

The most important characters in this section of the novel:

- The Eighth Prince—Genji's half-brother, a widower with two daughters, who has retreated from the world to study the scriptures
- Ōigimi—the Eighth Prince's older daughter
- Naka no Kimi—the Eighth Prince's younger daughter
- Kaoru—"The Fragrant Captain" (promoted to Counselor), thought to be Genji's son, but really Kashiwagi's son, Tō no Chūjō's grandson
- Niou—"The Perfumed Prince," son of the Empress Akashi and thus Genji's grandson
- Ukifune—the Eighth Prince's unrecognized daughter

1. The Eighth Prince faces a predicament: he can't find serious suitors for his two daughters, even though "he would have winked at courtship from anyone, even if not ideal, who genuinely wished to take one in hand, provided only that he was acceptable enough not to cause unfavorable gossip" (p. 852). Besides, he complains, "Women are trifling creatures on the whole, good only for passing pleasures, but they arouse strong feelings . . . a daughter . . . is likely to be a great worry even when one must acknowledge how little she is worth" (p. 853). His parting advice to his daughters as he retires from the world is this: "Never let yourselves be persuaded to leave this mountain village unless by someone worthy of you. Simply . . . decide to remain here all your lives . . . What matters above all, particularly for a woman, is to remain unseen and never to arouse such criticism as to bring her to others' unfriendly attention" (p. 855).
 - What seems to be the Eighth Prince's greatest concern about the fate of his daughters?
 - Is the predicament of Ōigime and Naka no Kimi more precarious than that of other daughters we have encountered? Tamakazura? Suzaku's third princess? If so, why?
 - Later, when the Empress tries to persuade Niou, who has quietly married Naka no Kimi, to marry Yūgiri's daughter, she tells him, "Once you have achieved so sound an alliance, then behave yourself and bring anyone else you may be keen on to you" (p. 905). Why does Niou consider this solution "a disaster"? What would make the life of a Consort or an Intimate for Naka no Kimi unacceptable?
 - Would the two princesses have been happier if they had lived their lives in isolation at Uji, as the Eighth Prince advised? What other options seem possible for them?
2. The Eighth Prince chooses Kaoru as the protector of his daughters before he retires from the world, then dies.
 - Why does he choose Kaoru?
 - What kind of guardian does Kaoru turn out to be? What trials threaten his reputation as staid, serious, even unworldly?
 - Why does Ōigime adamantly reject his advances?
 - Whose plan seems to be the wiser choice for Naka no Kimi's future: Kaoru's support of Niou's suit or Ōigime's suggestion that Kaoru transfer his desire from the older to the younger sister?

- What becomes the driving motivation for Kaoru's behavior? What has happened to his desire to retire from the world, as did the Eighth Prince, his mentor?
3. The Eighth Prince distrusted Niou as a suitor for his daughters because of his reputation as a "gallant."
 - Should Kaoru have known better than to encourage his pursuit of Naka no Kimi? What blinded his judgment?
 - How would you compare/contrast Niou to his grandfather, Genji, the "gallant" *par excellence* of this novel?
 - How serious are Niou's feelings for Naka no Kimi?
 - Was Naka no Kimi's fate, to have been supplanted by Niou's marriage to Yūgiri's sixth daughter, almost inevitable? Or might the birth of her son perhaps alter the hierarchy?
 4. The Tale of Genji describes in excruciating detail the constraints on the lives of these aristocratic women. But what constrains the lives of these aristocratic men?
 - How does Niou's position as a prince constrain his movements and choices?
 - Kaoru is a commoner, albeit high-ranking. But how are his choices also constrained by his position?
 - How many male characters have we encountered who long to retire from the world, but are prevented or delayed because of obligations to women, especially daughters? Does the novel suggest (intentionally? or unintentionally?) that patriarchy oppresses both genders?
 5. Throughout the novel, the plot is complicated by substitution or surrogacy in sexual relationships. Genji is attracted to Fujitsubo, in part, because he is told she resembles his deceased mother, then he is attracted to Murasaki because of her resemblance to Fujitsubo. Moreover, Genji is attracted to more than one daughter (e.g. Akikonomu and Tamakazura) because she reminds him of a former lover (e.g. the Rokujō Haven and Yūgao). Kashiwagi even substitutes a kitten for Suzaku's third princess, with whom he is obsessed! This pattern of surrogacy and substitution is expanded and complicated in the story of the third generation.
 - What motivates Kaoru, at first, to reject a substitution of Naka no Kimi for Ōigime, with whom he falls in love? After Ōigime's death, why does he regret not following her advice to choose the younger sister?
 - How does sexual longing and nostalgia for the lost Ōigime come to dominate Kaoru's decisions and actions?
 - At the end of chapter 49, when Kaoru spies on the Eighth Prince's unrecognized daughter, who so resembles her two sisters, he muses, "He and she must have shared a bond of destiny from the past" (p. 971). Consider the following substitutions:
 - Kaoru took Genji to be his father, but the Shining Prince was a substitute for his real father, Kashiwagi.
 - Kaoru took the Eighth Prince as a surrogate "father," to whose mountain village he retreated from the court to study the scriptures.
 - Kaoru successively desires the Eighth Prince's three daughters—each one sequentially substituting for the previous one.

Is “destiny” the best explanation for this repetitive pattern? How does this plot pattern relate to the other incidents of sexual surrogacy and substitution throughout the novel?