in complete ignorance of." (1-1084) Murasaki saves Kaoru from hell not so much by what he succeeds in doing as by what he attempts to do. His goals are not achieved - he is highly unsuccessful and indeed drives women to suicide - but the process of trying to do the right move from a Buddhist standpoint at each step works in his favor and will save him. While in fact Kaoru is just as cruel to women as Niou is, a definite line is drawn between them due to the motivation for their actions.

Kaoru sends Ukifune's brother to Ukifune with a message from the bishop. The message says, "now you must go back, surely and without hesitation, to the general, and dispel the clouds of sin brought on by tenacious affections. Draw comfort from the thought that a single day's retreat brings untold blessings." (1-1086) From a sociological standpoint she should return where the money is, and it would be good for the bishop to have done a favor for this rich and powerful man. Osamu Hashimoto suggests that the bishop cooperates with Kaoru because Ukifune's brother was a pretty boy, and the bishop was sexually attracted to him. (17-35) Certainly the section can be read that way, and I found it a little odd too. The bishop seems to want to start up a relationship with the boy, the way it is worded. But I don't think Murasaki was so out of touch with her readers that she would attempt to make this paragon of Buddhism a sex fiend. It wouldn't go over well with the masses. Murasaki's father was a poet, as were many other members of her family. The point of Heian poetry was to write something so impressive that it would improve other people's opinions of the author. I think Murasaki's writing sprang from this background and was written to be read and considered an excellent work. I see her as the type to put her written work, not her private self, forward to be viewed and judged. So the Murasaki Shikibu in my mind wouldn't have wanted to be overtly sacrilegious,

although she obviously doesn't completely trust Buddhists.

Returning to the story, Ukifune receives Kaoru's message but again pretends to be unable to remember the past. Money and power have always worked against her, and just as she rejects Hatsuse because it has been ineffective in the past, she rejects Kaoru because he has not made her happy in the past. Ties with him would repudiate the positive movement she has taken for herself and bring negative effects on her life.

In this scene we again see the Buddhists behaving less than ideally. The bishop's sister puts pressure on Ukifune to return to Kaoru by arguing his wordly position, saying, "the fact that the general is a man who must be reckoned with does not make matters less complicated." (1-1088) What difference does it make? The Tendai sect is headquartered in Hiei because its founder didn't want to get caught up in government affairs as the earlier sects in the previous capital of Nara were. Technically a lay position should not be taken into consideration. And when Kaoru's letter is opened, we see the nuns gaggling. "Sending forth the extraordinary fragrance, it quite dizzied the more forward of the nuns, who made sure that they had a glimpse of it." (1-1088) Why should they have to see the letter? It doesn't concern them. This constant curiosity about other people's love affairs is most unbecoming to a nun. It would be a crime today, invasion of privacy, to peek at another person's letter without explicit permission.

Ukifune refuses to answer as always, and her brother returns empty-handed. Her lack of response is in fact a complete response, rejecting Kaoru and his affection. But the book ends with Kaoru receiving the message and doubting Ukifune, wondering if another man is hiding her again. Doubting is a sin in Buddhism. We sense that while Ukifune's Buddhism is internal, with no outward show, Kaoru's Buddhism is external, much show but little content. He conducts all the ceremonies, pays for all the robes, tells everyone how he wants to take vows; but when Ukifune becomes a nun he suspects her. In his heart he has always patronized her, and he doesn't think she is intelligent enough or spiritually developed enough to really understand the mysteries of Buddhism. Kaoru does not put much stock in the quality of his mother's Buddhism either, although she has been a nun for a long time. Kaoru patronizes women in general, with the exceptions of the empress and the First Princess. Haughtiness is without question one of his characteristics. He only looks up to older men who are devout Buddhists, such as the bishop of Yokawa and Prince 8.

Oddly, the book ends here, with Kaoru's show of conceit. Many have argued that the

work is unfinished. Since we know nothing about the details, we cannot pronounce any definite conclusion. Did she die before she was finished? Were there additional chapters that were lost? We cannot answer these questions, but it is fun to guess what would have happened next. Here is my guess. As Kaoru forcibly took Ukifune to Uji, he now moves her forcibly to his mother's house. Because they are both nuns, he thinks it is a good place for her. As always, he disregards Ukifune's opinion. Kaoru provides Ukifune with lavish Buddhist equipment and tries to pry her into speaking to him with a show of loyalty. Ukifune is rather obstinate but is moved by his sudden presentation of her mother and nurse. Resuming relations with the women in her life, Ukifune finds happiness. And the story finally ends. It's just the guess of a Western optimist.

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Many thanks to President Endoh Asai of Minobusan University for his explanations of difficult points of Tendai Buddhism.