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From Naming and Seeing to Posthumous Judgments

How to Read Character in 'The Tale of the Heike'

Abstract. Some eight hundred individuals are named in the lengthy medieval Japanese war tale 'The Tale of the Heike' in the version for oral recitation set down in the year 1371. Episodes set before or during battles often include long lists of the combatants on both side, identified by name, title, or place of origin. Scenes of dialogue or action characterize selected individuals with details of their arms and clothing, through their speech or actions, with direct physical description used relatively sparingly. This paper examines the war tale's naming conventions and its use of devices like focalization, showing and telling, and posthumous judgments on characters. Among issues discussed are questions of how listeners and readers gradually build up an understanding of prominent characters, and how what seems inconsistent portrayal of key characters results from the narrative being written and edited by many hands, mixing fact and fiction.

1. Introduction

The decades in Japanese history corresponding to the years from the 1150s to the 1180s were a turbulent period of change, riven by factional strife at the imperial court, power struggles between major religious centers, and armed conflict involving two military houses, the Minamoto 源 (or Genji 源氏) and the Taira 平 (Heike 平家). These conflicts are the focus

of the medieval Japanese war tale 'Heike monogatari' 平家物語 ('The Tale of the Heike'), a work that was transmitted in oral and written versions from the early thirteenth century and survives today in many variants, including one for oral performance set down in 1371, the Kakuichi version (Kakuichi-bon 覚一本) that is the focus of this study. In its account of the decisive naval battle of Dan-no-ura 壇浦 in 1185, the 'Tale of the Heike' gives an unflattering description of one of the main characters on the side of the Genji. A leading samurai called Kagekiyo 景清 is ordered to hunt for the enemy leader, Yoshitsune 義経. His commander tells him how to recognize Yoshitsune, whom he calls 'Gen Kurō' 源九郎, literally the ninth son of the Genji.

> 「同じくは大将軍の源九郎にくん給へ。九郎は色白うせいちいさきが、むかばのことにさしいでてしるかんなるぞ。ただし直垂と鎧を常に着かふなれば、きッと見わけがたかんなり」('Heike monogatari,' SNKBZ 46: 373–374)

> "If you are going to fight, then fight with the Commander-in-Chief Gen Kurō. Kurō is fair-skinned and short in stature, with buck teeth, so people say he is easy to recognize. But as he changes his robe and armor all the time, he won't be easy to recognize, they say." (KbHM 11.7 'The Cockfights and the Battle at Dan-no-ura'; M 374, T 605)[1]

With traits like these, he should be to distinguish from other Genji warriors, but he evades recognition by frequently changing his *hitatare* 直垂 robe and armor. Later, the leading Heike commander Noritsune 教経 also goes in search of Yoshitsune. Because he does not know what Yoshitsune looks like (*Hōgan o mishiri-tamawaneba* 判官を見しり給はねば), he goes about looking closely at well-armed warriors (*mononogu no yoki musha* 物の具のよき武者; SNKBZ 46: 387).[2] When he finally sees Yoshitsune, his light and nimble opponent escapes him by jumping a great distance into another boat, a feat that has come to be part of the legend of Yoshitsune, frequently represented in the visual arts from the medieval period through the Edo period (1603–1868) to contemporary Japan, where the scene appears in decorations for Japanese festivals (Watson 2003, pp. 5–13).

Just as physical traits, costume, and weapons are guides for warriors trying to recognize worthy opponents in battle, those of us reading this war tale through words or images learn to watch out for significant markers. In early illustrations of 'Heike monogatari' we can pick out commanders in a crowded scene of battle by looking for the distinctive helmet with hoe-shaped (*kuwagata* 鍬形) 'horns' worn by military leaders. Compare, for example, the scene of the last battle of Yoshitsune's cousin Yoshinaka 義仲 as illustrated in the seventeenth-century hand-painted version of 'Heike monogatari' in Princeton Library with the verbal description of his helmet in the text.[3] For readers of this work—or audiences who for centuries listened to it chanted by blind performers accompanying themselves on the lute (*biwa* 琵琶)—the conventional textual descriptions of arms and armor function both to call attention to characters of importance on the battlefield and to provide a dramatic pause before scenes of intense physical action, like the warrior's victory or defeat in battle.

We should not attempt to read character in 'Heike monogatari' as an artifact of authorial intent. The *Urtext* of 'Heike monogatari,' if one ever existed, cannot be reconstructed. None of the surviving variants of 'Heike monogatari' is the creation of a single author. They are all the product of a variety of oral and written sources concerning both fact and fiction, retold with much freedom and edited by many hands over many decades.[4]

Editorial changes by those who created new variants by partial or wholesale revision may have sharpened or altered the details of the historical as well as invented persons appearing in the text. Some scholars have been tempted to credit Akashi no Kakuichi 明石覚一, the head of a line of *biwa* performers, with a major role in editing the Kakuichi variant, the version best known today (Ruch 1977; Tyler 2012, pp. xx–xxi). This text is extant in manuscripts that contain a colophon stating that Kakuichi dictated an authorized version of the text to a disciple in 1371, but the extent of his role in making major editorial changes or revisions remains unclear.

Rather than investigating the possible examples of 'character portrayal' resulting from editorial changes, this paper will consider the issue of character from the opposite direction, in terms of reader reception. For readers and listeners, 'character' is an illusion built up over the course of an episode, sequence, or longer portion of the narrative. What creates the characters of Yoshitsune or Kiyomori in the imagination of the reader or listener is an amalgamation of many elements: the different ways that they are called, how they appear outwardly, how they act, speak, think and feel; how they are shown to interact with others and what others say or think about them. As these features are very wide-ranging, this paper will focus on four main areas—naming, seeing, showing/telling, and posthumous judgments—with each discussed in turn below.[5]

We look first at naming conventions, "the specific set of naming strategies used to identify and subsequently to refer to [a text's] characters" (Jahn 2017, N7.9).

2. Naming

Few works in the canon of Japanese literature refer to as many characters as the Heian courtly tale 'Genji monogatari' and the medieval 'Heike monogatari,' with estimates of around four hundred characters for the former (Nakano 1997, p. 8) and eight hundred for the latter (Nishizawa 2017), although the war tale is less than half the length of the courtly tale. How many characters are 'important' for readers to remember is a much more subjective judgment, but in both cases, it is possible to narrow this number down to a total between fifty characters for 'Genji monogatari' 源氏物語 and around one hundred characters for 'Heike monogatari.'[6] The two comparisons show the war tale to have around twice the number of characters in total as well as twice the number of 'important' characters than the longer courtly work. What is more striking is the difference in the use of names and appellations. The number of characters identified by name is far higher in the case of the war tale. Only one of the main fifty charac-

ters listed by Nakano (1995) from 'Genji monogatari' is known by a personal name, the hero's confidant Koremitsu 惟光. In the glossaries to 'Heike monogatari' cited above and in note 6 as well as in more comprehensive indices in Japanese editions (e.g. SNKBZ 46: 562–574), almost all of the characters included are referred to in the tale by their personal names like Yoshitsune, religious names like Shunkan 俊寛, or posthumous names for emperors like Antoku 安徳, with the main exceptions being some married women like the wife of Koremori 維盛, or women known only by their court names like Kozaishō 小宰相.

Most men and many women mentioned in 'Heike monogatari' are identified by some indication of name, rank, or title, often accompanied by details of their family or place of origin. Dozens of names like this appear in simple list form in episodes preceding major battles or campaigns. Eight of the nearly two-hundred 'sections" (*shōdan*) in the work have titles containing the term *-zoroe* 揃へ (translated 'array' or 'roster').[7] In the most detailed Western-language study of names in Japanese war tales, such lists are compared with the 'catalogues' of Greek states, leaders, and ships in Homer's 'Iliad' (Brisset 1999, pp. 123–130). In such lists, it is easy to miss the initial unobtrusive mentions of figures like Musashino Benkei 武蔵野弁慶 or Kagekiyo, warriors who will later play a significant role in the conflict as well as looming large in the subsequent textual and extratextual reception of the stories of the Genpei wars (*Genpei sōran* 源平争乱).

Kagekiyo, mentioned at the outset, is an interesting case in point. The longest reference to him is as *Kazusa no Akushichibyōe Kagekiyo* 上総の悪七兵衛景清 (SNKBZ 46: 362), which identifies his place of origin in Kazusa 上総, in an area east of modern Tokyo.[8] Akushichibyōe is an alternative name often used in direct speech, in conversations between warriors. The preface *aku* 悪 uses a glyph that normally means 'bad' or 'evil' but here provides a hint about his fierce character, as we see in expressions like *akusō* 悪僧 ('fierce monks') or other names like Akugenda Yoshihira

悪源太義平, an important figure of the previous Genji generation who is twice remembered in the text.[9] As one of the Samurai Commanders (*samurai taishō* 侍大将), Kagekiyo is mentioned last in two lists, though it could be argued that this position has the reverse effect of quietly calling attention to his name.[10] He is then mentioned in passing as a participant in several battles, without further details of his speech or actions. Only towards the end of the narrative does Kagekiyo finally live up to his 'fierce' name and become a memorable character in his own right. This happens through two speeches, both reminiscent of the flyting of medieval Scottish-English wars. In the first, he challenges the enemy warriors to attack him with a *nanori* 名乗り ('self-naming'), a speech naming himself,[11] while in the second, he addresses other Heike warriors with the hope of shaming them into attacking the Genji.[12]

Readers thus build up their impression of the warrior Kagekiyo over a large span of the narrative, from the first Genji-Heike clash in Book Four to last incidents of fighting at the end of the Book Twelve, the last of the numbered books of the Kakuichi variant. Whereas the tale records in detail the deaths of many higher-ranking warriors, Kagekiyo fades from the text in an inconspicuous way, mentioned as one of the four named Heike warriors continuing resistance after Dan-no-ura.[13]

In other textual traditions and in the performing arts, what happened to Kagekiyo later was the subject of much invention. The Noh play 'Kagekiyo' imagines him as a blind beggar in exile, whose daughter has come in search of him. The play ends with his powerful re-enactment of a famous episode from the battle of Yashima (SNKBZ 59: 312–325; translation in Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1959, pp. 137–139).

Readers of 'Heike monogatari' whether in the original or translation must learn to recognize that the same character can be named in more than one way. We have seen this with Kagekiyo and with Yoshitsune, referred to in our first quotation as *Taishōgun* 大将軍 ('Commander-in-Chief') *Gen Kurō* 源九郎 ('Genji Ninth Son'), then simply as *Kurō* 九郎. In

another example, he is called *Hōgan* 判官, the court rank of 'Police Lieutenant' that becomes one of his most frequent appellations in the text.

Some variations in nomenclature may be of significance, showing greater or lesser respect for the character. Over the course of the first half of the work, the major character is the Heike tyrant, Kiyomori 清盛. Plain *Kiyomori* appears very rarely, mainly in narrative passages, in references in speech to him as a young man, or in utterances by other characters, sometimes with intent to insult.[14] More commonly he is called by other names and appellations. Kiyomori's derogative nickname as an adolescent was 'Giant Heida' (*Taka Heida* 高平太; SNKBZ 45: 113), as the rebel Saikō 西光 reminds him to his fury.[15] His religious name Jōkai 浄海 is sometimes used by Kiyomori in referring to himself, as in his threatening letter to Giō 祇王,[16] but when used by others it is insulting, as in the letter from the Miidera 三井寺 monks attacking him.[17] *Nyūdō shōkoku* 入道相国 ('the Novice-Chancellor') is his most common appellation in the work, with *shōkoku* ('Chancellor') being the highest rank he obtains before 'entering the way' (*nyūdō*) and taking religious orders.[18] Finally, the respectful term *Kiyomori kō* 清盛公 ('Lord Kiyomori') is used from early accounts of his career[19] to the posthumous episodes in praise of him.[20]

Historians of medieval Japan have reminded us of how common it was for older historical sources to use a number of different names or titles for the same person (Mass 1992, pp. 91–127). A variety of appellations used for the same character is also typical of other Japanese narratives. Translators of 'Genji monogatari' have been faced with the problem of how to refer to characters like Genji's friend Tō-no-Chūjō 頭中将, the 'Secretary Captain,' whom the Japanese original refers to in different ways as he rises in rank.

When possible, English translators of 'Heike monogatari' have tried to reflect some of the variety in appellations of characters. Sometimes, however, the desire for readability outweighs other considerations, and they have chosen to simplify longer titles or substitute more familiar names

than those used in a specific passage. The original should always be consulted when tracing subtle changes in character reference.

"Since naming patterns often dovetail with characterization, point of view or focalization, they merit close stylistic analysis" (Jahn 2017, N7.9). Our discussion of 'naming' is an attempt to prove the value and viability of such an approach in the study of this premodern narrative. We now turn to passages involving 'seeing' and focalization.

3. Seeing

Another important way that readers and listeners form their idea of characters in this narrative are via descriptions like the one we opened with, a passage of direct speech in which a Heike commander explains how to recognize Yoshitsune: fair-skinned, short, with buck teeth. The last two details are unflattering. Yoshitsune's small stature was already hinted at in an earlier battle scene in which he risks his life to retrieve his lost bow so that the enemy do not recover the lightly strung bow and realize that he is not strong.[21] Fair skin is mentioned in the tale as a beautiful feature in women, but a sign of high rank in men. After their victory, Genji warriors hunt for male children with pale skin and fine features (*iro shirō mime yoki* 色白う見めよき; SNKBZ 46: 460), putting them to death on the assumption that they are children of the Heike in hiding.[22]

Descriptions of people's physical appearance are relatively uncommon in 'Heike monogatari,' making those that exist more noteworthy. There are many more examples mentioning powerful horses than strong or well-build men. Both horses in the famous race to be first across the Uji River are described with the same conventional expression, *kiwamete futō takemashiki* きはめてふとうたけましき, "very stout and brawny" (SNKBZ 46: 164; trans. McCullough, p. 287).[23] A character called Muneyasu 宗康 is described as being 'very fat' (*amari ni futotte* あまりにふとッて; SNKBZ 45: 137), but this point is not mentioned as a memorable detail in portray-

ing him, but rather to explain factually why his father Kaneyasu 兼康 is fatally held up in their escape from their pursuers.[24]

Before we examine cases of focalized description, we should look at one more example of description in the narrative text (*ji no bun* 地の文). The example of Kikuō 菊王, a young man killed in the battle of Yashima 八島, is revealing in how it combines a direct description of physical abilities with a conventional mention of costume (armor, helmet) and weaponry (halberd), ending with a burst of action (charge into the enemy ranks) and death. The passage on Kikuō begins by identifying his master Noritsune and continues with his name and a phrase describing his great strength and bravery (*Kikuō to iu daijikara no kō no mono* 菊王といふ大力の剛のもの; SNKBZ 46: 354).[25] Kikuō is killed by an arrow released at close quarters that penetrates right through his body, a fairly graphic description for a work that famously lacks much of the sanguinary detail of deaths in the *Iliad* or medieval European romance and epic (Selinger 2019).

Our last example comes from the sequence of three long sections that end Book Twelve relating how Rokudai 六代—Koremori's son, Kiyomori's great-grandson, and the last direct heir of the Heike family—survives from his twelfth year to his thirtieth. He is discovered in hiding, pardoned on the point of execution through the intercession of the monk Mongaku 文覚, who is moved to ask for a pardon by the boy's beauty. There are two key scenes of focalized description. The first comes after an informer reveals where Koremori's wife and two children are hiding. A retainer of Hōjō Tokimasa 北条時政 looks through "a crack in the fence" (*magaki no hima* 籬のひま) and sees a "handsome boy" (*utsukushige naru wakagimi* うつくしげなる若君) run out of a building in pursuit of a white puppy (SNKBZ 46: 461; trans. Tyler, p. 664).[26] The scene recalls the *kaimami* 垣間見 scenes of classical 'invented tales' (*tsukuri monogatari* 作り物語), such as the episode when Hikaru Genji 光源氏 first sees the young Murasaki 紫, while the unexpected results of a person exposed to view after a

pet escapes recalls the episode involving the Third Princess (Onna Sannomiya 女三宮), her cat, and Kashiwagi 柏木 ('Genji monogatari' ch. 5, 'Wakamurasaki' 若紫; ch. 35, 'Wakana jō' 若菜上; trans. Tyler, pp. 86, 620). The romantic consequences are absent in the case of Rokudai, of course, but the beauty of the young boy helps to save his life for a time. Even the puppy makes another appearance when Rokudai returns home safely.

The second, much more detailed description of Rokudai through another's perspective comes after Mongaku is asked to intercede to help Rokudai. Hearing from Tokimasa that the boy is 'extremely beautiful' (*nanome narazu utsukushū* なのめならずうつくしう), Mongaku asks to see him. Rokudai is closely described through Mongaku's eyes: his robe, prayer-beads, hair, figure (*sugata* すがた), and manner (*kotogara* 事がら). Even the marks of fatigue on his face from lack of sleep are said to add to a beauty not of this world (SNKBZ 46: 468–469).[27]

Narrating while 'seeing' a character from another character's perspective is one of a number of techniques used to intensify readers' emotional responses to the story of Rokudai. Narrating from the perspective of a character who does not directly 'see' the character in question is another: the narrative follows characters like the mother and nurse who are impatiently waiting for news, uncertain of what will happen, while important events are occurring elsewhere. Suspense and delayed explanation are two more: we hear only after Mongaku arrives at the execution site in the nick of time how he obtained a pardon.

In many instances, characters in 'Heike monogatari' are presented to us with a mixture of two techniques well known to classical narratology: 'showing' and 'telling' (Jahn 2017, N5.3.1).

4. Showing and Telling

From a philosophical point of view, it can be argued that the characters in a narrative are no more than a verbal construct, an illusion created in our

minds as we read or listen to the story (Jannidis 2013). Each time we come across a new detail relating to a character, we add it to the store of information we already have, building up a cumulative picture of the individual, much as we do for living people known only through what we have read or heard about them. In real life we are accustomed to there being many blanks in our information about someone known only indirectly. In others' anecdotes of friends and relatives, for example, we may have learnt something of their character traits but have little idea of their outward appearance. Alternatively, we may know what such people look like from photographs but know very little about their personality. This tolerance for gaps in our knowledge is easily transferred to characters heard or read about in tales.

In the case of an actual historical figure like Kiyomori, it is of course possible to refer to accounts external to 'Heike monogatari' such as the writings of contemporary court diarists or modern historians. Here we will restrict ourselves to what the narrative itself reveals, leaving aside all questions of fact or fiction.[28]

The audience of 'Heike monogatari' learns quickly that the tyrant Kiyomori is prone to sudden changes of mood; we build up the image of an irascible and willful tyrant. The extremes of emotion are well illustrated by the 'Giō' section (KbHM 1.6). His sudden bursts of anger are mentioned in many other passages.[29]

The fact that the narrative gives us only the vaguest idea of his physical appearance seems less important—unless we approach the tale with novelistic expectations fostered by writers like Walter Scott or Charles Dickens. When there is physical description of Kiyomori or other characters, what tends to be described is not their outward appearance (stature, countenance) so much as movements or gestures that reveal their inner feelings at that moment.

In the case of Kiyomori, one memorable example early in the tale is the account in Book Two of his unsuccessful attempt to hide from his son

Shigemori 重盛 the fact that he is attired for battle against the Retired Emperor. Kiyomori's headquarters at Nishihachijō 西八条 is on military alert, and bustling with armed men, but the virtuous Shigemori signals his disapproval of the intended attack on Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa (Goshirakawa-in 後白河院) by arriving in civil costume of *eboshi* 烏帽子 (court hat), *nōshi* 直衣 (court dress), and *sashinuki* 指貫 (gathered trousers).[30] The narrator tentatively suggests two things that Kiyomori 'may or must have thought,' the first in the form of a direct quotation of Kiyomori's internal speech, the second in the form of speculation about why Kiyomori chooses to withdraw and put a robe over his metal corselet (*haramaki* 腹巻). The direct quotation of thoughts is prefaced by a telling physical description, Kiyomori looking down. The passage is long, but contains many telling details:

> 入道ふし目になッて、「あはれ例の内府が、世をへうする様にふるまふ。大きに諫めばや」とこそ思はれけめども、さすが子ながらも、内には五戒をたもッて慈悲を先とし、外には五常を乱らず礼義をただしうし給ふ人なれば、あのすがたに、腹巻を着て向はむ事、おもばゆう恥づかしうや思はれけむ、障子をすこし引きたてて、素絹の衣を、腹巻の上に、あわて着に着給ひたりけるが、胸板の金物のすこしはづれて見えけるを、かくさうど、頻りに衣の胸を引きちがへ引きちがへぞし給ひける。(SNKBZ 45: 133–134)

> The Novice lowered his eyes (*fushime ni natte*). "Ah, the Palace Minister is behaving with his usual contempt for the world. I would so like to give him a thorough telling-off," he may have thought, but (*omowarekemedomo*) even though [Shigemori] was his own child (*ko nagara mo*), he was someone who put compassion first, keeping the Five Commandments of Buddhism, and was very proper in his behavior, not offending against the Five Constant Virtues of Confucianism, so that Kiyomori must have thought (*omowarekemu*) it would be shameful to meet him wearing a corselet when Shigemori was in [civil] attire. Thus, he partially closed the sliding door, and hurriedly (*awategi ni*) put on plain silk robe over his armor. But the metal of his breast plate could be seen a little, even though he pulled on the robe's labels hard (*shikiri ni*), again and again, in an effort to hide it.[31]

It is presumably out of shame that Kiyomori averts his eyes from Shigemori (SNKBT 44: 95, note 30). He finds himself unable to admonish his

own son. In the narrator's 'reconstruction' of how Kiyomori reacts, what holds him back most is his son's virtuous behavior. The speculative (*suiryō* 推量) form of the verbs of thinking, *omowarekemedomo* 思はれけめども and *omowarekemu* 思はれけむ, is the usual narrative device to report on what may have been going through a character's mind. Grounds for this supposition are provided by two external descriptions of Kiyomori: the mention of his lowered eyes, and the account of actions that immediately follows. He 'partially' closes the sliding door and 'hurriedly' puts a plain silk robe (*soken* 素絹) over his armor (*haramaki*), trying 'again and again' to pull up the lapels of the robe to hide the metal plates. The doubling of the verbs *hiki-chigae hiki-chigae* 引きちがへ引きちがへ, translated as "adjusted and readjusted" (trans. McCullough, p. 74) and "tugged [...] every which way" (trans. Tyler, p. 92), represents his repeated attempts to adjust his robe. What makes the description here effective is its use of the expressions *sukoshi* すこし, *awategi ni* あわて着に, and *shikiri ni* 頻りに, ('partially,' 'hurriedly,' 'hard'). The description of Kiyomori's hasty attempts to hide his armor serves to reveal to readers what his feelings might be at this juncture, his desire to avoid the embarrassment of appearing before his son in martial garb.

The unexpected is another aspect of character that we learn to accept in real life, both in people we are acquainted with and those we hear about (in others' anecdotes of friends and relatives, in reports of public figures). Indeed, there is often a pleasure in learning that someone's personality is more complicated than we had hitherto been led to believe. These attitudes are transferred to our encounters with narratives. While we generally count on there being basic consistency or coherence in a character's behavior as described in the narrative, at the same time we may also look forward to revelations of yet unseen or unimagined facets of personality. Before this example in Book Two, we have seen Kiyomori act in a high-handed way on numerous occasions, little concerned about what others think or feel. An early example is his apparent insensitivity to the feelings

of his mistress Giō when she is recalled and forced to dance before him. The narrative comments on how he was quite unaware of her feelings (*Giō ga kokoro no uchi o ba shiri-tamawazu* 祇王が心のうちをば知り給はず; SNKBZ 45: 43).[32] Now we must partially revise this assessment on the basis of what we see in the encounter with Shigemori. The text depicts him as wanting very much to scold Shigemori (*ōki ni isamebaya* 大きに諫めばや; SNKBZ 45: 133) but unable to do so because his son is a paragon of virtue.[33]

This is by no means the last time that Kiyomori acts unexpectedly, or rather in a way that we are told is unexpected. In the opening of Book Three, when his daughter is nearing the time when she will give birth to a child by Emperor Takakura 高倉, her condition is made worse by spirits, revealed by a medium to be the spirits of living and dead rebels.[34] Kiyomori gives posthumous pardon to two imperial rebels, but Shigemori suggests to him that an amnesty should also be granted to Naritsune 成経, one of the three Shishi-no-tani 鹿谷 conspirators exiled to the remote island of Kikai-ga-shima 鬼界が島. When Kiyomori asks what is to be done about the remaining two exiles, our attention is directed to his manner of speaking, quite unlike his usual hectoring tone:

> [...] 入道相国日ごろにも似ず、事の外にやはらいで、「さてさて俊寛と康頼法師が事はいかに」。(SNKBZ 45: 188)
>
> The Novice-Chancellor asked in a surprisingly mild manner (*koto no hoka ni yawaraide*) quite unlike his usual self (*higoro ni mo nizu*), "Well then, what is to be done about Shunkan and the monk Yasuyori?"[35]

When Shigemori suggests pardoning both men, however, Kiyomori categorically refuses to consider an amnesty for Shunkan. His apparent softening in this passage is effective, for it opens up the possibility of pardon for the third exile only to close it decisively. This calls attention to the special fate singled out for Shunkan, the focus of a sequence of episodes in Book Four. There is just one other occasion on which Kiyomori is de-

scribed as being moved to an act of mercy: his pardoning of Nobutsura 信連, who had acted bravely to win time for his master to escape.[36]

Kiyomori had earlier been shown to be sympathetic to the plight of Yasuyori 康頼. When a wooden grave marker or stupa (Jp. *sotoba* 卒都婆) inscribed with Yasuyori's poems and message is brought to the capital, Kiyomori shows pity because (as the narrator comments) even he is not without feeling, 'as even the Novice was not stone or wood' (*Nyūdō mo iwaki naraneba* 入道も石木ならねば; SNKBZ 45: 178).[37] The opening of the last section in Book Two relates how this uncharacteristic show of pity (*awaremi* あはれみ; SNKBZ 45: 179) by Kiyomori encourages others in the capital to recite Yasuyori's poem.[38]

In a passage from Book Six, it is suggested that Kiyomori comes to feel that he went too far in his treatment of Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa. Rather than a direct statement of his thoughts, the suggestion is made tentatively, as conjecture rather than direct statement. The key phrase is *osoroshi to ya omowareken* おそろしとや思はれけん, which could be translated more literally as 'must have thought [it was] frightening':

> 入道相国、かやうにいたくなさけなうふるまひおかれし事を、さすがおそろしとや思はれけん、[...] (SNKBZ 45: 441)
>
> In the end, the Novice-Chancellor may have thought it was a fearful thing (*osoroshi to ya omowareken*) to have behaved with such great cruelty.[39]

This refers to Kiyomori's cruel treatment of Go-Shirakawa and also, possibly, to his conduct toward Go-Shirakawa's son (and his own son-in-law), Takakura. Kiyomori makes amends by presenting Go-Shirakawa with one of his own daughters, born to an attendant of the Itsukushima Shrine (Itsukushima Jinja 厳島神社). This incident is related in Book Six, after the narrator reminds us of some of Kiyomori's many 'evil deeds' (*akugyō* 悪行), which included the destruction of a major temple in Nara 奈良, the move of the capital to Fukuhara 福原, and actions that hastened the death of his son-in-law, Emperor Takakura.His mistrust of Go-Shirakawa is one of the chief themes of Book One. Books Three to Five describe how Ki-

yomori acts against both Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa and his son Emperor Takakura. In 1179, Go-Shirakawa is removed from the capital and kept in an isolated 'palace' in Toba 鳥羽, causing Takakura much anguish.[40] In 1180, Go-Shirakawa is taken to the new capital of Fukuhara and confined in still worse conditions.[41] Takakura is also taken to Fukuhara, where his health continues to suffer.[42] It is as a result of actions like these, the Kakuichi version claims, that Kiyomori contributed to the early death of Retired Emperor Takakura in 1181.[43]

The examples we have looked at so far have been a mixture of narration (*ji no bun*) concerning Kiyomori, such as narratorial description of his manner of speech and his actions, and direct discourse by him. Character traits can be directly communicated by the narrator, or the person in question can be made to reveal them indirectly by speech or action. There is a third possibility, however, and that is presentation through the comments or perception of a third party. Kiyomori's propensity to lose his temper is commented on by numerous other characters: by Shigemori in prayer at Kumano 熊野,[44] by anonymous witnesses of his angry attack on the high-ranking monk, Dharma Seal Jōken (Jōken Hōin 静憲法印),[45] and finally, in the reaction of all ranks of society in the capital:

> 入道相国の心に天魔入りかはッて、腹をすゑかね給へりと聞えしかば、又天下いかなる事か出でこんずらんとて、京中上下おそれをののく。(SNKBZ 45: 251)
>
> "A devil has taken possession of Kiyomori's mind (*kokoro ni tenma irikawatte*). He is unable to control his anger (*hara o sue-kanetamaeri*)," it was rumoured (*to kikoeshikaba*). "Who knows what might happen now?" High and low in the capital trembled in fright.[46]

To conclude this section, let us look at another rhetorical device available to storytellers when describing a character's personality: the use of figurative language to suggest to the audience the kind of behavior most typical of a person.

In two widely separated passages Kiyomori is described by the same metaphorical expression for someone who imposes his will on others: *yokogami o yaru* よこ紙を破る, literally meaning 'to rip paper in half horizontally,' which was harder than ripping it vertically. The first instance of the expression is in Book Three in an account of general grief over the death of Kiyomori's son Shigemori, with 'high and low' people functioning here as elsewhere as what has been called a 'chorus character' (Jahn 2017, N7.8):

> 御年四十三。世はさかりとみえつるに、哀れなりし事共なり。入道相国の、さしもよこ紙をやられつるも、此人のなほしなだめられつればこそ、世もおだしかりつれ、此後天下にいかなる事か出でこんずらむとて、京中の上下歎きあへり。(SNKBZ 45: 231)

> It was a great pity that [Shigemori should die] in his forty-third year when in the prime of his life. No matter how much the Novice-Chancellor acted the tyrant (*Nyūdō shōkoku no sashimo yokogami o yararetsuru mo*), Shigemori would always amend and moderate matters so that the world remained unscathed. What kind of things will happen now in the country? In this way, high and low in the capital lamented to each other.[47]

The expression's literal meaning refers to tearing Japanese paper sideways, against the grain, as in the earliest English translation from 1918: "Though the Lay-priest Chancellor would try to tear paper across the grain" (trans. Sadler, p. 142). The French translation also retains the image: "quand bien même la Religieux Ministre agissait à tort et à traver" (trans. Sieffert, pp. 144–145).

The second instance is when Kiyomori finally gives in to universal criticism of the transfer of the capital to Fukuhara, and announces a return to the old capital:

> 今度の都遷をば、君も臣も御歎あり。山、奈良をはじめて、諸寺諸社にいたるまで、しかるべからざるよし一同にうッたへ申すあひだ、さしもよこ紙をやらるる太政入道も、さらば都がへりあるべしとて、京中ひしめきあへり。(SNKBZ 45: 409)

> Both sovereign and subjects lamented the present transfer of the capital. Mount Hiei [Enryakuji], Nara [Kōfukuji], and the other temples and shrines were unanimous in condemning the transfer and made a formal appeal against it. The Novice-Chancellor—who had forced his own way in so much (*sashimo yokogami o yararuru*)—finally said, "In that case, we will return to the capital," and there was great tumult throughout the city.[48]

Ichiko Teiji paraphrases the phrase in question by terms meaning to act tyrannically ("ōbō na koto o nasatte 横暴な事をなさって"; SNKBZ 45: 232 [modern translation]) or to be selfish ("waga mama katte na わがまま勝手な"; SNKBZ 45: 409, note 22).

These two passages are examples of contemporary judgments. A striking feature of 'Heike monogatari' is its use of posthumous judgments, discussed next.

5. Posthumous Judgments

As this essay has argued, readers' or listeners' understanding of character is progressive and dynamic. We revise our idea of a given character as new information is provided to us. A striking feature of character presentation in the Kakuichi 'Heike monogatari' is the way that the narrative frequently gives its most comprehensive treatment of an individual only *after* recording that person's death.

Stories told after a character's death tend to dwell on the good side of the deceased, so that in the case of positively depicted characters, the stories will either bear out the fine traits that have already been shown, or complement the picture with the record of other virtues. The hagiographic episodes after Shigemori's death (KbHM 3.12) illustrate his piety, adding the final touches to the image already given of the deceased over the course of numerous episodes like 'The Lanterns' (KbHM 3.13) or 'Gold to China' (3.14). Even when a character has hitherto been depicted as less than ideal, the anecdotes may dwell on praiseworthy deeds.

This kind of laudatory posthumous account is also found in one of the shorter war tales that preceded 'Heike monogatari,' 'Heiji monogatari' 平

治物語, giving an account of a failed *coup d'état* in the year 1159. The Kotohira 金刀 variant of 'Heiji monogatari' inserts two incidents in the life of Shinzei 信西 (Fujiwara no Michinori 藤原通憲, 1106–1160) that illustrate his great learning, in striking contrast with the preceding account of his miserable death. These are the sections titled 'The visit of the Tang monk to Japan' ('Tōsō raichō no koto' 唐僧来朝事) and 'The Tale of Mount Hiei' ('Hieizan monogatari no koto' 比叡山物語事) (NKBT 31: 202–206).[49]

Kiyomori's death is accompanied by premonitions that he will suffer the torments of hell, and his dying wish is for revenge on his enemy, not Buddhist services for his soul. His final sufferings were terrible and yet, the narrator remarks, 'there were many things to show that he was truly no ordinary man' (*makoto ni wa tadabito to mo oboenu kotodomo ōkarikeri* まことにはただ人ともおぼえぬ事どもおほかりけり; SNKBZ 45: 454).[50]

The narrative goes on to recount several unrelated incidents that put Kiyomori in a more positive light: his construction of an island to protect shipping and his sponsorship of a temple where readings of the Lotus Sutra are held. Many later prose and performance pieces were based on this episode about the island, variously called a 'man-made island' (Tsukishima 築島) or 'sutra island' (Kyō no Shima 経島), including a *kōwakamai* 幸若舞 or 'ballad dance' (Arnn 1984, pp. 84–122).

One posthumous episode after Kiyomori's death assures us that he is the reincarnation of a holy man (KbHM 6.9 'Jishinbō'), another that his true father was an emperor, and not Taira no Tadamori 平忠盛 as we had been previously told (6.10 'The Gion Consort'). The idea that Kiyomori was Emperor Shirakawa's 白河 child was long thought to have some basis in fact, but after a careful examination of the evidence, Akamatsu Toshihide (1980) has concluded that the supposed documentary evidence is not to be trusted. In a much-read introduction to the 'Tale of the Heike' from the 1950s, the three posthumous episodes were dismissed as 'additions' (*zōho* 増補) which are 'interesting as *setsuwa* 説話 but of little value in

terms of literature' (Ishimoda 1957, 80–81), but present-day scholarship values the short anecdotal tales known as *setsuwa* much more highly, regarding them as central to premodern prose literature in Japan. Whatever their historical veracity, such tales are also of great value for the study of narratology.

In the case of the veteran Genji warrior Minamoto no Yorimasa 源頼政, we also find the account of a shocking or pathetic death followed by recollections of memorable deeds in earlier days. Yorimasa takes his own life when the uprising in the name of Prince Mochihito (Mochihito-ō 以仁王) ends in failure at the battle of Uji 宇治 (1180.5.12). The narrative steps momentarily aside from the aftermath of the battle to recall incidents decades earlier in Yorimasa's life. Only after recounting the exploits that had won his imperial praise does the tale return to the narrative present, with a final comment regretting Yorimasa's participation in a 'worthless rebellion' (*yoshinaki muhon* よしなき謀叛; SNKBZ 45: 340) that led to the death of Prince Mochihito and his own destruction.[51] The same formulaic phrase *yoshinaki muhon* appeared earlier both as narratorial comment and character text (direct speech) in condemnation of Shishi-no-tani conspirators like Shunkan (SNKBZ 45: 73, 163, 191).[52] The repetition of phrase links Yorimasa's revolt with the earlier failed conspiracy, passing a severe moral judgment on both.

While there are no independent sections dealing with women after their death, there are examples of short posthumous notices, such as the account of Kozaishō's background and the story of how she was wooed by Michimori 通盛. These follow the account of her suicide in reaction to his death in battle. The flashback is introduced by a phrase often used to give biographical information that in other forms of narrative might come at the outset of a story, but here signals a kind of footnote: 'And speaking of this lady [...]' (*Kono nyōbō to mōsu wa* 此女房と申すは; SNKBZ 46: 251).[53]

Sometimes one has the feeling that the death of a character provided a convenient place to fit in stories that would not go anywhere else, but which the writers or editors thought too good to waste. The two 'nightbird' (*nue* 鵺) anecdotes about Yorimasa are perhaps a case in point (KbHM 4.15 'The Nightbird'). The material—and its gaps—also inspired later inventions, such as the Noh plays 'Nue' 鵺 and 'Yorimasa' 頼政, both still in the performance repertoire today.[54]

6. Conclusion: The Illusion of Character

Japanese discussions of the depiction of individual characters in 'Heike monogatari' use terms combining the personal name of a character with the suffix *-zō* 像 for 'image, figure': *Kiyomori-zō* 清盛像 ('the image of Kiyomori'), for instance. A related expression is *jinbutsuzō* 人物像 which means 'character portrait' or simply 'character' in the sense of the overall image presented of one of the *dramatis personae*. A search of the CiNii database of Japanese academic journals shows that these terms, like those mentioned below, continue to be frequently used in titles of studies of 'Heike monogatari.'

To indicate multiple portraits or characterizations, plural, a term sometimes seen is *jinbutsu gunzō*, as in 'Henkakki no jinbutsu gunzō' 変革期の人物群像, 'Portraits of Individuals in a Period of Upheaval,' the subtitle of a popular introduction to 'Heike monogatari' (Tomikura 1972). The term *gunzō* originally meant a group of sculptures like the Laocöon. For the artistic 'creation' of such an image, the terms most frequently used are *zōkei* 造形 ('molding, modeling') and the derived verb *zōkei suru* 造形する (Inaba 1984). Another term is *keishō* 形象 meaning 'shaping, figuration.' Like terms ending in *-zō* 像, these expressions are metaphors from the plastic arts, whereas English has traditionally used words from drawing or painting ('sketch,' 'portrait') or the theatre ('person,' French *personnage*).

The psychological nuance inherent in English 'character' is absent in Japanese terms, and just as well, perhaps, considering the confusion occa-

sioned by the application of psychology, whether of the armchair or the Freudian kind, to the study of the human actors in narrative. In this paper we have tried to avoid analysis of character psychology, or for that matter of 'author psychology,' an idea even less suited to 'Heike monogatari.' If psychology can play any role in the discussions of character in a premodern work like this, it can contribute most usefully in reader psychology, in explaining how readers built up their mental image of a character.

We have looked at how the characters in 'Heike monogatari' are presented to us, the audience. The passive voice in 'presented to us' may seem to evade the issue of deciding who or what is responsible for 'presenting' (or 'molding') the image we have of the characters. Attempts to identify 'authorial intent' are no longer in fashion, however, and for sound reasons in the case of premodern literature. When even the identity of the author is in question, and there is little or no external evidence about why and how a work came to be written, then we are left with only internal evidence from the work itself.

Character presentation is ultimately an illusion created by the text. We as readers are not passive victims of the sleight of hand, but rather active collaborators in the magical performance, doing everything we can to keep up our belief in the shadow figures before us.

This paper began by considering what is conventionally meant by the 'portrayal' of a character, one that implies a relationship between an artist and the public eagerly waiting for the work of art to be unveiled when it is finally completed. We have argued instead that the figures of Kiyomori and other characters are only completed in the mind of the reader or listener. As a theorist in Homeric studies has argued, attempts at reconstructing intentionality will "simply shift the problem of interpretation to a different (often more inaccessible) level," and thus we should affirm instead "the large part played by the reader in the production of meaning" (Peradotto 1997, p. 382).

Notes

1 Unless otherwise indicated, translations from 'Heike monogatari' are mine, but section titles are cited from the translation by Tyler (2012), preceded by book and section numbers of the Kakuichi-bon 覚一本 variant 'Heike monogatari' (KbHM). Cross references are given to the translations by McCullough (1988) and Tyler (2012), abbreviated M and T.

2 KbHM 11.10 'The Death of Noritsune'; cf. M 380, T 615.

3 See vol. 4, illustration 19.6 with Yoshinaka shown at the top right. For an introduction to this manuscript, which is available online, see Collcutt 1991. Cf. KbHM 9.4 'The Death of Kiso'; SNKBZ 46: 177, M 291, T 465.

4 See entries in Ōtsu [et al.] 2010 for a good overview of questions of authorship, origins, and evolution. For English-language discussion, see Bialock 1999; Watson 2003, pp. 2–9; Oyler 2006; Bialock 2007; Franks 2009, pp. 20–29; Selinger 2013, pp. 20–23. The frequently cited article by Butler (1966) no longer represents current scholarly consensus.

5 Some portions of this paper are revised from Chapter 5 'Character Presentation' in my unpublished DPhil thesis (Watson 2003).

6 Figures calculated from Nakano 1995, pp. 64–75 ('Shuyō tōjō jinbutsu kaisetsu' 主要登場人物解説) and SNKBT 45: 1–18 ('Shuyō jinbutsu ichiran' 主要人物一覧), glossed lists of important characters for 'Genji monogatari' and 'Heike monogatari' respectively. The 'Glossary of Characters' contributed by the present writer to the partial translation by Burton Watson edited by Haruo Shirane (2006, pp. 171–194) contains 105 characters, including about fifty in detail. Forty characters are listed in the translation by McCullough (1988, pp. 17–19 ['Principal Characters']).

7 Examples include sections KbHM 4.3, 5.5, 7.2, 7.19, 9.2, 9.7, 10.14, and 11.11.

8 KbHM 11.5 'The Dropped Bow'; M 369, T 598.

9 KbHM 6.5 'The Circular Letter'; SNKBZ 45: 442, M 207, T 322; KbHM 10.10 'Koremori Renounces the World'; SNKBZ 46: 304, M 245; T 566.

10 KbHM 4.11 'The Battle on the Bridge'; SNKBZ 45: 315, M 152, T 227; KbHM 7.2 'The Northern Campaign'; SNKBZ 46: 21, M 225, T 352.

11 KbHM 11.5 'The Dropped Bow'; SNKBZ 46: 362, M 369, T 598. Examples of *nanori* are discussed by Brisset 1999, pp. 130–136.

12 KbHM 11.7 'The Cockfights and the Battle at Dan-no-ura'; SNKBZ 46: 373, M 373, T 605.

13 KbHM 12.9 'The Execution of Rokudai'; SNKBZ 46: 487, M 420, T 679.

14 KbHM 7.5 'A Prayer to Hachiman'; SNKBZ 46: 31, M 229, T 361.

15 KbHM 2.3 ‘The Execution of Saikō’; M 66, T 78.
16 KbHM 1.6 ‘Giō’; SNKBZ 45: 40, M 33, T 40.
17 KbHM 4.7 ‘The Appeal to Mount Hiei’; SNKBZ 45: 301, M 146, T 217.
18 KbHM 1.4 ‘The Rokuhara Boys’; SNKBZ 45: 29, M 28, T 12.
19 KbHM 1.3 ‘The Sea Bass’; SNKBZ 45: 28, M 27, T 10.
20 KbHM 6.9 ‘Jishinbō’; SNKBZ 45: 455, M 213, T 332.
21 KbHM 11.5 ‘The Dropped Bow’; SNKBZ 46: 363–364, M 370, T 599.
22 KbHM 12.7 ‘Rokudai’; M 409, T 664.
23 KmHM 9.2 ‘First Across the Uji River’; M 287, T 164.
24 KbHM 8.8 ‘The Death of Senō’; M 273, T 436.
25 KbHM 11.3 ‘The Death of Tsuginobu’; M 365, T 592 (“Noritsune’s outstandingly strong and brave page”).
26 KbHM 12.7 ‘Rokudai’; M 410, T 664 (quoted). For an Edo-period representation, see the Princeton illustrated ‘Heike monogatari’ (online), vol. 6, illustration 29.3.
27 KbHM 12.7 ‘Rokudai’; M 412, T 668–669.
28 For a discussion of factuality in premodern Japanese literature, see Watson 2020.
29 Examples include KbHM 1.11 ‘The Collision with the Regent’; SNKBZ 45: 63, M 43, T 37; KbHM 2.3 ‘The Execution of Saikō’; SNKBZ 45: 114, M 66, T 79; KbHM 3.15 ‘The Confrontation with Jōken’; SNKBZ 45: 244, M 122, T 175; KbHM 5.4 ‘The Courier’; SNKBZ 45: 366, M 174, T 265.
30 KbHM 2.6 ‘The Remonstrance’; SKNBZ 45: 133, M 73, T 92.
31 KbHM 2.6 ‘The Remonstrance’; M 74, T 92.
32 KbHM 1.6 ‘Giō’; M 34, T 21.
33 KbHM 2.6 ‘The Remonstrance’; M 74, T 92.
34 KbHM 3.1 ‘The Pardon’; SNKBZ 45: 187, M 97, T 132. Kiyomori’s daughter is Emperor Takakura’s consort Tokuko 徳子, later known as Kenreimon’in 建礼門院.
35 KbHM 3.1 ‘The Pardon’; M 98, T 134.
36 KbHM 4.5 ‘Nobutsura’; SNKBZ 45: 291, M 141, T 211.
37 KbHM 2.16 ‘Stupas Cast into the Sea’; M 94, T 125.
38 KbHM 2.17 ‘Su Wu’; M 94, T 125.
39 KbHM 6.5 ‘The Circular Letter’; M 206, T 321.
40 KbHM 3.18 ‘The Exile of the Cloistered Emperor’; SNKBZ 45: 257, M 127, T 182–185.

41 KbHM 5.1 'The Capital Moved to Fukuhara'; SNKBZ 45: 348, M 165–166, T 251.
42 KbHM 5.13 'The Return to the Old Capital'; SNKBZ 45: 409, M 193, T 296.
43 KbHM 6.1 'The Death of Retired Emperor Takakura'; SNKBZ 45: 422–423, M 198, T 308.
44 KbHM 3.11 'To Consult or Not the Chinese Physician'; SNKBZ 45: 226, M 115, T 163.
45 KbHM 3.15 'The Confrontation with Jōken'; SNKBZ 45: 244, M 122, T 176.
46 KbHM 3.17 'Yukitaka'; M 125, T 181.
47 KbHM 3.11 'To Consult or Not the Chinese Physician,' with the romanized phrase translated as "Kiyomori's high-handed ways" (M 117) and "Violent as Kiyomori was in his ways" (T 166).
48 KbHM 5.13 'The Return to the Old Capital,' with the romanized phrase translated as "the stiff-necked Kiyomori finally yielded" (M 193) and "Lord Kiyomori, who never honored any wish but his own" (T 296).
49 These episodes are not found in the older Yōmei-Gakushūin version 陽明・学習院本 of Book One translated by Tyler (2016). For French and Italian translations see the ones by René Sieffert (1988, pp. 145–147) and Giuliana Stramigioli (1975, pp. 311–17).
50 KbHM 6.8 'Sutra Island'; M 212, T 329.
51 KbHM 4.15 'The Night Bird'; M 163 ("senseless revolt"), T 245 ("futile revolt").
52 KbHM 1.13 'The Fight over Ugawa'; M 47 ("foolish conspiracy"), T 44 ("absurd conspiracy"); KbHM 2.11 'Tokudaiji Sanesada's Pilgrimage to Itsukushima'; M 86 ("senseless revolt"), T 112 ("futile rebellion"); KbHM 3.2 'Stamping in Frenzy'; M 99 ("miserable conspiracy"), T 136 ("futile rebellion").
53 KbHM 9.19 'Kozaishō Drowns'; M 323, T 515.
54 For an overview of canonical and non-canonical noh plays (*genkō kyoku* 現行曲 and *bangai kyoku* 番外曲) related to the Genpei conflicts, see Watson 2013 or Watson 2016 (online).

References

Abbreviations

KbHM Kakuichi-bon (Kakuichi variant) 'Heike monogatari' 覚一本『平家物語』 cited by book (*maki* 巻) and section (*shōdan* 章段) number accompanied by section title in the translation by Tyler (2012)
NKBT Nihon koten bungaku taikei 日本文学大系
SNKBT Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei 新日本文学大系
SNKBZ Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū 新編日本古典文学全集

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