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## **Linguistic Characteristics of Premodern Japanese Narrative: Issues of Narrative Voice and Mood**

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*Sebastian Balmes (ed.)*

## Narratological Perspectives on Premodern Japanese Literature

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*Sebastian Balmes*

# Linguistic Characteristics of Premodern Japanese Narrative

## Issues of Narrative Voice and Mood

*Abstract.* In order to examine linguistic characteristics of classical and medieval Japanese literature, this article considers two categories that Gérard Genette defined in his ‘Narrative Discourse’: voice and mood. First, the specific ways in which narratorial presence is created in premodern Japanese texts and how they relate to grammatical person are discussed. Subsequently, the paper scrutinizes the status of the narrator(s) of ‘The Tale of Genji’ and other narratives, who are neither fully heterodiegetic nor homodiegetic, partly due to linguistic conventions but also because of premodern conceptions of literature. The section on mood is divided into perspective and distance. It is shown how ‘internal’ focalization is constituted in Japanese narrative, and what problems are raised by the distinction between voice and perspective. Finally, the definition of distance is reconsidered through the analysis of Japanese texts, leading to a conclusion that coincides with theoretical observations, and to the realization that in Japanese narrative distance can hardly be determined by speech representation.

### **1. Introduction**

While there is an ongoing debate on how universal concepts of classical narratology really are, so far few attempts have been made to clarify this question by studying narrative traditions in non-European languages.

Although it has already been pointed out that theoretical models may need modification in order to apply them to premodern Japanese literature (Watson 2004, p. 116), there have not been many specific suggestions on how this can be done.<sup>1</sup> The reason for this state of affairs seems to be not so much neglect of theoretical issues as the enormous difficulties one encounters when engaging in this task. Another reason is that most articles on premodern Japanese literature that use narratological methodology do not focus on theory itself but on a specific text or group of texts.

This article aims to explain some characteristics of premodern Japanese narrative that depend on the classical Japanese language. Since this approach takes into account only basic linguistic conditions of narrative discourse and does not include plot structures and issues of character representation, it cannot lead to a holistic theory of Japanese narrative. However, it might give some clues as to what parts of individual narratological concepts may be considered universal and what parts will have to be examined more closely in order to adequately analyze classical and medieval Japanese literature. The structure of this paper follows Gérard Genette's influential categories 'voice,' i.e. the narrator, and 'mood,' which is regulated by 'distance' and 'perspective.' Despite its flaws, some of which will be pointed out below, the theory devised by Genette in his 'Discours du récit' (first published in 1972 and translated under the title 'Narrative Discourse') is still widely used and his categories provide a helpful framework to discuss narrative characteristics of premodern Japanese literature.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Voice

The narrator may be defined as the deictic center of narration, which after its anthropomorphization in the mind of the reader appears as the originator of narrative discourse. As such, the narrator has to be distinguished from the real author of a text (Margolin 2011, pp. 43–44; 2014, par. 1). Since not all narrators are personified, this textual function is also re-

ferred to as (narrative/narrating) voice, a term taken from the theory of Genette, even though he presents a different definition in his introduction—but this terminological issue needs not to be addressed in detail here.

In the following, we will first examine how narratorial presence is created in Japanese texts and, since this concept is vital to many theories of narrative, how it is related to grammatical person. Subsequently, special attention will be paid to the narrator(s) of the ‘Genji monogatari’ 源氏物語 (‘The Tale of Genji’), written by the court lady Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 in the early eleventh century, which also allows us to draw conclusions on narrative voice in classical and medieval Japanese texts in general.

## 2.1 Narratorial Presence: Grammatical Person and ‘Narrative Posture’

The way narratorial presence is created in premodern Japanese narrative differs considerably from that of Western literature—but also from that of the modern Japanese novel. Among studies on the narrator in premodern Japanese texts, the narrator(s) of the ‘Genji monogatari’ has/have been discussed the most. Because the text is difficult to comprehend, in the late fifteenth century commentators started to mark different types of discourse through interlinear glosses. From the early sixteenth century on, narratorial comments, then—and sometimes even more recently—still thought of as ‘auctorial’ comments (*sakusha no kotoba* 作者[の]詞), were known under the term *sōshiji* 草子地 (‘ground/foundation of the book’) (Izume 1989). The concluding lines of the chapter ‘Yūgao’ 夕顔 (‘The Twilight Beauty’)<sup>3</sup> belong to the *sōshiji* quoted the most frequently:

かやうのくだ / \しき事は、あながちに隠ろへ忍び給しもいとを<sup>(ほ)</sup>しくて<sup>4</sup>、  
みな漏らしとどめたるを、「など、みかどの御子ならんからに、見ん人さへ  
かたほならず物ほめがちなる」と、作りごとめきて取りなすものし給けれ  
ばなん。あまりもの言ひさがなき罪、さりどころなく。(‘Genji monogatari,’  
SNKBT 19: 146; emphasis added)

*Kayō no kudakudashiki koto wa, anagachi ni kakuroe-shinobi-tamaishi mo itōshikute, mina morashi-todometaru o, “nado, mikado no mi-ko naran kara ni, min hito sae kataho narazu mono-homegachi naru” to, tsukurigotomekite torinasu hito mono shi-tamaikereba nan. Amari mono-ii saganaki tsumi, saridokoro naku.*

His efforts to conceal this kind of troublesome thing were pathetic and so I had not let them come out, but precisely because there are even people who think the whole thing is a fiction, wondering, Just because he is the emperor's son, why do even people who know him tend to praise him and think he has no faults? [I have written like this.] There is no way to avoid the sin of gossiping. (Stinchecum 1980, p. 381; square brackets as in the original, emphasis added)

The Japanese quote does not contain any words corresponding to the personal pronouns of Indo-European languages. It is an important feature of Japanese that words that would be required in a sentence in a European language can be left out, most significantly the subject. Although this is also the case in modern Japanese, this tendency is most striking in the language of the Heian period (794–1185). While statements that would appear redundant or too insistent were avoided, the subject was often hinted at by the degree of honorific expressions, which show a greater variety than those of modern Japanese (for analyses of text examples from ‘Genji monogatari’ in which changes of the subject can only be determined by honorifics, refer to Murakami 2009).

Since it was common to omit the subject, it comes as no surprise that the passage from ‘Yūgao’ does not require pronouns. Yet, *mina morashi-todometaru* (“I had not let them come out”) has to be translated in the first person, adding the pronoun ‘I.’ That the narrator refers to herself can be inferred from the absence of an honorific expression and because it would make no sense to ascribe this withholding of narrative information to any other character. This is the only instance where Amanda Mayer Stinchecum adds a personal pronoun in her translation of the quote, which is literal as far as possible, whereas Royall Tyler’s translation includes the word ‘I’ three times and ‘my’ twice (‘The Tale of Genji,’ p. 80).

There is a similar tendency in other passages that are regarded as *sōshiji*. Therefore, while *sōshiji* have been described as “first-person asides” (Watson 2005, p. 265), this does not apply to the Japanese text in the strict grammatical sense. The kind of narrator who falls into neither of the traditional categories ‘first-person narrator’ and ‘third-person narrator’ has sometimes—though usually in modern contexts very different from *sōshiji*—been termed a ‘non-person narrator’ (*muninshō no katarite* 無人称の語り手; Kamei 1983, pp. 15–16; 2002, pp. 9–10; see also Uno 1995, p. 61).<sup>5</sup>

Not only is it most uncommon for a narrator in Japanese to refer to himself by a word corresponding to English ‘I’ unless he himself (or, to be more precise, his past self) was involved in the narrated events, it can even be argued that the concept of grammatical person does not apply to classical Japanese, as is proposed by Jinno Hidenori.<sup>6</sup> Grammatical person is not marked by verb conjugation, and while there has been a system of ‘real personal pronouns’ (Lewin 2003, p. 8) in Old Japanese (8<sup>th</sup> c.),<sup>7</sup> which were used much more frequently than pronouns of later periods (Frellesvig 2011, p. 138), it has been abandoned in Early Middle Japanese (9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> c.) (ibid., p. 245). For instance, in the ‘Kojiki’ 古事記 (‘Records of Ancient Matters,’ 712) Izanaki 伊邪那岐 says to Izanami 伊邪那美:

美我那邇妹命、吾与汝所作之国、未作竟。[...] (‘Kojiki,’ SNKKBZ 1: 44; emphasis added)

“*Utsukushiki aga nanimo no mikoto, are to namuchi to tsukureru kuni, imada tsukuri-owarazu. [...]*”<sup>8</sup>

“*YOU, my beloved girl, the lands that I and you created are not yet finished. [...]*”

This accumulation of pronouns is not often found in the literature of the following centuries (although in the late Heian period the word *mikoto*, which is here employed as an honorific, could in fact be used to refer to the addressee, or ‘second person,’ in a casual or derogatory way).<sup>9</sup>

In Early Middle Japanese, which forms the basis of the written language until the modern period and is also subsumed under ‘classical Japanese,’<sup>10</sup> the most common ‘pronouns’ denoting the speaker are *ware* and *waga*. *Ware* is also used in the rare example of a narrator referring to himself with a pronoun in *setsuwa* 説話<sup>11</sup> literature that Komine Kazuaki (2002, p. 172) quotes from Kamo no Chōmei’s 鴨長明 (1155–1216) ‘Hosshinshū’ 発心集 (‘Collection of [Tales on the] Resolution to Attain Enlightenment,’ ca. 1215). *Ware* and *waga* derive from Old Japanese *wa* that, in contrast to the first-person pronoun *a*, could be used for plural reference but also as a reflexive pronoun (‘myself,’ ‘oneself’). Thus, it can be concluded that *wa* served as an indefinite personal pronoun in pre-Old Japanese (Frellesvig 2011, pp. 138, 142). Although “a shift from *a*- to *wa*- as the 1st person pronoun” occurred (ibid., p. 138), the usage of *ware* does not correspond to that of English ‘I,’ since *ware* can also denote the third person (ibid., p. 246) or be used as a second-person pronoun when speaking to someone subordinate to oneself on a social scale (KKD: ‘ware’). The following quote is an example for a case in which *waga* has to be substituted by a third-person pronoun in translation:

然シテ我カ御身ハ都テ无レ程御入滅 (Akagi-bunko-bon ‘Shintōshū,’ p. 339 [vol. 7, fol. 19<sup>r</sup>]; emphasis added)<sup>12</sup>

*Shikōshite waga on-mi wa miyako de hodo naku go-nyūmetsu [su]*

Soon after that, he himself entered nirvāṇa in the capital.

It is impossible to explain this use of *waga* by assuming a change to first-person narration since honorifics, such as the prefixes *on*- and *go*- (both written 御), cannot be used when referring to the speaker. *On-mi*, here taken as the honorific form of ‘oneself,’ in this context ‘himself,’ cannot only mean ‘body’ as well, which too seems applicable to the quote, but can also be used as a ‘second-person pronoun.’ Along with the semantic range of the so-called ‘personal pronoun’ *ware*, this contributes to the confusion to which the application of grammatical person to Japanese leads. While



in the above phrase the honorific expression *on-* reveals the referent of *waga*, in some cases we can only rely on context. Tomiko Yoda quotes a striking example from the ‘Sarashina nikki’ 更級日記 (‘The Sarashina Diary,’ ca. 1060) by Sugawara no Takasue’s Daughter (Jp. Sugawara no Takasue no Musume 菅原孝標女, 1008–?) in which *ware* is used twice in one sentence, one time referring to the protagonist (or the narrator’s past self), the other time to her father.

父は、たゞ我をおとなにしすへ<sup>(※)</sup>て、我は世にもいであじらはず、[...]  
(‘Sarashina nikki,’ SNKBT 24: 406; emphasis added)

*Tete wa, tada ware o otona ni shi-suete, ware wa yo ni mo ide-majirawazu,*  
[...]

My father immediately set *me (ware)* up as the mistress of the household, while he *himself (ware)* withdrew from the world. (Yoda 2004, p. 193)

The fact that, after the father (*tete*) is introduced as the topic of the sentence, *ware* first refers to the protagonist and only after that to the father, who is again marked as the topic by the particle *wa*, makes this phrase even more difficult to comprehend.

In addition to the absence of a fixed set of personal pronouns from the Heian period on, it is particularly striking that even in Old Japanese there is no one pronoun reserved exclusively for the third person (see also Lewin 2003, p. 54). Instead, this function is carried out by demonstratives that also refer to inanimate objects (in Old Japanese *so* and *shi*; see Frellesvig 2011, pp. 138–139). We may recall Émile Benveniste’s (1966, pp. 255–256) argument that the third person is actually a ‘non-person’ because its referent can be understood independently of the ‘instance of discourse.’ But even so, this does not change the fact that ‘pronouns’ such as *ware* are not limited to one specific person (or ‘non-person’). It therefore seems misleading to transfer conceptions of first- and third-person narration to Japanese literature.

Yet, it has sometimes been stated that in classical Japanese literature changes from third- to first-person narration or vice versa may occur. The

most famous example for which this claim has been made is the beginning of the ‘Kagerō no nikki’ かげろふの日記<sup>13</sup> (‘The Kagerō Diary,’ ca. 974), the memoir of Fujiwara no Michitsuna’s Mother (Jp. Fujiwara no Michitsuna no Haha 藤原道綱母, 936?–995).

かくありし時すぎて、世中にいとものはかなく、とにもかくにもつかで世にふる人ありけり。[...] たゞふしを<sup>(お)</sup>きあかしくらすまゝに世中におほかるふる物語のはしなどを見れば、世におほかるそらごとだにあり、人にもあらぬ身のうへまで書き日記してめづらしきさまにもありなん、天下の人の品たかきやと問はんためしにもせよかし、とおぼゆるもすぎにし年月ごろのこともおぼつかなかりければ、さてもありぬべきことなんおほかりける。  
(‘Kagerō [no] nikki,’ SNKBT 24: 39; emphasis added)

*Kaku arishi toki sugite, yo no naka ni ito mono-hakanaku, to ni mo kaku ni mo tsukade yo ni furu hito arikeri. [...] tada fushi-oki akashi-kurasu mama ni yo no naka ni okaru furu-monogatari no hashi nado o mireba, yo ni okaru soragoto dani ari, hito ni mo aranu mi no ue made kaki nikki shite mezurashiki sama ni mo arinann, tenge no hito no shina takaki ya to towan tameashi ni mo seyo kashi, to oboyuru mo suginishi toshitsuki-goro no koto mo obotsukanakarikereba, sate mo arinu beki koto nan okarikeru.*

Thus the time has passed and there is one in the world who has lived such a vain existence, catching on to neither this nor that. [...] it is just that in the course of living, lying down, getting up, dawn to dusk, when she looks at the odds and ends of the old tales—of which there are so many, they are just so much fantasy—that she thinks perhaps if she were to make a record of a life like her own, being really nobody, it might actually be novel, and could even serve to answer, should anyone ask, what is it like, the life of a woman married to a highly placed man, yet the events of the months and years gone by are vague; places where I have just left it at that are indeed many. (‘The Kagerō Diary,’ trans. Arntzen, p. 57; emphasis added)

It should be noted that the Japanese quote does not contain any ‘pronouns.’ Following conventional narrative patterns of the time, the first sentence of the text ends with *hito arikeri* (‘there was one [who ...]’) (for a detailed discussion of this sentence focusing on *hito*, see section 4 of Jinno’s article in this volume). In most translations, the whole passage is rendered in the third person before the main part of the diary starts in the first person—e.g. in the translation by Edward Seidensticker, who after

this opening passage literally begins with the pronoun ‘I’ (‘The Gossamer Years,’ p. 33). This choice is obviously made because in Western narrative tradition a change of grammatical person is considered a “violation” (Genette 1986, p. 246). Seidensticker puts the opening passage in italics and thus sets it off from the rest of the diary, marking it as a prologue that may be considered a paratext (or peritext), so that no breach of rules regarding the consistency of person can be detected. However, in premodern versions such as the Katsuranomiya 桂宮 manuscript, which serves as the basis for modern editions of the text, the opening is not marked in any way.<sup>14</sup>

This distinction is also not made by Sonja Arntzen, in whose translation the first two sentences appear as a paragraph as any other. Arntzen too assumes a change from third- to first-person narration, but according to her the text “gradually shifts over to the first person perspective” (Arntzen 1997, p. 4). In her translation, this shift is completed at the end of the second, sinuous sentence (“places where I have just left it at that are indeed many”). This is of course a matter of interpretation—I feel that the phrase *mezurashiki sama ni mo arinan* (“it might actually be novel”), with *-nan* expressing a strong conjecture, serves as a hint that it may be appropriate to use first-person pronouns even somewhat earlier. Moreover, *to oboyuru*, consisting of a quotative particle and the verb ‘to think,’ does not necessarily signal the thoughts of the protagonist but could also be taken as referring to the thoughts of the narrator, and does not necessarily frame *mezurashiki sama ni mo arinan* (Balmes 2018, p. 15, see also my German translation on p. 14).

A translation like that by Arntzen or the one proposed may appear to suggest that in Japanese narrative—in contrast to Western literature—a change of grammatical person is not perceived as a ‘violation.’ But just because a change of grammatical person is a convenient way to express the conspicuous shift of perspective that occurs at the beginning of the ‘Kagerō no nikki’ in an European language, this does not have to mean

that we can define the Japanese text by using labels such as ‘first-’ and ‘third-person narration.’ Furthermore, even in translation this change of person is feasible only at the very beginning of the diary. In fact, just within the first of the three books that comprise the diary five more instances where the narrator refers to herself as *hito* (‘one,’ ‘person’) occur. This use of *hito* contrasts with the ‘pronouns’ *ware* and *waga*, although they are rather few when compared to a Western diary: the first part of the ‘Kagerō no nikki,’ which consists of 71 pages in the Katsuranomiya manuscript (56 pages in the SNKBT edition), contains no more than 24 instances of *ware* or *waga* (‘my’) that are used to refer to the narrator/protagonist—approximately one every three pages of manuscript.<sup>15</sup>

In all of the five instances where *hito* is used, the narrator/protagonist is juxtaposed to other characters. In four, the narrator refers to her former self as *tomaru hito* とまる人 (‘the one who stays’), also shortened to *tomaru wa* とまるは, in contrast to other characters who set out on a journey (e.g. *yuku hito* ゆく人, ‘the one departing’).<sup>16</sup> In another, she describes herself as ‘the one who has consorted [with him] for months and years’ (*toshitsuki mishi hito* とし月見し人), with ‘him’ being her husband Kaneie 兼家, the ‘fortunate one’ (*saiwai aru hito* さひ<sup>(い)</sup> はひある人).<sup>17</sup> While these expressions are clearly part of a rhetorical pattern (Balmes 2017, p. 98; 2018, p. 16), this is also true of the diary’s first sentence. However, whereas it seemed appropriate to translate the opening with a change from third- to first-person narration, sudden shifts of grammatical person would hardly be tolerated by readers at a later stage in the narrative, or would at least cause confusion. Accordingly, Arntzen uses first-person pronouns in all of these five cases.<sup>18</sup>

With regard to the Japanese text we may thus conclude that positing a change of grammatical person implies a dissonance that was clearly not perceived by Japanese readers. A text that bears some similarity to ‘Kagerō no nikki’ regarding the shift of perspective at the outset and later references to the narrator’s past self in a seemingly unconventional, dis-

tanced way (though not by *hito* but the narrator's/protagonist's name) is the first book of 'Zōki hōshi shū' 増基法師集 ('The Poetry Collection of Master Zōki,' late 10<sup>th</sup> or early 11<sup>th</sup> c.), which leads us to similar conclusions (Balmes 2017, pp. 100–102; 2018, pp. 18–23). Therefore, rather than consider shifts of grammatical person a characteristic unique to Japanese literature, it seems more likely that the concept of grammatical person does simply not apply to classical Japanese. Moreover, this discussion somewhat recalls the assumption that changes of tense frequently occur in Japanese literature, a notion that is equally problematic since it too suggests a dissonance that is not perceived by Japanese readers (ibid., p. 23). In fact, it has even been questioned to what degree the grammatical category 'tense' may be applied to classical Japanese.<sup>19</sup>

As has become apparent from the above discussion, from what perspective a Japanese text is narrated depends only partly on the use of so-called personal pronouns. Just as important when deciding the person in which to translate the text are particles and verbal suffixes, or even their relative absence. We already encountered *-nan*, a combination of the two verbal suffixes *-nu* expressing certainty and conjectural *-mu/-n*. Another example is *-ki*, which often appears in attributive position as *-shi*, such as in the first words of the 'Kagerō no nikki,' *Kaku arīshī toki sugite* ("Thus the time has passed"), as well as in *suginīshī toshitsuki-goro* ("the months and years gone by") and *toshitsuki mişhī hito* ("the one who has consorted [with him] for months and years"). Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the function of *-ki* has been traditionally seen as marking the recollection of an event the speaker has participated in or witnessed (Shirane 1994, pp. 222–223). Although there are cases in which the speaker relates events that he did not experience himself, so that *-ki* may rather serve to mark the truthfulness of the account (Oda 2015, p. 150), the traditional definition seems to aptly describe the function of *-ki* in the above examples. We may also note that all of these examples concern the pas-

sage of long periods of time. In so far as *-ki* marks the position of the narrator, it foregrounds her experience and the act of recollection.

According to Genette (1986, p. 244), the author does not choose “between two grammatical forms, but between two narrative postures (whose grammatical forms are simply an automatic consequence).” By ‘grammatical form’ Genette is of course referring to person. The above discussion of the ‘Kagerō no nikki’ suggests that the ‘narrative postures’ found in Japanese narrative differ from those of literature in Indo-European languages in that they are not mutually exclusive and there is no particular grammatical form that derives as a consequence of a certain ‘posture’ and is required to remain the same throughout the whole text (Balmes 2017, p. 102; 2018, p. 22). Also, it can be doubted that ‘narrative posture’ is limited to two forms—otherwise the gradual shift of perspective that Arntzen pointed out in the beginning of ‘Kagerō no nikki’ as well as the use of both *-ki* and the rather distanced *hito* in *toshitsuki mishi hito* could not be explained. Although Genette states that a ‘posture’ is chosen before the narrative is verbalized, his assumption that there are only two ‘narrative postures’ betrays the fact that in Genette’s theory they are clearly based on grammar (person).

## 2.2 The Narrator of ‘The Tale of Genji’

In the light of the above discussion of the problem of grammatical person, it comes as no surprise that even the narrator(s) of the ‘Genji monogatari,’ who is/are believed to be quite prominent in comparison to those of other works of *monogatari* literature, hardly refer(s) directly to herself/themselves. While Stinchecum (1980, p. 381) holds that in *sōshiji* “the narrator addresses the reader directly,” this hardly seems to be the case when comparing ‘Genji monogatari’ to European medieval literature, such as the following lines of ‘Iwein’ (ca. 1200) by Hartmann von Aue:

Ich machte des strītes vil  
mit worten, wan daz ichn wil,  
als ich iu bescheide ('Iwein,' ll. 1029–1031)

I could tell of the fight in many words, but I don't want to, as I will explain to you.

The narrator of 'Iwein' states that he will refrain from telling certain events, at least in detail, which is similar to the 'Yūgao' narrator's comment quoted at the beginning of section 2.1, but despite this parallel in content, their language differs fundamentally. Unlike the narrator(s) of the 'Genji monogatari,' Hartmann's narrator not only repeatedly uses the pronoun *ich* ('I'), but directly addresses his listeners and readers as *iu* ('you')—a device not found in premodern Japanese literature. In 'Genji monogatari,' there are, however, rare instances where the narrator, instead of going into details, states that one 'should imagine' something, such as the following quote from the chapter 'Otome' 少女 ('The Maidens'): *Ōn-fumi no uchi omoiyaru beshi* 御文のうち思ひやるべし ('It should be imagined what was in the letter'; SNKBT 20: 312).<sup>20</sup> Even though this can hardly count as a direct address of the audience when compared to 'Iwein,' in the earlier 'Ochikubo monogatari' 落窪物語 ('The Tale of Lady of the Low Chamber,' late 10th c.) there is one instance where the imperative form of the verb *omoiyaru* ('to imagine') is used: *Kakazu to mo, gishiki, arisama omoiyare* 書かずとも、儀式、有様思ひやれ ('I will not write it down, but imagine the sight of the ceremony'; SNKBZ 17: 338).<sup>21</sup>

Although the lack of personal pronouns and, as a consequence, the directness of address we encounter in European medieval literature might suggest that in Japanese literature the narrator is less visible, that conclusion seems somewhat rash. In fact, the narrator's presence is apparent even in those parts of the text that are not considered *sōshiji* by Japanese scholarship. This becomes clear when taking a look at the opening sen-

tence of ‘Kiritsubo’ 桐壺 (‘The Paulownia Pavilion’), the first chapter of the ‘Genji monogatari’:

いづれの御時にか、女御、更衣あまたさぶらひ繪ひける中に、いとやんごとなき際にはあらぬがすぐれてときめき繪ふ有けり。(‘Genji monogatari,’ SNKBT 19: 4; emphasis added)

*Izure no ōn-toki ni ka, nyōgo, kōi amata saburai-tamaikeru naka ni, ito yangotonaki kiwa ni wa aranu ga sugurete tokimeki-tamau arikeri.*

In a certain reign (whose can it have been?) someone of no very great rank, among all His Majesty’s Consorts and Intimates, enjoyed exceptional favor. (‘The Tale of Genji,’ trans. Tyler, p. 3)

The abbreviated question<sup>22</sup> by the narrator wondering in whose reign the events took place creates a narratorial presence that is obvious even in translation. Because of this narratorial presence, the beginning of the sentence actually has been discussed in the context of *sōshiji*, even though it is not usually regarded as one.<sup>23</sup> But apart from this, there are other indications of narratorial presence that concern the ‘narrative posture’ of the passage and cannot be retained in translation (or only in ways that would draw more attention to them than appropriate). The first is easily explained: the auxiliary verb *-tamau* expresses respect towards the subject, which thus cannot be the speaker herself. The second one is *-keri*, a verbal suffix whose functions have been the object of much debate.

In contexts such as the above quote, *-keri* is traditionally assumed to signal that the narrator has not experienced the recounted events himself but has heard or read of them. This explanation goes back to Hosoe Ikki 細江逸記, who in 1932 described *-ki* and *-keri* in a way similar to Turkish *-di* and *-miş*, with *-ki* marking personal or ‘attested recollection’ (*mokuto kaisō* 目睹回想) and *-keri* marking ‘transmitted recollection’ (*denshō kaisō* 伝承回想) (Oda 2015, p. 147). It has also been argued that *-keri* expresses a certain distance of a spatial, temporal, and/or psychological kind, referring to events that are not connected to the narrating instance, while simultaneously bringing them into the present (Shirane 1994,



pp. 223–224; Itoi 2018, p. 5; Okada 1991, pp. 38–39). Therefore, *-keri* creates a “quality of presence or immediacy” (“The Tale of Genji,’ p. xxviii [introduction by Tyler]), but also serves to mark the perspective of the narrator (Itoi 2018, pp. 5, 18).

Since *-keri* is commonly employed in narratives, Oda Masaru (2015, p. 153) subdivides the function under discussion into ‘transmitted past’ (*denshō kako* 伝承過去) and ‘narrative past’ (*monogatari kako* 物語過去). However, even though most *monogatari* texts were considered fiction, they were often criticized for inventing stories.<sup>24</sup> Against this backdrop, the notion of transmission, by which the author could reduce his responsibility concerning the truthfulness of the tale, was of vital importance and would certainly not have been given up easily (see also Okada 1991, pp. 41–42). Tales were told *as if* the narrator gave an account of real events he or she heard about. Because of this gesture of the narrator it does not seem contradictory that *-keri* marks something one has heard or read of and at the same time indicates fictionality. To what degree *-keri* can be termed ‘past tense’ within the context of narrative is yet another question (see also the discussion of Käte Hamburger’s concept of the ‘epic preterite’ in note 19).

As a consequence of linguistic characteristics such as the ones elucidated above, the narrator is almost always present in premodern Japanese narrative, though somewhat faint. Narratorial presence is conceived fundamentally differently from the way it is in European or modern Japanese literature. The language of modern Japanese novels has no equivalent of *-keri*, and their narrators do not use honorifics when referring to fictive characters.

Besides narratorial presence, the narrator’s identity seems to be constructed differently as well, although the ‘Genji monogatari’ is considered exceptional in this regard. It is widely accepted that the ‘Genji monogatari’ is told by a variety of narrators (Jinno 2016a, p. 130). It has been argued that it cannot be one omniscient narrator, since at the beginning of the

chapter ‘Takekawa’ 竹河 (‘Bamboo River’) the narrator explains that her account is based on what she has heard from old women who have served Higekuro 鬚黒 in the past and that their story differs from that of the former servants of Lady Murasaki (Murasaki no Ue 紫上) (SNKBT 22: 252; ‘The Tale of Genji,’ trans. Tyler, p. 805; the latter point is made clearer in Oscar Benl’s German translation ‘Die Geschichte vom Prinzen Genji,’ vol. 2, p. 403). The narrators, to whom individual parts of the ‘Genji monogatari’ are ascribed, are distinguished through the knowledge required to tell the events in question (see Mitani 2002, p. 19) and through certain linguistic signs. The best-known example for the second type is the beginning of the first chapter ‘Kiritsubo.’ It continues as follows:

はじめより我はと思ひ上がり たまへる御方が、めざましき物におとしめそねみ給ふ。同じ程、それよりげらう<sup>(ふ)</sup>の更衣たちはまして 安からず。  
(‘Genji monogatari,’ SNKBT 19: 4; emphasis added)

*Hajime yori ware wa to omoiagari-tamaeru ōn-katagata, mezamashiki mono ni otoshime-sonemi-tamau. Onaji hodo, sore yori gerō no kōi-tachi wa mashite yasukarazu.*

Those others who had always assumed that pride of place was properly theirs despised her as a dreadful woman, while the lesser Intimates were unhappier still. (‘The Tale of Genji,’ trans. Tyler, p. 3)

It has been pointed out that the narrator uses honorific expressions when referring to the emperor’s consorts (*nyōgo* 女御), who received the third court rank and higher, but not when referring to the ‘intimates’ (*kōi* 更衣) of fourth rank or lower. It is often concluded that the narrator holds the fourth rank, while the father and husband of the author of the work, Murasaki Shikibu, only received fifth rank. But apart from the assumption that the narrator is an assistant handmaid (*naishi no suke* 典侍)<sup>25</sup> because of her court rank (Mitani 2002, p. 17; see also Bowring 1988, p. 59), we know nothing about her. We should also note that in the preceding sentence quoted on p. 72 the honorific *-tamau* refers to both consorts and intimates, and that the predicate (*yasukarazu*, ‘not at peace,’ translated

by Tyler as ‘unhappy’) that refers to the intimates alone is an adjective and as such cannot be combined with honorifics. As Murakami Fuminobu (1998, p. 14) has put it: “In sentences with verbs or suffixes at the end, the narrator can take a stance by means of using or omitting honorifics, whereas in [a] sentence with an adjective at the end s/he cannot do so.” Nevertheless, Mitani Kuniaki (2002, p. 18) reads this passage as an introduction of a personalized narrator, which he describes as a ‘hypostasis’ (*jittai-ka* 実体化). While this may seem nearly as exaggerated as to speak of the ‘birth of the ‘narrator’” (“katarite’ no tanjō 〈語り手〉の誕生”; Mitani 1978, pp. 41–42), it shows how exceptional personalized narrators are in the context of early Japanese narrative.

Some doubts remain as to whether the author of the ‘Genji monogatari’ really intended a fragmentation of narrative voice as complicated as (re)constructed by modern scholars. An important impetus for studies in this vein has been Tamagami Takuya’s 玉上琢彌 theory of three levels of narrators (in his terminology still ‘authors,’ *sakusha* 作者), which he developed in the 1950s and which remains influential even today. According to Tamagami, (1) old ladies-in-waiting (*furu-nyōbō* 古女房 or *furu-gotachi* 古御達) who experienced or heard about the events recounted in the tale would tell them to other ladies-in-waiting. (2) These would write down the tale and finally, (3) another group of ladies-in-waiting would recite the text while adding their own impressions and evaluations (Tamagami 1966, pp. 253, 256; see also Masuda 1989; Stinchecum 1980, pp. 375–376; Murakami 1998, p. 3). The third group of narrators results from Tamagami’s assumption that *monogatari* tales were read aloud. This theory, which he named *monogatari ondoku ron* 物語音読論, is based on his argument that before ‘The Tale of Genji’ *monogatari* were first written by men in Chinese characters, and afterwards recited by women. According to Tamagami, the early *monogatari* texts known to us are records of such performances (Tamagami 1966, pp. 147–148, 251–252). He gives some quotes suggesting that *monogatari* were performed orally (ibid.,

pp. 151, 154), but admits that his theory cannot be proven (ibid., pp. 154, 247).

Although Tamagami's proposal was met with much approval (ibid., p. 248), there has also been substantial criticism, particularly by Nakano Kōichi (1972, first published in 1964). Nakano examines the narrator of the 'Genji monogatari' by focusing on *sōshiji* similar to those that have been central to Tamagami's theory (Nakano 1972, pp. 204, 209, 212).<sup>26</sup> Nakano distinguishes between two types of *sōshiji* which treat the narrated events either as something the narrator has seen or heard herself, or something that has been transmitted (ibid., pp. 204–208; Nakano speaks of 'postures,' *shisei* 姿勢, which is the term that is also used for 'narrative posture' in the Japanese translation of Genette's 'Narrative Discourse'; see Genette 1985, p. 287). However, Nakano (1972, pp. 206–207) points out that not everything that is narrated could actually be seen or heard by someone. Furthermore, he concludes that speculation by the narrator indicates that details are left out on purpose. Thus, the aforementioned types of *sōshiji* are merely techniques of this narrator whom Nakano describes as 'omnipotent' ("zennōsei o motte ori 全能性をもっており"; ibid., p. 208)—an expression that perhaps should rather be replaced with 'omniscient' (*zenchi* 全知), though both terms are derived from theology.

While Nakano still uses the term 'author' (*sakusha*), Konishi Jin'ichi speaks of the narrator (although he employs a somewhat unusual expression, *jusshu* 述主) but deconstructs Tamagami's model in a less radical way. Konishi (1971, p. 48) criticizes that Tamagami does not distinguish between a narrator inside the text as a fictive character and a real person reading the text aloud. He therefore rejects the third level of Tamagami's model (see also Masuda 1989, p. 167) and contends that the 'Genji monogatari' is told by a primary narrator whose account is based on the report of several secondary narrators (Konishi 1971, p. 46–47; 1986, pp. 337–338). Moreover, with regard to primary narration he argues that the 'Genji monogatari,' like all fictional tales (*tsukuri-monogatari* 作り物語) of the

Heian period, is narrated from an ‘omniscient point of view’ (Konishi 1971, pp. 45, 50–52), even though this ‘omniscience’ can be toned down through (interrogative) conjectures or other *sōshiji* (ibid., pp. 51–54). Yet, while we may assume that the narrator gains information from old ladies-in-waiting, or is at least suggesting this, it is at no point in the text evident that these informants are actually *speaking*, i.e. narrating. This is true of the beginning of ‘Hahakigi’ 帚木 (‘The Broom Tree’) and the ending of ‘Yūgao,’ which frame the so-called *Hahakigi sanjō* 帚木三帖 (‘Three Hahakigi Chapters’) and are frequently quoted to support the assumption of several narrators (e.g. Mitani 1978, pp. 45–46; 2002, pp. 48–50), and this is also true of the ending of the chapter ‘Yomogiu’ 蓬生 (‘A Waste of Weeds’), where according to Konishi (1986, p. 337) only the last two moras *to zo* that mark the account as based on external information may be attributed to the primary narrator. Just because the text suggests that old ladies-in-waiting had transmitted (narrated) the story, this does not mean that they are narrators in the sense in which this term is used in textual analysis, i.e. that the narrative represents their *words*.

While the distinction between primary and secondary narration is certainly useful with regard to the genre of *rekishi monogatari* 歴史物語 (‘historical tales’) or even noh theater, especially dream plays (*mugen nō* 夢幻能) (see the paper by Takeuchi Akiko in this volume), it does not apply to ‘Genji monogatari’ in the way suggested by Tamagami’s theory. Thus, by retaining the first two levels of Tamagami’s model Konishi mistakes the narrator’s sources of information for narrators, mingling voice and knowledge.

Knowledge, however, is closely connected to perspective, which in Japanese research on premodern literature is often equated with voice. For instance, Mitani (2002, p. 19) uses the expressions ‘multilayeredness of grammatical person’ (‘ninshō no tasōsei 人称の多層性’) and ‘multiperspectivity’ (‘ta-shiten 多視点’) interchangeably. In Japanese, the distinction between voice and perspective is complicated by the fact that certain

subjective expressions are considered to always refer to the speaker in conversational context (see Murakami 1998, pp. 1, 12–14, 20–21 on ‘sensation/emotion adjectives’).<sup>27</sup> While it does not seem appropriate to call their use in so-called ‘third-person’ narratives “ungrammatical” (Murakami 1998, p. 14; 2009, p. 84)—after all, free indirect speech is also not described in this way, although it only occurs in literary texts—they undoubtedly testify to the close relationship between voice and perspective (and serve to enhance experientiality<sup>28</sup>). However, since knowledge does not pertain to linguistic aspects of perspective, it can easily be distinguished from voice.

To mistake the function of the narrator’s sources for that of the narrator herself may in fact be more misleading than the third level of Tamagami’s model rejected by Konishi, which perhaps should not be dismissed so easily. In the Heian period, texts like ‘Genji monogatari’ were not easily accessed, and it was a common practice to copy texts one had managed to borrow from someone else during the process of reading (Bowring 1988, p. 82). While copying small alterations were made to the texts, either consciously or inadvertently, so that hardly a manuscript exists that is completely identical to another. In Tamagami’s theory, people copying a text are treated in the same way as those reciting it, both belonging to the third level of narration (Tamagami 1966, pp. 148, 252).

It can be difficult to decide if several narrators should be distinguished according to the historical formation of the text, or if it is more appropriate to assume only one narrator for the final text as one single macro speech act. In narratology the latter approach prevails (and this is also the approach taken by Nakano and Konishi), but narratological theory has developed around the classical novel—a type of literature that is created by only one author. In contrast, narrative prior to the emergence of print culture constantly changes in the course of transmission. Yet, the text of the ‘Genji monogatari’ does not allow a distinction of a plurality of narrators on linguistic grounds. With regard to Tamagami’s third level of narra-

tors Jinno remarks that the language of the ‘Genji monogatari’ as a whole is modeled after oral narration, so that the text cannot be divided into written and oral parts (Jinno 2016a, p. 14). In this context it may therefore be safer not to change Tamagami’s ‘authors’ to ‘narrators.’

The problem of to what extent the process of production should be taken into account for narratological analysis becomes more pertinent when we turn to texts such as the ‘Tosa nikki’ 土左日記 (‘The Diary of [the Governor of] Tosa,’ ca. 935) by the renowned poet Ki no Tsurayuki 紀貫之 (–945). Although it is commonly accepted that the events are told by a female narrator, indications of the narrator’s gender are extremely few (Balmes 2017, p. 110; 2018, p. 35). It is believed that the ‘Tosa nikki’ is based on notes that Tsurayuki made during the journey. Since several passages appear more natural if ascribed to the voice of the former provincial governor, the character based on Tsurayuki himself, the question arises whether it is appropriate to assume a female narrator for the text as a whole, even though Tsurayuki might well have added her at the final stage of compilation. There seems to be no definite answer to this question (Balmes 2017, pp. 111–115; 2018, pp. 38–40). Instead, it depends on the theoretical background of the study to be carried out.

The narrators of the ‘Genji monogatari’ are considered exceptional because they appear to have a ‘personality.’ All the same, they are never mentioned explicitly in the text, for those that are mentioned are no narrators in the narratological sense but mere sources of information. But even if we make this distinction, and even if we assume only one narrator, we can infer that she is a lady-in-waiting (*nyōbō* 女房) (see Konishi 1971, p. 46). Jinno (2016, p. 17) argues that this is also apparent from the fact that the narrator frequently leaves the words and actions of particularly high-ranking characters to the imagination of the readers, suggesting the limited field of perception of a lady-in-waiting.

Mitani (1978, p. 42) claims that the ‘personalized’ narrators (*katarite* 語り手, as opposed to the nonpersonalized narrator as a textual function,

to whom he refers by the term *washa* 話者, ‘speaker’), who first appear in the ‘Genji monogatari,’ result from the structure of classical Japanese, since in prose the unnamed subject is often marked by the degree of honorific language. By this degree the narrator reveals his/her social place in relation to the characters in the narrative. Since this suggests that the narrator belongs to the same world as the fictive characters (although removed in time), he/she may to some degree be regarded as ‘homodiegetic.’ But tales commonly considered to have a heterodiegetic, omniscient narrator, such as the anonymous ‘Taketori monogatari’ 竹取物語 (‘The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter,’ early 10<sup>th</sup> c.), are subject to the same linguistic requirements. It has been pointed out that ‘Taketori monogatari’ contains no honorifics at the beginning, while their number gradually increases towards the end of the work. Furthermore, the use of honorific expressions regarding the protagonist Kaguya-hime かぐや姫 does not seem to follow specific rules (Mitani 1978, p. 43). Nevertheless, no one has tried to explain these contradictions by introducing the notion of different narrators, which raises the question of how justified the attempt to discern numerous narrators really is if this approach should be appropriate only for ‘Genji monogatari.’ Nakano (1972, pp. 210–211) already criticized the way ‘Genji monogatari’ tends to be treated as special, and urged to study ‘Genji’ within the context of the *monogatari* tradition. Rather, we may conclude that there is hardly a narrator in premodern Japanese literature who is truly heterodiegetic.

Despite attempts to explain the narrator(s) of the ‘Genji monogatari’ as entities with limited knowledge, Nakano and Konishi have correctly pointed out that the narrator’s knowledge exceeds the amount of information that can be acquired in the context of Tamagami’s three-layered model. This suggests that the narrator is neither clearly ‘homodiegetic’ nor ‘heterodiegetic’ in the mutually exclusive sense in which these terms are usually understood. While the narrator is in some way involved in the diegesis (story world) by obtaining information from characters who wit-



nessed the narrated events, she obviously displays heterodiegetic features as well. Rather than consider this an exceptional feature of the ‘Genji monogatari,’ it seems reasonable to conclude that the terms ‘homodiegetic’ and ‘heterodiegetic’ are not completely applicable to premodern Japanese narration.

A better way to describe this kind of narrator may be Kendall L. Walton’s concept of ‘reporting’ and ‘storytelling narrators.’ ‘Reporting narrators’ give the impression that they recount real events (at least real to them), i.e. events that are part of the same narrative level as the narrator, whereas ‘storytelling narrators’ suggest that they invent the story they tell. In contrast to Genette’s concept of ‘homodiegetic’ and ‘heterodiegetic’ narrators, which is based on an ontological distinction, Walton’s theory allows a blending of ‘reporting’ and ‘storytelling narrators’ (Walton 1993, pp. 368–372, esp. note 19). This indicates that Genette’s postulation of only two ‘narrative postures,’ implicitly related to grammatical person, is over-simplistic not only with regard to premodern Japanese literature, but to literature in general—although this does not change the fact that in classical Japanese ‘narrative posture’ may be expressed in a particularly nuanced fashion.

The reason that this hybrid sort of narrator comes into being in Japanese literature is not only the convention to use honorifics but also, and perhaps even more importantly, the need to legitimize one’s narrative by suggesting that the story was not invented but transmitted. As far as the narrator of ‘The Tale of Genji’ reveals her sources, her tendency to ‘report’ is somewhat stronger than in preceding *monogatari*. Her (fictive) informants may well even be described as personalized forms of *-keri*.

### 3. Narrative Mood

Regarding narrative mood, Genette distinguishes ‘distance’ and ‘perspective,’ both of which are closely connected to the way narrated events are perceived by readers or listeners. Since the concept of distance requires

more revision than perspective regarding its application to premodern Japanese narrative, we will first discuss perspective. This change of order is also justified by the fact that in Japanese narrative, or perhaps even narrative in general, distance is not defined by narratorial voice to a greater extent than perspective.

### 3.1 Perspective

According to Genette's theory, the perspective of a text is defined by its use of focalization. A text segment is focalized internally, i.e. on a character, if the knowledge of the narrator equals that of a certain character in the story. In segments externally focalized, the narrator knows less than the characters, thus appearing as an observer who can only report what the characters do or say, but not what they feel or think. If the narrator's knowledge exceeds that of the characters and he freely describes the thoughts and emotions of different characters, there is zero focalization. This stance is typical for the so-called omniscient narrator (Genette 1986, pp. 188–190).

While Genette's theory of focalization has been influential, there are a few problems that need to be addressed. First of all, the differentiation between 'internal' and 'external,' which is also central to many other narratological models of perspective, is not altogether clear (Zeman 2018, pp. 183–186). But what is even more important is that Genette fails to accept the narrator as an entity who may serve as a focalizer himself—to borrow a term from Mieke Bal, who attributes a more active role to the characters, so that the narrative is not focalized *on* but *through* a character (Bal 1983, p. 241). In fact, from the viewpoint of cognitive linguistics, the narrator as a level of perspective is always present, and the perspective of a character can only be represented within this frame. Thus, the perspective of a given character and that of the narrator do not alternate; instead the perspective of the character is necessarily embedded within that of the narrator (Igl 2018, pp. 133–135, 137–138; see also Zeman 2016,

pp. 28–32). The degree to which the narrator’s point of view is perceptible to the reader may of course vary.

With regard to the analysis of literary texts, perspective is most relevant when text passages are focalized through individual characters. The term focalization, as it is used in this article, implies that the perspective of a character is perceptible for a certain stretch of narrative—not only through one or two words. Throughout the focalized passage the perspective of the narrator may not disappear altogether, but it is the perspective of a character that is foregrounded.

A certain perspective cannot only be marked by the amount of knowledge displayed, but also by specific linguistic means. We have already encountered a few examples in our discussion of ‘narrative posture.’ A character’s point of view is often introduced by narrated perception, mostly expressed by the transitive verbs *miru* (‘to see’) and *kiku* (‘to hear’) as well as by their intransitive counterparts *miyu* (‘to appear/to be seen’) and *kikoyu* (‘to be heard’). In focalized passages we might expect deictic expressions pointing to the place of the character, such as *konata* (‘here’), *anata* (‘there’), or *ku* (‘to come,’ especially as an additional verb marking the direction of an action). However, while deictic expressions seem to be relatively rare, much more frequently verbal suffixes marking different types and degrees of speculation are employed, e.g. *-mu*, *beshi*, *meri*, *-kemu*, and *ramu*. Furthermore, the suffix *nari* expresses that something is heard, but it too can be used to mark speculation. The great variety of verbal suffixes expressing conjecture serves as an effective device to enhance focalization. The nuances carried by them cannot be conveyed as easily in modern Japanese.

A more significant difference concerns the presence (i.e., perspective) of the narrator. It has already been mentioned that a subtle but steady narratorial presence is created by verbal suffixes such as *-keri* and by honorifics. In passages that are focalized through a certain character in the story these expressions are reduced. The short tale ‘Hanazakura oru

shōshō' 花桜折る少将 ('The Lieutenant Plucks a Sprig of Flowering Cherry'), probably written in the eleventh century and contained within the 'Tsutsumi chūnagon monogatari' 堤中納言物語 ('The Riverside Counselor's Stories'), serves as a fine example since the first third of the text is very clearly focalized through the protagonist. The text starts in the following way:

月にはかられて、夜ふかく起きにけるも、思ふらむところいとを(ほ)しけれど、 [...]' (Tsutsumi chūnagon monogatari,' SNKBT 26: 4; emphasis added)

*Tsuki ni hakararete, yo fukaku okinikeru mo, omou ramu tokoro itōshikeredo, [...]*

Deceived by the moon, he had gotten up in the middle of the night. What might she think? He felt sorry for her, but [...]<sup>29</sup>

In accordance with narrative conventions of the time, *-keri* is used at the beginning of the text, thereby clearly marking the narrator. It is immediately followed by a verb to which the conjectural suffix *ramu* is attached, voicing the thoughts of the protagonist: *omou ramu* ('[What] might [she] think?' or '[How] might [she] feel [about him leaving so early]?'). *Itōshi* ('pitiful,' here translated as 'He felt sorry for her') belongs not only to the category that Murakami (1998) calls 'sensation/emotion adjectives' (Jp. *jōisei keiyōshi* 情意性形容詞; see Hijikata 2010, p. 176), but more specifically to the kind of adjectives that, while referring to someone or something else, at the same time express the speaker's attitude or feelings (see *ibid.*, pp. 177–179; Murakami 1998, pp. 15–16). After the above quote, *-keri* is no longer used<sup>30</sup> and all verbal suffixes that mark speculation can be ascribed to the protagonist, which is suggested by verbs of perception. The focalized part, apart from direct speech, contains only one honorific expression: *notamau* のたまふ ('he said'; SNKBT 26: 5). This reminds us that the perspectives of the narrator and the protagonist are not mutually exclusive, and that the perspective of the protagonist is embedded within that of the narrator.

The end of the focalization through the protagonist is marked by the sudden use of the honorific auxiliary verb *-tamau* that continues throughout the rest of the text. In the following quote, expressions that indicate focalization are emphasized by dotted and wavy lines.

みなしたてて、五六人ぞある。下るゝほどもいとなやましげに、これぞ主なるらむとみゆるを、よくみれば、衣ぎぬかけたるやうだひ<sup>(1)</sup>、さゝやかに、いみじう見ぬいたり。ものいひたるもらうたきものの、ゆう／＼しく聞こゆ。「うれしくもみつるかな」と思ふに、やう／＼あくれば、帰り給ぬ。

日さしあがるほどに起き給て、よべの所に文書き給ふ。(‘Tsutsumi chūnagon monogatari,’ SNKBT 26: 6; emphasis added)

*Mina shitatete, gorokunin zo aru. Oruru hodo mo ito nayamashige ni, kore zo shū naru ramu to miyuru o, yoku mireba, kinuginu kaketarū yōdai, sasayaka ni, imijū ko-meitari. Mono iitaru mo rōtaki mono no, yūyūshiku kikoyū. “Ureshiku mo mitsuru kana” to omou ni, yōyō akureba, kaeritamainu.*

*Hi sashiagaru hodo ni oki-tamaite, yobe no tokoro ni fumi kaki-tamau.*

Five or six people appeared, all dressed to go out. Apparently much distressed as she descended the stairs was the one who must have been the mistress, or so it appeared to him; and as he regarded her carefully, the tiny figure with her mantelet thrown back struck him as ever so childlike. And while her speech was pretty too, it also impressed him with its elegance.

“How lucky I am to have seen her!” he thought, and as day was beginning to dawn he took himself home.

He awoke to a sun shining high in the sky and wrote a letter to the lady with whom he had stayed the night before. (“The Riverside Counselor’s Stories,’ trans. Backus, pp. 15–16; emphasis added)

There can be no doubt about the focalization through the protagonist, which is indicated by verbs related to perception (*miru*, *miyu*, *kikoyū*). All of these verbs are used within the context of a man secretly observing a woman, a so-called *kaimami* 垣間見 (‘peeking through the fence’) scene. The perspective of the protagonist is also marked by the conjectural suffix *ramu* and expressions referring to his impression of the woman (*nayamashige*, “apparently [...] distressed,” and *ko-meitari*, “struck him as [...] childlike”). While all of these (marked by dotted lines in the above

quote) are rendered into English in the translation by Robert L. Backus, the auxiliary verb *-tamau* cannot be translated—at least not without over-emphasizing its function. Thus, the sudden presence of the narrator is lost in translation.

Admittedly, there are other, more subtle indicators of focalization that are also not reflected in Backus’s translation: the deictic *kore* (‘this’), especially in conjunction with the emphatic particle *zo*, prompting Inaga Keiji to enclose the phrase *kore zo shū naru ramu* in quotation marks (SNKBZ 17: 389), treating it as direct thought (‘This seems to be the mistress’). Moreover, even though *rōtashi* (‘pretty’) belongs to the subclass of *ku* adjectives that in most cases refer to an objective state (see Frellesvig 2011, pp. 90–92), it shows semantic similarities to *itōshi*. In fact, dictionaries use this exact word to explain its meaning, which is also described as ‘to feel the wish to look after a child or woman’ (‘Shōgakukan Zenbun zen’yaku kogo jiten’; NKD; KKD). Therefore, *rōtashi* clearly has to be considered a ‘sensation/emotion adjective,’ contributing to the focalization through the protagonist.

Since honorifics indicate that the speaker is talking about someone else, text segments lacking honorifics (i.e., the social perspective of the narrator) are sometimes regarded as being told in the first person—in this vein, the first third of ‘Hanazakura oru shōshō’ has been described as ‘first person-like’ (*ichininshō-teki* 一人称的; Jinno 2017, pp. 54, 56, see also p. 58 for a critical stance towards this expression). Therefore, passages like the one quoted above contribute to the aforementioned tendency of Japanese scholars to equate voice with perspective. Yet, while verbs such as *miru* may signal focalization through a character without entailing a change of voice, other linguistic means do not allow a clear-cut distinction between voice and perspective. We do not necessarily have to assume that the voice is that of the character whenever we encounter a ‘sensation/emotion adjective.’ Deictic expressions, however, are more clearly pertaining to voice.

Genette (1986, pp. 186–188) argues that voice and mood are to be strictly separated, which has in fact been an important reason for the popularity of his concept of focalization (Schmid 2011, p. 142). While it is certainly true that by defining focalization through the knowledge of the narrator Genette himself suggests a connection between voice and mood (ibid.; Broman 2004, pp. 61–62), we can find many examples of narrators who use words the characters themselves might choose. Of course, this phenomenon is by no means limited to Japanese literature, as is apparent from the discussion of free indirect speech (or free indirect discourse), where no distinction between voice and perspective can be made. Moreover, if the ‘linguistic point of view’ (Schmid 2010, p. 115) of a character is foregrounded, this does not necessarily mean that the narrator has changed—thus, we can still safely distinguish the informants from the narrator(s) in ‘Genji monogatari.’ Yet, the theoretical problem of the relationship between voice and mood remains. Eva Broman (2004, p. 80) has aptly pointed out that the “separation of *voice* and *mood* is just as misleading as earlier point of view theories, which tended to conflate the two aspects.”

### 3.2 Distance

The term narrative distance refers to the relationship between story and discourse (Genette 1986, p. 168), which in turn causes the listener or reader to feel a certain degree of closeness or distance to the narrated events (Martínez/Scheffel 2016, p. 50). The concept of narrative distance has received not nearly as much attention as point of view, i.e. perspective (a recent exception is Köppe/Singer 2018). This results from distance being almost exclusively defined by the degree of narratorial presence,<sup>31</sup> which is discussed either in studies of narrative voice or within the context of perspective. In fact, it could be argued that if distance is defined by narratorial presence alone, it is nothing more than a subset of perspective and does therefore not constitute an independent category. However, we

will put this theoretical objection aside for now, and examine the concept of distance through the analysis of Japanese texts.

Traditionally, distance has often been dealt with in the context of speech representation, starting with Plato's 'Politeia' ('The Republic,' Book III, 392–394), where he has Socrates distinguish between 'simple narrative' (*haplé diégêsis*) and 'imitation' (*mimêsis*). Because direct speech is supposed to contain only the exact words of a character (therefore constituting 'imitation'), there is basically no distance between the narrative and the reader, who feels as if he himself observes the conversation. In the case of indirect speech, the choice of words is still that of the character, but tense, deictic expressions, and syntax are regulated by the mediating narrator. The largest distance is achieved through narrated speech, in which the narrator sums up the speech of a character. Smaller and larger distance has also been termed 'dramatic/narrative mode' and 'showing/telling.'

However, if it is assumed that the degree of narrative distance corresponds to the degree of narratorial presence, 'Hanazakura oru shōshō' is highly contradictory. For the most part, the last two thirds of the text contain dialogue consisting of short utterances. Although this suggests small narrative distance, the narratorial insertions between the characters' speeches contain a considerable number of honorific expressions that clearly emphasize the presence of the narrator, such as the verbs *notamau* ('to say') and *obosu* ('to think') as well as the auxiliary verb *-tamau*. If we rely on a definition according to which distance corresponds to narratorial presence, there appears to be a strange tension between short segments either 'narrative' or 'dramatic.' Yet, it seems hard to imagine a reason why this tension should be intended.

Genette (1986, p. 166) names narrative speed as a second criterion through which distance can be measured. High narrative speed results in a style similar to a summary and thus in the perception of larger distance. On the other hand, if the events are told slowly and with many details, the



reader feels less distant from them and is more likely to be immersed in the narrative. The ‘Hachirō<sup>32</sup>’ tale in the mid-fourteenth-century ‘Shintōshū’ 神道集 (‘Anthology of the Way of the *Kami*’) is clearly divided into parts with high and low narrative speed. Among these, the following quote is the slowest passage, i.e. the one with the highest density of narrative information concerning a small amount of time in the narrated world.

既<sup>ニ</sup>高井ノ岩屋ニ付ツ、宗光贅<sup>ヘ</sup>ノ棚ニ昇テ、北向<sup>ニ</sup>坐ツ、水精ノ軸<sup>シタル</sup>法花經<sup>ヲ</sup>  
 [→] 紐<sup>ヲ</sup>解キ、打拳<sup>ニ</sup>と讀誦<sup>セラル</sup>。良且ク有セテ、大蛇<sup>ハ</sup>石ノ戸<sup>ヲ</sup>押開テ出タリ。其<sup>ノ</sup>  
 体<sup>ヲ</sup>見<sup>ル</sup>ニ<sup>シケレ</sup>。首<sup>ハ</sup>真ノ漆<sup>ヲ</sup>以テ七ケ八ケ塗<sup>タルカ</sup>如シテ、眼<sup>ハ</sup>赤雲<sup>ケル</sup>提<sup>テ</sup> [→] 緹<sup>ヲ</sup>  
 闇<sup>ニ</sup> (ユ [→] エ) リ<sup>ハ</sup>メタルニ似<sup>リ</sup>。口<sup>ニ</sup>ハ銖<sup>ヲ</sup>差<sup>シタルカ</sup>如シ。外<sup>ノ</sup>ニ<sup>テ</sup>見<sup>ル</sup>ニ<sup>身ノ毛</sup>弥<sup>ヨ</sup>立<sup>テ</sup>  
 怖<sup>キ</sup>ニ、倍<sup>シテ</sup>宗光ノ心ノ内<sup>ニ</sup>推量<sup>セラレテ</sup>哀<sup>レ</sup>也。而<sup>トモ</sup>宗光<sup>ハ</sup>少<sup>シ</sup>シモ恐<sup>タル</sup>氣色<sup>モ</sup>无<sup>ク</sup>シテ、  
 御經<sup>ヨリ</sup>外<sup>ハ</sup>眼<sup>省</sup>ル<sup>方</sup>无<sup>シ</sup>。(Akagi-bunko-bon ‘Shintōshū,’ p. 378 [vol. 8, fol. 16’]; emphasis added)

*Sude ni Takai no iwaya ni tsuketsutsu, Munemitsu nie no tana ni nobotte, kitamuki ni suwaritsutsu, suishō no jiku shitaru Hokekyō [n]o himo o toki, uchiage uchiage dokuju seraru. Shibaraku arasete, daija wa ishi no to o oshi-hirakite idetari. Soṇo karaḍa o miru ni zo osoroshikere. Kubi wa shin no urushi o motte shichika hachika nuretaru ga gotoku shite, me wa akagumoikeru tei [?] o [e]ri-hametaru ni nitari. Kuchi ni wa shu o sashitaru ga gotoshi. Yoso nite miru ni mi no ke iyoioyō tate osoroshiki ni, mashite Munemitsu no kokoro no uchi suiryō serarete aware nari. Shikaredomo Munemitsu wa sukoshi mo osoretaru keshiki mo naku shite, on-kyō yori hoka wa me kubaru kata mo nashi.*<sup>33</sup>

Having arrived at the cave in Takai, Munemitsu climbed upon the immolation platform. He sat facing North, untied the cord [of a copy of] the Lotus Sūtra with a crystal roll and recited it with his voice raised. After a while, the giant serpent pushed open the stone door and came out. The sight of its body was frightening. The neck seemed to have been brushed seven or eight times with real lacquer, and the eyes resembled inlaid red, [like the] red [evening sun shining through] clouds. The mouth seemed as if vermilion had been applied. While one’s body hair already stands up in fright when seeing it from afar, how much more pitiful is it to imagine Munemitsu’s feelings. But Munemitsu did not show the slightest sign of fear, and except for the sūtra there was no direction in which he cast a look.

This passage is remarkable in how it makes us believe that the giant serpent's appearance is depicted from the point of view of the protagonist—because who else should be observing it? After the narrator invites us to imagine Munemitsu's 宗光 fear, he finally discloses that Munemitsu does not even look up from the text he is reading, leaving us to realize that the preceding lines have not really been focalized through him. Although this sort of play is highly exceptional, it seems to be the rule that the presence of the narrator is obvious even in those passages with the lowest narrative speed.

Presumably, the tales of the 'Shintōshū' were intended to be performed orally, and while this seems to have resulted in the presence of the narrator being particularly striking, the example of 'Hanazakura oru shōshō' suggests that a certain degree of narratorial presence was considered natural. Genette's (1986, p. 166) explanation of "mimesis being defined by a maximum of information and a minimum of the informer, diegesis by the opposite relationship" does not seem to apply to premodern Japanese narrative, since the quantity of narrative information and the degree of narratorial presence do not appear to be "in inverse ratio." Interestingly, Genette observes that Marcel Proust's 'À la recherche du temps perdu' ('In Search of Lost Time,' 1913–1927) is highly 'mimetic,' although the narrator is constantly present (Genette 1986, p. 167). He calls this effect "mediated intensity" (ibid., p. 168). At least in the 'Shintōshū,' where the presence of the narrator is created not only by honorifics and verbal suffixes but by strong evaluations, the intensity of the narrative seems not so much to decrease because of the mediation of the narrator as the intensity of its experientiality is enforced by his evaluations. In the sense that the narrator intensifies experience he does not appear to be an obstacle to small narrative distance.

As mentioned above, the concept of narrative distance is applied particularly in the context of speech and thought representation. This approach proves somewhat problematic regarding Japanese literature. First

and foremost, direct and indirect speech are often not grammatically distinct since there is no change of tense or syntax. Deictic expressions may provide important hints, but great care is required because most deictica are demonstratives that may also serve as anaphora, referring to something that has already been named (e.g., *sono*), and ‘pronouns’ are not only hardly used but are also often not restricted to one grammatical person. Moreover, there are no quotation marks in premodern Japanese manuscripts. If an utterance contains interjections or other indicators of orality, it may be taken as direct speech, and if it contains honorifics referring to the ‘original’ speaker, it may be considered indirect speech. But if neither is the case, which is likelier the shorter the utterance is, the distinction of direct and indirect speech is mostly arbitrary. If we compare different editions of the same text, we may notice that the classification of speech and thought representation may differ considerably.

For instance, the phrase *naniwaza suru naran to yukashikute* なにわさするならんとゆかしくて (Takamatsunomiya-bon ‘Tsutsumi chūnagon monogatari,’ pp. 86–87) is left this way in Ōtsuki Osamu’s edition (SNKBT 26: 51), while Inaga Keiji adds quotation marks (SNKBZ 17: 446; for a similar example, see section 3.1). Corresponding to the latter interpretation, Robert L. Backus translates: “‘What can they be doing?’ he thought curiously” (‘The Riverside Counselor’s Stories,’ p. 119). Although Ōtsuki appears to be quite careful, editors of premodern Japanese literature generally tend to consider almost anything followed by a quotation particle (*to*, *tote*, *nado*) direct speech. The following example from ‘Tosa nikki’ illustrates how confusing the results of this practice can be. This quote, which is written exclusively in phonographic script (*kana* 仮名) in the Seikei-shooku 青谿書屋 manuscript (p. 35 [fol. 10<sup>r</sup>]), contains quotation marks within quotation marks in both the SNKBT (24: 9) and the SNKBZ (13: 23) editions, as well as in the more recent edition by Higashihara Nobuaki (‘Shinpen Tosa nikki,’ p. 30) inspired by Mitani Kuniaki’s

*gensetsu bunseki* 言説分析 (‘discourse analysis’; see the introduction to this volume).

「「罷らず」とて立ちぬる人を待ちて詠まむ」とて求めけるを [...] (‘Tosa nikki,’ SNKBT 24: 9; emphasis added)

“‘Makarazu’ *tote* tachinuru hito o machite yomamu” *tote* motomekeru o [...]

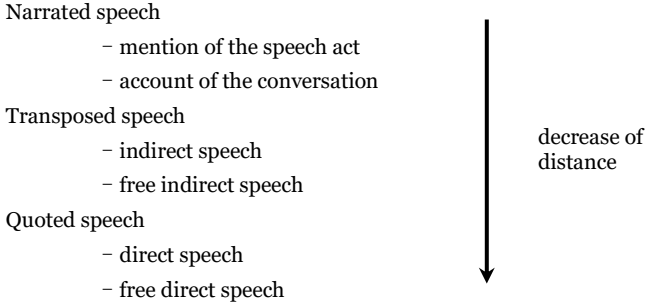
Helen Craig McCullough has translated the clause in a more natural way:

“I’ll wait for the gentleman who went away. He said he wasn’t leaving.”

Someone went in search of the man, but [...] (‘A Tosa Journal,’ trans. McCullough, p. 270)

The lack of a clear distinction between different types of speech representation and the relative obscurity, among Japanese scholars, of the concept of narrated speech have caused some scholars to interpret segments of narrated speech as indirect speech. For instance, Mitani (1978, p. 49) classifies the phrase *Yorozu no koto o naku naku chigiri-notamawasure-do* よろづのことを泣く / \ 契のたまはずれど (‘Under tears he promised her all kinds of things, but [...]’; ‘Genji monogatari,’ SNKBT 19: 7) as indirect speech (*kansetsu wahō* 間接話法), although *yorozu no koto* (‘all kinds of things’) is clearly not a direct quote but an expression the narrator uses to summarize what has been said.<sup>34</sup> The designation of narrated speech as indirect speech in turn appears to have strengthened the tendency to interpret anything followed by the particle *to*, *tote*, and *nado* as direct speech, without considering the possibility of indirect speech. Stinchecum (1980, pp. 376–377) adheres to this rule with regard to classical literature, whereas in her discussion of modern Japanese she does not (see *ibid.*, p. 378). It is, however, not plausible why this rule should only apply to classical texts—or even apply at all, for that matter.

Martínez and Scheffel (2016, p. 66) present a detailed account of different types of speech representation in relation to narrative distance:



This chart shows that direct speech and indirect speech are not the only categories to be taken into account. In fact, direct and indirect speech are not even next to each other regarding narrative distance, with free indirect speech placed between them. The same holds true for free direct and free indirect speech, which are not always distinguishable, as the following quote demonstrates:

別當惠美僧正急キ上洛シテ、事ノ由ヲ委細ニ奏聞セラルレハ、帝ハ大ニ御逆鱗有テ、国ヲ鎮シト下シタル甲斐无。伽藍堂舎ヲ亡ス条不思議ナリ。北陸道ノ末ニ、佐渡ノ嶋ニ流ラレ  
[→流サル]<sup>35</sup>へキ由ノ、追立ノ檢 [→檢/檢] 非違使等遣シ下サルへ。(Akagi-bunko-  
bon ‘Shintōshū,’ p. 336 [vol. 7, fol. 17<sup>v</sup>]; emphasis added)

*Bettō Emi [no] sōjō isogi shōraku shite, koto no yoshi o isai ni sōmon serarureba, mikado wa ōki ni go-gekirin atte, kuni o shizumen to kudashitaru kai nashi. Garan dōsha o horobosu jō fushigi nari. Hokurikudō no sue. Sado no shima ni naga[saru] beki yoshi no, oitate no kebiishi nado tsukawashikudasaruru.*

The abbot Emi no Sōjō hastened up into the capital and gave [the Emperor] a most detailed account of what had happened. The Emperor was very infuriated; it had been in vain to send [Yukitaka] down to bring peace to the province. It was inconceivable that he had destroyed the buildings of the temple complex. He should be exiled to the island of Sado at the end of the North Land Road; with this order he dispatched, among others, a *kebiishi* for eviction.

The noun *yoshi* 由, which refers to the content of an utterance (here translated as ‘this order’), marks the end of the narrated (summarized) order by

the emperor. Yet, the evaluation of Yukitaka's 知隆 deeds does not seem to be part of the order. We can therefore conclude that a quotation particle has been omitted. In Japanese, quotation particles can assume a function similar to that of tag clauses in Indo-European languages, since a verb is not necessarily required to mark an utterance. Above, the emperor's evaluation is translated as free indirect speech, but considering that it contains no verbal suffixes or honorifics signaling the narrator's presence, it could also be interpreted as free direct speech. Referring to Martínez's and Scheffel's chart, the emperor's evaluation may either create smaller or larger distance than direct speech, which is situated between free indirect and free direct speech. Thus, focusing on speech representation it is not possible to classify the distance in this particular example as either average or extremely small.

This paradox suggests that it may not be valid to take speech representation as a criterion when analyzing distance in premodern Japanese narrative. It seems to me that that the degree of detail or narrative speed, the second criterion in Genette's definition, promises much more reliable results when determining narrative distance. Moreover, by defining distance in this way it is not only easier to apply in textual analysis, also the objection that distance is a mere subset of perspective cannot be raised.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is my hope that I have drawn attention to some linguistic characteristics of classical and medieval Japanese narrative. To sum it up briefly, the concept of grammatical person seems not helpful for the analysis of Japanese texts because pronouns are seldom used and many of them are not limited to one grammatical person. While the presence of the narrator in Japanese texts therefore seems faint at first glance, verbal suffixes and auxiliary verbs serve to create a constant narratorial presence. The regulation of this kind of presence, strong in quantity while weak in quality, plays a crucial part in focalization. The example of 'Hanazakura oru

shōshō' shows how *-keri* and *-tamau* emphasize the perspective of the narrator, whereas the lack of such expressions intensifies focalization through a character. At the same time, these nuances, although vital for comprehending premodern Japanese narrative, cannot be translated into Indo-European languages. On the one hand, translations adhering to Western linguistic and literary conventions, which entail the necessity to choose a grammatical person and to name a subject, construct new narrative versions that are much clearer in meaning compared to the original Japanese texts.<sup>36</sup> But on the other hand, expressions marking changes of perspective or 'narrative postures' are often lost entirely, depriving the text of features vital to the narrative.

Besides first- and third-person narration, there are other basic concepts of classical narratology that also do not seem to apply to premodern Japanese narrative, particularly the opposition of 'homodiegesis' and 'heterodiegesis.' The use of honorifics with regard to fictive characters suggests that the narrator belongs to the same reality as the characters in the story. At the same time, the narrator's knowledge clearly exceeds that of the characters. A more accurate way to describe the narrators in premodern Japanese literature is Kendall L. Walton's distinction of 'reporting' and 'storytelling narrators.' These categories do not refer to the ontological status of the narrator and are therefore not mutually exclusive. The hybrid nature of Japanese narrators can be traced back not only to linguistic conventions, especially the use of honorifics, but also to premodern conceptions of literature, since fictionality was deemed problematic and narrators were expected to mask their tales as accounts of real events that they heard or read of. In this sense, the ladies-in-waiting informing the narrator of the 'Genji monogatari' may even be regarded as personalized forms of *-keri*.

In premodern Japanese texts, narrative distance appears to be defined mainly by narrative speed, while the presence of the narrator does not necessarily lead to large distance. Speech representation as a criterion

measuring narrative distance seems to be valid only under certain circumstances. This in turn leaves us with the question of whether there is a historical and/or cultural difference, not only regarding degrees of narrative distance but also the way distance functions, or whether distance as a universal concept has to be reconsidered. I have proposed to define distance only through the second criterion named by Genette, i.e. narrative speed, which relates to the degree of detail in a given text segment. This allows us to deal with narratorial presence within the context of perspective, without distance becoming a subset of perspective and therefore superfluous as a category of its own.

As stated at the outset, this article is concerned only with basic linguistic conditions of Japanese narrative and the implications these may have for definitions of narratological concepts. A more comprehensive theory of Japanese narrative would also have to account for plot structures, the representation of characters, and issues pertaining time and space. For this it would also be necessary to draw clearer distinctions between historical periods, genres, and individual texts. Moreover, while this study uses modern narratological theory as its framework, it would be intriguing to contrast its premises and conclusions with historical conceptions of narrative as we may find them in medieval commentaries on Japanese classics.

## Notes

- 1 There have, for instance, been attempts to create a typology of premodern forms of speech representation, such as Stinchecum 1980. But, as will be shown below (p. 92 and note 34), certain aspects of this model remain problematic.
- 2 This article draws on research for my doctoral thesis, which explains the issues discussed here in greater detail and has been submitted to LMU Munich under the title 'Narratologie und vormoderne japanische Literatur. Theoretische Grundlagen, Forschungskritik und sprachlich bedingte Charakteristika japanischen Erzählens' ('Narratology and Premodern Japanese Literature. Theory, Critique of Research, and Linguistic Characteristics of Japanese Narrative') in March 2019. While in Genette's theory 'mood' is generated by 'distance' and



‘perspective,’ I further propose ‘determinacy’ as an additional category of particular importance to Heian-period (794–1185) prose, in which the grammatical subject is not always clear. It seems that a poetic effect could be created by deliberately leaving the subject of an action, speech, thought, feeling, or perception indistinct. I argue that, whereas distance concerns the quantity of narrative information and perspective its quality (Genette 1988, p. 43), determinacy marks its degree of coherence.

- 3 The translations of chapter titles from ‘Genji monogatari’ are those by Royall Tyler (‘The Tale of Genji,’ 2003).
- 4 As in the case of *itōshi* いとをし, which is usually written *itōshi* いとほし, the standardized old orthography is given in brackets in the following quotes from SNKBT.
- 5 Cf. Murakami Fuminobu’s expression ‘person-less sentences’ (Murakami 2009, pp. 81, 84, 89). The term *muninshō* has also been used by Fujii Sadakazu 藤井貞和, for instance in a 1994 article (Yoda 2004, p. 165). Tomiko Yoda’s translation “zero-person” is somewhat unfortunate, since Fujii later distinguishes, among others, between *muninshō* and *zeroninshō* ゼロ人称—though his theory itself is problematic, as Jinno Hidenori’s points out in his paper in this volume.
- 6 Jinno 2016b, pp. 107–108, 115, 117. See also Jinno’s article in this volume, as well as Balmes 2017, pp. 99, 101–102; 2018, pp. 12, 16–18, 21–23. Yoda also questions the applicability of grammatical person to classical Japanese narratives, arguing that *ware*, commonly regarded as a first-person pronoun, in the ‘Kagerō no nikki’ かげろふの日記 (see below) refers to the protagonist without pointing to the speaker of the discourse or suggesting the identity of the two (Yoda 2004, pp. 186–204, esp. pp. 196–197). See note 15.
- 7 Speaker (‘first person’): *a*, *wa*; addressee (‘second person’): *na*; interrogative: *ta*. In addition, Lewin gives the ‘third-person pronoun’ *shi*, but since this is a demonstrative which can also refer to inanimate objects (see p. 65), it is hardly appropriate to consider it one of the ‘real personal pronouns’ (“echte[] Personalpronomen”; Lewin 2003, p. 8).
- 8 The transliteration follows the interpretation given in SNKBZ 1: 45. Since it is not altogether clear how the predominantly Sinographic text of the ‘Kojiki’ was transposed into spoken Old Japanese, Japanese ‘readings,’ which are strongly influenced by the work of early modern scholars, particularly Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), remain mere interpretations (Antoni 2012, pp. 389–390, 393–394).

- 9 This use of *mikoto*, which was then written 尊, seems to be somewhat restricted since both ‘Nihon kokugo daijiten’ (NKD) and ‘Ōbunsha Zen’yaku kogo jiten’ quote examples from the ‘Konjaku monogatari shū’ 今昔物語集 (‘Collection of Tales Now Long Past,’ early 12<sup>th</sup> c.), while ‘Kadokawa Kogo daijiten’ (KKD), although being more detailed than the dictionary by Ōbunsha, does not give this function at all. It would appear exaggerated to consider *mikoto* addressing the listener a pronoun.
- 10 In a more specific sense, Classical Japanese refers to the standardized written language (*bungo* 文語) that is mostly based on twelfth-century spoken Japanese (Frellesvig 2011, p. 2).
- 11 The term *setsuwa* refers to a wide range of texts, such as folk tales, Buddhist legends, and historical anecdotes. In general, they were transmitted orally before being written down and are didactic in nature.
- 12 The quoted manuscript, the Akagi-bunko-bon 赤城文庫本 dating from the year Meiō 3 (1494), is somewhat ambivalent regarding whether it should read *on-mi wa* or *on-mi ni*. I opted for the alternative easier to comprehend, *wa* also being the particle that is used in Edo-period (1603–1868) manuscripts that have *waga mi wa* without *on-* (‘Shintōshū. Tōyō-bunko-bon,’ p. 231; ‘Shintōshū. Kōno-bon,’ p. 114). The scribe of the Shōkōkan-bon 彰考館本, an exact copy of the Akagi-bunko-bon, chose to write *ni* rather than *wa* (Shōkōkan-bon ‘Shintōshū,’ p. 329 [vol. 7, fol. 20<sup>r</sup>]), and Okami Masao and Takahashi Kiichi also read *ni* in their transcription of the Akagi-bunko-bon (‘Shintōshū,’ p. 213). This version stresses the corporeal quality of *on-mi*, which also means ‘body’ (a literal rendition of *waga on-mi ni* would be ‘on his body’). Be that as it may, whether we read *wa* or *ni* has no implications for the function of *waga*.
- 13 This is the title as it is suggested at the end of the first book in the diary itself: *kagerō no nikki to iu beshi* かげろふの日記といふべし (SNKBT 24: 94), “this could be called the diary of a mayfly or the shimmering heat on a summer’s day” (‘The Kagerō Diary,’ trans. Arntzen, p. 163). While *kagerō* can mean both, the title on manuscripts is usually written ‘Kagerō nikki’ 蜻蛉日記 with the Chinese characters for ‘mayfly.’
- 14 This is also the case in the version printed in Tenroku 10 (1697) by the publisher Tennōjiya Gen’emon 天王寺屋源右衛門 ([online](#) in the National Diet Library [NDL] Digital Collections), which was closely followed by later editions such as the one published in Hōreki 6 (1756) by Yasui Kahē 安井嘉兵衛 ([online](#) in the NDL Digital Collections; also [online](#) on the website of the Waseda University Library).

- 15 This count includes one instance of *waga mi* ('myself,' 'my body'), which in dictionaries is treated as an expression of its own. For detailed references, refer to Balmes 2017, pp. 99, 116–117; 2018, p. 16. Yoda (2004, pp. 187–189) stresses that *ware* always refers to the protagonist, usually considered the narrator's former self, and never to her present self. This also seems to be true for *waga*, although for an expression such as *waga ie* わが家 ('my home'; section 20, SNKBT 24: 51; in the facsimile of the Katsuranomiya manuscript, see p. 14 [vol. 1, fol. 7<sup>v</sup>]) this distinction can hardly be made. Following Fukazawa Tōru 深澤徹 and taking up Tokieda Motoki's 時枝誠記 somewhat simplistic distinction between objective nominals (*shi* 詞) and subjective verbal suffixes and particles (*ji* 辞), Yoda argues that in 'Kagerō no nikki' *shi*, including words that are usually considered personal pronouns, only point to the narrator's former self, while her present perspective is only expressed by *ji* (ibid., pp. 189–190, 192–193). However, in her discussion of instances where the narrator uses *hito* to refer to herself (ibid., pp. 185–186) she overlooks several examples, including *toshitsuki mishi hito* とし月見し人 ('the one who has consorted [with him] for months and years'; SNKBT 24: 67; see below in the main text). This expression clearly refers to the narrator's present self, which is also reflected in modern Japanese translations (SNKBZ 13: 129–130; see also p. 287 of Kawamura Yūko's translation) as well as in the translation by Arntzen ('The Kagerō Diary,' p. 113). It does not seem plausible that only *-shi* (see below in the main text) should point to the narrator's present self whereas *hito* should refer to her past self, although her present self is the subject of the sentence.
- 16 The expression *tomaru hito* is used in sections 9 and 15 (SNKBT 24: 44, 48), *tomaru wa* in sections 47 and 49 (SNKBT 24: 74, 76). *Yuku hito* is employed in sections 9 and 47. The numbers follow those in Kagerō nikki zenchūshaku 蜻蛉日記全注釈, ed. by Kakimoto Tsutomu 柿本奨, vol. 1, Tōkyō: Kadokawa shoten 角川書店 (Nihon koten hyōshaku, zenchūshaku sōsho 日本古典評釈・全注釈叢書), 1966. In the facsimile of the Katsuranomiya manuscript, see pp. 7, 12, 44, 47 (vol. 1, fols. 4<sup>r</sup>, 6<sup>v</sup>, 22<sup>v</sup>, 24<sup>r</sup>).
- 17 Section 39 (SNKBT 24: 67). See p. 35 of the facsimile of the Katsuranomiya manuscript (vol. 1, fol. 18<sup>r</sup>).
- 18 "I, the one who is to stay" ('The Kagerō Diary,' trans. Arntzen, p. 67); "I who am to be left behind" (p. 73); "Despite my having consorted with this most fortunate man for months and years" (p. 113); "I" (p. 123); "as for me who was to stay behind" (p. 125).

- 19 Applying the category ‘tense’ to classical Japanese literature easily leads to confusion. For instance, H. Richard Okada (1991, pp. 18, 35–37, 41) has argued that Japanese is ‘tenseless’ when no verbal suffixes such as *-ki* and *-keri* are used. Yet, his concept of ‘tenselessness’ is contradictory because he both distinguishes it from and equates it with the present tense (see *ibid.*, esp. p. 179). His use of the present tense in translations from Heian-period texts is criticized by Haruo Shirane (1994, p. 225) as a “serious distortion” that creates “a sense of deviance that does not occur when reading Heian narratives in Japanese.” Nevertheless, this contradictory approach can sometimes be seen in other, more recent studies as well, such as Murakami 2009. Itoi Michihiro also contrasted *-keri* with historical present tense (*rekishiteki genzaihō* 歴史の現在法) in a 1987 article (Itoi 2018, pp. 12, 15), but took an opposite view in 1992 (*ibid.*, p. 28)—it would have been desirable to revise the older article for its republication in 2018. While tense as a grammatical category has sometimes been rejected with regard to Japanese altogether (e.g. Matsumura 1971, p. 549), this is by no means the consensus among linguists. However, it seems to me that it is not helpful to refer to a fluctuating tense in narratological discussion of Japanese texts, let alone to translate in a way that creates contradictions by pretending to be more exact than is possible. We can neither translate a Japanese text into a European language without making choices regarding person and tense, nor is there a way to adequately reflect the Japanese TAM (tense–aspect–mood) system. Furthermore, before one contrasts *-keri* with ‘tenselessness,’ one should consider the sense of ‘immediacy’ *-keri* creates (see pp. 72–73 of this paper) and perhaps also note Käte Hamburger’s concept of the ‘epic preterite,’ according to which the preterite loses its temporal function in ‘third-person’ narrative and instead serves to mark the narrative as fiction (Hamburger 1980, pp. 63–78). In fact, Bruno Lewin (2003, p. 162) in his grammar describes the function of *-keri* as ‘epic preterite,’ although he does not explicitly refer to Hamburger or give her book as a reference, nor does he question *-keri* as past tense. It is, of course, not my intention to propose that we transfer Hamburger’s concept onto *-keri*, or uncritically accept her theory, for that matter. Yet, even if one does not assume the loss of past tense in fiction altogether, her argument cannot be dismissed that easily, and the parallels to Japanese narrative seem worth considering.
- 20 Another example occurs in the chapter ‘Makibashira’ 真木柱 (‘The Handsome Pillar’):

そのほどのありさま、言はずとも思ひやりつべきことぞかし。(‘Genji monogatari,’ SNKBT 21: 144)

*Sono hodo no arisama, iwazu to mo omoiyaritsu beki koto zo kashi.*

“All this is easily imagined, though, and there is no need to insist.” (‘The Tale of Genji,’ trans. Tyler, p. 543)

I did not use Tyler’s translation for the quote from ‘Otome’ because he adds the pronoun ‘you’ (“You can imagine what his letter was like”; p. 396).

- 21 Only the last two of the eight manuscripts that were compared by Fujii Sadakazu (SNKBT 18: v) contain the phrase *kakazu to mo* かゝすとも, the other six write かすとも, which does not appear to make sense (SNKBT 18: 288, note 2).
- 22 When the particle *ka* is used, the predicate has to be used in the attributive form, but *arikeri* at the end of the sentence is given in the final form. Thus, we may conclude that *arikemu* was omitted after *ka*, corresponding to the first phrase in the later variants of the mid-tenth century ‘Ise shū’ 伊勢集 (‘Poetry Collection of Lady Ise’): *Izure no ōn-toki ni ka arikemu* いつれの御時にかありけむ, ‘In whose reign could it have been?’ (Mitani 2002, p. 45; see also Mostow 2004, pp. 144–145 on the opening of ‘Ise shū’).
- 23 Mitani Kuniaki (2002, pp. 44–45) classifies the clause as a *sōshiji* of doubting’ (*ibukashigari no sōshiji* 訝しがり of the 草子地). Furthermore, Nakanoin Michikatsu’s 中院通勝 (1558–1610) ‘Mingō nisso’ 岷江入楚 (1598), which compiles the content of preceding commentaries on the ‘Genji monogatari,’ contains the following remark in an explanation of a *sōshiji*: ‘Same as the phrase: In whose reign can it have been?’ (*Izure no ōn-toki ni ka to iu kotoba to onaji* いづれの御ときにかといふ詞とおなじ). Thus, Michikatsu interprets the first sentence of the ‘Genji monogatari’ as a *sōshiji* (ibid., p. 44). However, it is not quoted in Enomoto Masazumi’s (1982) list of 1,062 *sōshiji* that are designated as such in at least one of 32 premodern and modern commentaries.
- 24 The ‘Mumyōzōshi’ 無名草子 (‘The Nameless Book,’ between 1196 and 1202) names 29 fictional but only two factual *monogatari* (Konishi 1986, p. 252). On the belief that stories should not be made up, see Balmes 2015. The following quotes taken from the beginning and the end of ‘Hanada no nyōgo’ はなだの女御 (‘The Flower Ladies’), a short narrative which was probably written in the eleventh century and is contained within the ‘Tsutsumi chūnagon monogatari’ 堤中納言物語 (‘The Riverside Counselor’s Stories’), serve as a good example for a narrator stressing the truthfulness of her tale (although there is also the pos-

sibility that the second quote is a comment that was added by someone who copied the tale):

「そのころの事」と、あまたみゆる人まねのやうに、かたはらいたけれど、これは聞きし事なればなん。(‘Tsutsumi chūnagon monogatari,’ SNKBT 26: 72)

*“Sono koro no koto” to, amata miyuru hitomane no yō ni, katawara itakeredo, kore wa kikishi koto nareba nan.*

I feel silly starting off with the phrase, “Once it happened that...,” the way so many people begin a story, but I do so because it is something I heard about that happened. (‘The Riverside Counselor’s Stories,’ trans. Backus, p. 167)

これらつくりたるさまもおぼえず、よしなきもののおさまを、そら事にもあらず。世の中に、そら物がたり多かれば、誠ともや思はざるらむ。これ思こそねたけれ。(‘Tsutsumi chūnagon monogatari,’ SNKBT 26: 81)

*Korera tsukuritaru sama mo oboezu, yoshinaki mono no sama o, soragoto ni mo arazu. Yo no naka ni, sora-monogatari ōkareba, makoto to mo ya omowazaru ramu. Kore omou koso netakere.*

Nor do these things appear to have been invented. What nonsense they sound like! But at the same time they are not falsehoods. Because there are so many fictional tales in the world, I fear that you do not believe this story to be true. It is certainly annoying to think that that is the case! (‘The Riverside Counselor’s Stories,’ trans. Backus, p. 183)

- 25 A female official in the Palace Attendants Bureau (*naishi no tsukasa* 内侍司), which received requests for audiences with the emperor, transmitted imperial orders, and was responsible for ceremonies in the empress’ palace (*kōkyū* 後宮).
- 26 Tamagami 1966 discusses *sōshiji* on pp. 150–152 and 254–261. Yet, he refrains from using the term *sōshiji* and rather opts for expressions such as ‘remarks on omissions or of evaluative nature’ (“shōryaku hihyō no kotowarigaki 省略批評のことわり書き”; p. 252), even though he uses the old terms for speech and thought, *kotoba* 詞 and *kokoro* 心 (pp. 253, 257), and his theory contributed to a reevaluation of medieval commentaries (Jinno 2016a, p. 130).
- 27 See also Shirane’s (2005, pp. 98, 115–116, 124) comments on *-mu*, *beshi*, and *-ji*, according to which the subject is the first person if the suffixes are used to express an intention.
- 28 The concept of ‘experientiality’ was introduced to narratological theory by Monika Fludernik (1996). According to her theory, experientiality is what constitutes narrativity, so that the two terms can be used interchangeably. Other authors have argued that while every narrative requires experientiality, this

- concept alone is not sufficient to define narrativity (Caracciolo 2014, pars. 1, 9–10).
- 29 Robert L. Backus translates this phrase somewhat more freely: “Deceived by the moon into thinking it was dawn, he had risen in the depths of night from the bed where she must still be lying, wondering why he had gone, alas [...]” (‘The Riverside Counselor’s Stories,’ p. 13).
- 30 *-keri* appears once in the non-focalized text (SNKBT 26: 8) and twice at the end of the text, where the narrator evaluates the outcome of the story (SNKBT 26: 9–10).
- 31 Tobias Klauk and Tilmann Köppe (2014, pars. 13–20) summarize seven ways in which narrative distance, or ‘showing’ and ‘telling,’ have been defined. If we exclude the last definition, which is based not on the text but on the reader, there is only one that cannot be traced back to narratorial presence: the second criterion in Genette’s model (see below). For an analysis of the different definitions, see my dissertation (note 2).
- 32 The full title is ‘Kōzuke no kuni Nawa Hachirō no daimyōjin no koto’ 上野国那波八郎大明神事 (‘On Hachirō no Daimyōjin of Nawa in Kōzuke Province’). It is the forty-eighth chapter of the ‘Shintōshū,’ contained within the eighth volume. For a translation of the whole chapter, see Dykstra 1978, pp. 75–79.
- 33 The transliteration reflects the corrections that I made in the original text.
- 34 Stinchecum also seems to interpret narrated speech as indirect speech. As one example of indirect speech she quotes the phrase *ito meyasuku ureshikaru beki koto ni omoite* いとめやすくうれしかるべきことに思て (SNKBT 23: 227), which she renders into English as “she feels it to be a highly proper and pleasing thing” (Stinchecum 1980, p. 376). Thus, Stinchecum opts for narrated speech in her translation herself, instead of using indirect speech: ‘she feels (that) it is [...].’ On the problems that arise when employing the present tense in translations of Japanese literature, see note 19.
- 35 Since *nagarare* is not grammatical, it should be changed to *nagasaru* (causative-passive).
- 36 Even if we have no doubts about the subject being a ‘third person,’ the gender—another grammatical category absent in Japanese—implied by the pronoun gives an important clue to which character the narrator refers to. While in theory it is possible to employ the passive voice to avoid mentioning the subject, the resulting translation would undoubtedly be considered fairly strange by its readers and cause an effect not aimed for by the author. Also, the passive voice already existed in the Japanese language, even if it was relatively seldom used

until the influence of Western languages led to its increase at the end of the nineteenth century. Before the modern period, the verbal suffixes *-ru* and *-raru*, which were used to indicate the passive voice (a function that probably derived from their original function to signal spontaneity or, in Lewin's [2003, pp. 152–153] words, 'medium'), mainly served as honorific expressions.



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### Abbreviations

- NKD Nihon kokugo daijiten 日本国語大辞典  
KKD Kadokawa Kogo daijiten 角川古語大辞典  
SNKBT Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikai 新日本古典文学大系  
SNKBZ Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū 新編日本古典文学全集

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