



Fitful Slumbers. Utatane

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Fitful Slumbers

Utatane

by ABUTSU-NI

I'm sure it did no good to think back about our affair so incessantly.²⁶ Yet waiting for the moonlight that I had made my friend on sleepless nights, I slid open the door as usual and gazed out. But the lonely scene of the dew in the now desolate autumn garden and the doleful sound of insects only seemed to renew my sorrow. I held back bitter tears and considered for a while what had happened and what would become of me. I felt nothing but resentment as I thought obsessively about the wretched, meaningless affair.

After our first night together, a night that then seemed more a dream than reality,²⁷ he often didn't even bother to wait for the night watchman to doze off.²⁸ And so I expected an unbroken string of nights dreaming with him. It wasn't that I hadn't already learned that a man's inconstancy is like the easily fading dye made from the dayflower, but my heart had gone out to his, and his had dyed into mine. It was a time of careless and unfortunate confusion. Just as in the poem 'I expected it',²⁹ I didn't realize how painful losing him could be.

The trees had begun to turn color, and my heart felt sad in the cold autumn wind. Even on nights when he asked me to wait for him, it wasn't now like it had been before. I lay in bed, acutely aware of the striking of the bell that marked the passing hours, feeling as if I were dead. It was then that I learned

²⁶Compare *Shūishū*, 434, by Ōe Tamemoto
大江為基: *nagamuru ni / mono omou koto no*
/ nagusamu wa / tsuki wa uki yo no / hoka
yori ya yuku.

In composing verse / I find comfort from /
thinking back on that affair; / does the moon
travel, I wonder, / beyond this sorrowful
world?

²⁷*Ise Monogatari*, 69 (also in *Kokinshū*,
645): *kimi ya koshi / ware ya yukikemu /*
omōezu / yume ka utsutsu ka / nete ka samete
ka.

Might you have come here, / or did I
perhaps go there? / I cannot recall. . . . / Was
it dream or reality? / Was I sleeping or wak-
ing?

Helen Craig McCullough, tr., *Kokin*

Wakashū, Stanford U.P., 1985, p. 144.

²⁸*Ise Monogatari*, 5 (also in *Kokinshū*, 632),
by Ariwara Narihira 在原業平: *hito shirenu /*
wa ga kayoi no / sekimori wa / yoiyoi goto ni
/ uchi mo nenanamu.

If only he might / drop off to sleep each
evening— / that watchman who guards / the
place where I come and go / with the world
none the wiser.

McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū*, p. 142.

²⁹*Senzaishū*, 798, by Taikenmon'in no Kaga
待賢門院加賀: *kanete yori / omoishi koto zo /*
fushi shiba no / koru bakari naru /
nagekisemu to wa.

I expected it / for some time, / and thought
to make the grief / nothing more than mere
firewood, / from which I will learn.

the pain of waiting through the night described in the poem, 'If he does not come.'³⁰ Although our secret meetings hadn't ended completely, they were now different from before. Even though various things were coming between us, I didn't recognize the change right away. Such, I suppose, are the ways of an affair.

It was soon the Tenth Month, that desultory time of year when it rains off and on uncertainly.³¹ All the more reason that my sleeves had no time to dry. I fretted obsessively day and night, worrying that he might never visit me again. The number of days between his calls exceeded even what I had grown to accept, and no words can adequately describe the sadness of that miserable time when I first realized that our relationship had come to this pass.

I was feeling thoroughly oppressed and wretched, and perhaps because of this I suddenly decided to pay homage at Uzumasa.³² I knew my state of mind was extreme, and so was ashamed what the Lord Buddha might think, but from a very early age I had made such visits as I had a deep faith in him. I wanted to be allowed to tell him of the distress in my heart, and so I prayed there for a while.

Soon I was told by my companions that it was going to rain and, as they were pressing to return without delay, we left the temple sooner than I would have wished. Still, I couldn't pass by Hōkongō-in, where the autumn maple trees were at their best and looked most delightful. I alighted from my carriage, sat on a rock by the side of the temple's fence, and gazed toward the hills where the trees displayed various shades of autumn colors. The deep red leaves of the ivy³³ hanging from the pines stood out conspicuously. Probably because there were so many fine sights to gaze at, I gradually began to forget thoughts of my unhappy home and was not in a hurry to leave.

A wind started to blow. I became somehow restless and so I stopped gazing at the scenery. I composed these lines while standing there:

<i>hito shirezu</i>	O stormy wind—
<i>chigirishi naka no</i>	I did not ask you
<i>koto no ha wo</i>	to scatter the leaves
<i>arashi fuke to wa</i>	of secret promises
<i>omowazarishi wo</i>	between my lover and myself.

But even now, I thought only of him.³⁴

³⁰*Heike Monogatari* 平家物語, 5:2 (also in *Shin-Kokinshū*, 1191), by Kojijū 小侍従: *matsu yoi no / fukeyuku kane no / koe kikeba / kaeru ashita no / tori wa mono ka wa*.

If he does not come, / There is nothing but the bell / Deepening the night. / How small a thing the bird call / That tells us morning is here.

Hiroshi Kitagawa & Bruce T. Tsuchida, tr.,

Tale of the Heike: Heike Monogatari, University of Tokyo Press, 1975, p. 297.

³¹*Gosenshū*, 445: *kannazuki / furimi furazumi / sadamenaki / shigure zo fuyu no / hajime nari keru*.

Tenth Month. / The rain falls, / then does not fall / in uncertain drizzle— / winter has begun.

³²In present-day northwest Kyoto. The tem-

Despite this trip, I was still unhappy. I was taking a short rest when an attendant brought in a letter from him and I opened it with excitement. He wrote that the recent weather had moved him, and apologized for his silence. The flow of his brush was strong yet sensitive, and very splendid. My feelings were, as usual, in complete disarray, and so in my reply I could not tell where one word ended and the next began. Afterward I felt anxious, wondering whether I had written it at all well.

Forgetting my recent bitterness, I stared at his letter. Then I worried that others might think me fickle, and hid it away.

*kore ya sa wa
tou ni tsurasa no
kazukazu ni
namida wo souru
mizukuki no ato*

So, must this be
'the bitterness of inquiry'?³⁵
Tracings from his brush
that add tears
to these tears.

The secret way he always took to come to my house was not long, but he did not arrive until late: it was as if he had come merely to keep his promise. Still, I was so happy that I felt I was in a dream from which I need never awake. Inexplicable tears overcame me, and I was not able to share my feelings with him.

At dawn the nearby bell sounded as if tolling the end of my life, and I was beside myself as he rose from the bed to leave. My sleeves were wet with dew, and I felt even greater resentment than before. Like any careful lover, he slipped stealthily out along the path from which I fancied he had perhaps never come.³⁶ I could not help feeling it had been but a dream.

For some months Mumekita no Kata³⁷ had been ill at his place, and one day she finally passed away. I thought that it was perhaps because of the events surrounding her death that his visits became less frequent. Still, it hurt me that he now broke promises even more often than before. I wanted to show him my sympathy and let him know I understood how upset he must be, grieving as he was for someone whom he had genuinely loved. I was not less feeling than the others, but I was in no position to send a message to his place.³⁸

ple in question may be Kōryūji 広隆寺, a Shingon foundation that enjoyed lavish support from the court.

³³*tsuta kokoro no iro*. The Higashiyama text has '*eda kokoro no iro*'.

³⁴*omoimazuru koto naki*. Some texts have *omoisamasaru koto naki*, 'without calming my thoughts'.

³⁵'The bitterness of inquiry', *tou ni tsurasa*; that is, when kind words or actions cause greater sadness or bitterness. An idiom in frequent use in Abutsu's day, it appears five times in *Towazugatari* 問はず語り.

³⁶*Ise Monogatari*, 69—see n. 27, above.

³⁷むめ北の方, probably the wife of Abutsu's lover.

³⁸In *Genji Monogatari*, Kosaishō 小宰相 writes in sympathy to Kaoru 薫, who is grieving the disappearance of his lover, Ukifune 浮舟:

aware shiru / kokoro wa hito ni / okurenedo / kazu naranu mi ni / kietsutsu zo furu.

Pray think me not less feeling than the others. / But I am no one. Silent pass my days.

Edward G. Seidensticker, tr., *The Tale of Genji*, Knopf, New York, 1978, p. 1029.

The gloomy days passed without the comfort of his letters. Then suddenly he wrote, 'I want to meet with you and talk about this heartless world and the emotions I am feeling.' So when I heard the bell sounding the hour at which I usually retired, I lay down with confidence in his secret promise. As I considered my present circumstances, I felt a distaste for the person I had become. What would be the future of someone so unreliable as myself? I became depressed while imagining my future. If I had only stayed the way I was before, I would not have made these mistakes and I could have passed my days without coming to this. The pain grew to the point that I no longer looked forward to passing the night with him. I lay awake with these many thoughts on my mind, and when he did not arrive at the usual hour I thought about what might happen next.

Then, while I was lying there restlessly with my eyes open, I heard a hushed knock like that of a small child,³⁹ and my calmness deserted me at once. I went quietly out to the garden, chagrined at my lack of composure. The moon was quite bright and, worried lest I might be noticed, I hid behind the fence. My lover approached and teased me with the lines, 'Though I should say you don't resemble "the gentleman who followed after me. . ."', and on hearing this, I too thought of *Genji* and the scene at Hitachi's royal residence.⁴⁰ I felt that my lover was indeed as fine as the Genji who had composed at that time the poem 'It sheds its rays'.⁴¹ Afterward I often recalled that night and felt embarrassed when I thought that he might be remembering it, too.

On a wintry night in the Twelfth Month, the sky was heavy with snow and I went around early closing the shutters. It grew quite late as I idly chatted with a few others. Everyone went to bed, but I wasn't able to sleep, so I quietly arose, slipped from the room, and looked out on the night. It had stopped snowing sometime before and the moon, no longer hidden, was now shining among drifting clouds, its glow faintly outlining the rims of the nearby hills. It was a waxing, quarter moon. I recalled that the time I last saw him was under such a moon and I relived that night as if I were again with the man whose face I could not now even clearly remember. Soon the moonlight became obscured by my tears. I felt as if the Lord Buddha was there before me, and I was at once both ashamed and encouraged.⁴²

³⁹Possibly a reference to *Ise Monogatari*, 69, where an Ise Virgin, accompanied by a child, visits the bedchamber of a man late at night.

⁴⁰When Genji visits a daughter of Prince Hitachi 常陸, he is secretly followed by his friend Tō no Chūjō 頭の中將, who hides behind a fence and then later reveals himself to Genji.

Seidensticker, p. 115.

⁴¹*Sato wakanu / kage wo ba miredo / yuku tsuki no / iru sa no yama wo / tare ka*

tazunuru.

It sheds its rays impartially here and there, / And who should care what mountain it sets behind?

Seidensticker, p. 115.

⁴²The text is unclear at this point: *hotoke nado no mietamaitsuru ni ya omou ni . . .*, literally, 'I felt perhaps I might be looking upon the Buddha or such.' *Nado* and *ni ya*, which often appear in the first half of the text, both lend ambiguity to the statement.

As the days passed, I could bear it no longer for my heart seemed to becoming only more weary. Finally I realized that it would be easy to do once I had made a firm decision,⁴³ and I resolved to ask for the tonsure. The thought that this might have something to do with the other day's dream made me happy. But even when I tried, I could not tell myself I must stop thinking about him, and so my sadness persisted.⁴⁴

One beautiful spring day, while I was getting rid of scraps of my writings that had somehow accumulated, I took out his letters and read through them. From the first appearance of the plum blossoms until the winter grasses had completely withered, how many sad and trying times had there been! I grew emotional as my eyes passed over the many pages where he so clearly professed his love for me.

I was thinking about when I might have written a certain passage and was wondering whether it had captured his attention more than usual⁴⁵ when her ladyship⁴⁶ came in and asked me to stay the night as she was lonely and ill at ease, and so I did not return to my own room. It was a nuisance, but I worried that I might reveal my secret plans if I did not comply, so I lay down and said nothing of my thoughts.

When everyone was fast asleep, I slipped quietly out of the room. I was afraid of waking the others, for the lamp still glowed palely and my room was separated from theirs by only a sliding door. I felt happy when my hands found in the dimness the scissors and box lid I had prepared that day. Yet, as may be imagined, I could not help feeling anxious as I gathered my hair in my hand.

⁴³*Shin-Kokinshū*, 1772, by Arakida Naganobu 荒木田長延: *tsukuzuku to / omoeba yasuki / yo no naka wo / kokoro to nageku / waga mi narikeri*.

When I keenly reflect, / I think it is easy / in this world; / but my own heart / brings me suffering.

⁴⁴*Ise Monogatari*, 34 (also in *Shin-Chokusenshū* 新勅撰集, 637, attributed to Narihira:

ieba e ni / iwaneba mune ni / sawagarete / kokoro hitotsu ni / nageku koro kana.

When I would speak of it, I cannot; / When I resolve to say nothing, / I am utterly distraught. / These days I can but grieve / In my innermost heart.

Helen McCullough, tr., *Tales of Ise*, Stanford U.P., 1968, p. 94.

There is an additional allusion to a poem by the daughter of Minamoto Tasaku 源朝 in *Yamato Monogatari* 大和物語, 5 (also in *Ōkagami* 大鏡, in the section dealing with Emperor Murakami, and *Shin-Chokusenshū*,

884, with the fourth line slightly changed):

wabinureba / ima wa to mono wo / omoedo mo / kokoro ni ninu wa / namida narikeri.

As I grieve / I think to myself / That I must stop; / But contrary to my resolution / The tears still flow.

Mildred Tahara, tr., *Tales of Yamato*, University Press of Hawaii, 1980, p. 6.

These two allusions, interwoven by the author, adroitly express Abutsu's sense of helplessness in facing and controlling her emotions.

⁴⁵Some words seem to be missing at this point. It is not clear whether Abutsu is referring to her own writing or her lover's. Nor is it evident whose attention she intends. A literal translation of the passage reads: 'When was this? . . . I wondered whether this might have caught the eye.'

⁴⁶Identity unknown, although it may refer to Abutsu's wet-nurse who appears at the end of the story.

I trimmed it off, placed the strands in the lid of the box, and arranged the accompanying letters I had written earlier. The light coming through the doorway shone faintly as I put the uncovered inkstone that was at my side in front of me—the one I had used that day to write the many farewell letters. Along the edge of the sheet of thick Michinokuni paper⁴⁷ that I would wrap around my hair, I wrote just something that came to mind. The light shining from the other room was so faint that I couldn't even see where the brush touched the paper's surface:

*nageki tsutsu
mi wo hayaki se no
soko to dani
shirazu mayowamu
ato zo kanashiki*

Even if I threw this lamenting body
into the fast current's waters,
into unfathomable depths,
my soul would wander still,
bearing my sadness.

I wonder whether at that moment I was thinking of drowning myself in the river.

I wanted to leave right away and quietly slid open the door. The month was nearly at an end, so there was no moon. Rain clouds were gathering and made everything frighteningly dark. It was already late. When the night guardsmen ceremoniously called out to one another, I worried someone might catch sight of me, so I lay down in the room as before, yet no one nearby so much as stirred.

For a long time the guardsman had been accustomed to open the gate and leave during the middle of the night, but now, as I was waiting secretly for that moment, I heard the gate sounding and the guardsman leaving quite early.

I slipped outside, but could not remember clearly the way to my destination.⁴⁸ The place where I had been staying was itself outside the capital, at the foot of the Northern Hills, and few people would see me here. As I was walking under the cover of the trees, I wondered what it was going to be like to travel alone along these hill paths that lay dreamlike in front of me. I became quite frightened when I thought of the great risk I was taking. I avoided the gaze of the local people and walked along in a distracted state. It was hard to believe that this was really happening.

My destination was near the foot of the Western Hills and they were some distance away. It began to rain in the middle of the night and by dawn my kimono was soaked through. There had been nothing to obstruct the view between my home and Saga,⁴⁹ so I managed to arrive that far without mishap.

It gradually became light. People on the road began to look at me closely,

⁴⁷Heavy paper traditionally made in the old province of Michinokuni and often used for love letters.

⁴⁸The convent in the western foothills beyond the city limits.

⁴⁹Although Abutsu has been staying at an

unspecified place near the Northern Hills for a few weeks, her usual residence, the mansion of Ankamon'in, was nearby.

Saga, near Arashiyama in western Kyoto, lay in the general direction of the convent that was her destination.

and I felt a greater trepidation than ever before. But, determined to reach my goal, I trusted in the progress of my feet. Although practically dead with exhaustion, I did not stop to rest for I wanted to advance farther into the hills as soon as possible.

As I approached the foothills that lead up to Mt Arashi, the rain came down even harder, while ahead the clouds were so piled up that I couldn't make out my destination. I managed to reach Hōrinji, but then lost my way on the path and had no idea what to do.

I did not especially value my life, but now I was overcome with suffering and despair. Tears blurred my vision of the dark rain. I couldn't see either from where I had come nor where I was headed. I cannot adequately express how I felt and I thought that my life must be nearing its end. Meanwhile, the rain soaked me to the skin and I was wetter than the Ise fishermen.⁵⁰

After wandering so far, I was taking shelter from the wind under a sturdy pine when there approached a woman wearing a straw raincoat and carrying an umbrella. She too was probably coming from the capital. She was talking with a child who spoke in the same manner,⁵¹ and I fancied they might be from Katsura.

The two came toward me. The woman asked in a chatty tone, 'And who might you be? You look so sad, dear. Are you running away from someone? Did you have a quarrel? What are you doing here in these hills getting yourself soaked in the rain? Where did you come from and where are you going? You're quite a sight, you know.' She clacked her tongue several times and repeated again how pitiful I looked. Her sympathy warmed my heart.

As she did not stop asking me about myself, I finally said, 'I'm not at odds with anyone, and I haven't had a quarrel. I just have something I want to do in a place here in these mountains. I started out late last night, but it was raining so hard I lost the way. I can't remember how I got here and I don't know which way I should be going, either. I've stopped at this spot, feeling as if it might be all over with me. If it's not too much trouble, I wonder if you wouldn't mind showing me the right direction?'

At this, the woman took even more pity on me. I was so happy and grateful for her deep compassion that, when she took my hand and led me along, I wondered whether I was being guided by the Lord Buddha himself. After a time we reached the convent, and the woman and child went on their way.

I think my unusual appearance distressed even many of the nuns who received me, but they were no less compassionate than the woman from Katsura and

⁵⁰*Kokinshū*, 683: *ise no ama no / asa na yū na ni / kazuku chō / mirume ni hito wo / aku yoshi mo gana.*

I long for a means / of seeing my fill of you— / seeing like the weed, / the 'see weed'
Ise fishers / harvest morning and evening.

McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū*, p. 152.

Ise no ama came to be used as a poetic metaphor for dampness. Here Abutsu's use of allusion works doubly to express the author's being soaked through and her longing for her lover.

⁵¹Literally, 'same voice', but probably referring to the local accent.

tended to my every need. While I had clung to consciousness in the hills, now that I was able to rest I completely collapsed and lay weakly in bed, unable to raise myself even a little.

Friends from the capital somehow learned of my whereabouts and came to visit, and made a nuisance of themselves for three days. But since I had been able to receive the tonsure and come to this temple—things I had wanted to do with all my heart—I felt contented about everything and could think happily even about my sorrows.

As I looked around the precincts, I thought how fortunate it was that such a sacred place existed in this world so filled with unhappiness. The nuns conducted their religious services devoutly and without fail made offerings day and night. I listened to the sound of the *senurei*⁵² and so on around me and felt a chill at heart when I considered what might become of someone such as myself, who had piled up so many sins over the years, if she ended her days in this world without coming to such a place. The autumn wind that filled my garden back home with sorrow blew here through the hilltop pines in harmony with the chanting of the Lotus Sutra. The moonlight I had gazed upon as I waited longingly for my lover to appear at the gate became here a guide to lead my heart far away to the clouds over Eagle Peak.

*sutete ideshi
washi no mi-yama no
tsuki narade
tare wo yonayona
koiwatari kemu*

Although here is the moon of Eagle Peak
where Buddha instructed,
'Forsake this world,'
it seems my love for someone
night after night finds no end.⁵³

I had been as unsteady as a ship floating on the waves,⁵⁴ someone drifting alone without her wits about her, and I wondered whether I had become the subject of gossip. Although I was a woman sailing on quite lost in no fixed direction, there were times when I was calm enough to think of what might become of me. Thus I believed that my state of mind was not just the ordinary suffering of this temporary world. Rather, I felt I must have been groping along from one darkness into the still deeper darkness of the long night of doubt.⁵⁵

⁵²Corrupt text. Possibly a reference to *shinrei* 振鈴, a type of temple bell.

⁵³Eagle Peak (also known as Vulture Peak) is where the Buddha preached his doctrine to all sentient beings.

⁵⁴*Kokinshū*, 508: *ide ware wo / hito na togame so / obune no / yuta no tayuta ni / mono omou koro zo*.

You who are watching: / please do not find fault with me, / for this is a time / when love makes me unsteady / as a ship riding the waves.

McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū*, p. 118.

⁵⁵*Shūishū*, 1342, by Izumi Shikibu 和泉式部: *kuraki yori / kuraki michi ni zo / irinubeki / haruka ni terase / yama no ha no tsuki*.

From darkness / Into the path of darkness / Must I enter: / Shine upon me from afar, / O moon above the mountain crest.

Edwin A. Cranston, *The Izumi Shikibu Diary*, Harvard U.P., 1969, p. 6.

The poem refers to a line in the Lotus Sutra: 'From darkness proceeding to darkness, / They never hear the Buddha's name.'

Leon Hurvitz, tr., *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, Columbia U.P.,

The sadness was very oppressive, but the heart is its own master. Believing it might soothe my mind, with a frail brush I secretly wrote about how I could not suppress the excessive bitterness and the grief I felt when I looked out as usual on the evening scene. But all this did was to make me weep even more. Until then I had clung to my fragile life only because from time to time he had tossed to me in an offhand way meaningless assurances that he had not forgotten me. Perhaps I had become accustomed even to a man's cruel lies.

I had grown more distant from his world than I could imagine. Although our residences were as close as Shiogama is to Chiga, I felt quite hopeless.⁵⁶

<i>michinoku no</i>	Our letters have ended,
<i>tsubo no ishibumi</i>	and you have grown
<i>kakitaete</i>	as distant from me
<i>harukeki naka to</i>	as the inscribed stone
<i>nari ni keru kana</i>	at Michinoku monument. ⁵⁷

After several days' rain, the evening moon shone faintly through the dispersing clouds. It was not the hour before dawn, but I was thinking spitefully of that man who was being so cruel.⁵⁸ Even when I closed the sliding door I could still hear the running water of the brook near the gate. It sounded louder than usual, for probably the rain had swollen the stream. When was it that, even with the stream in flood, he had secretly crossed the rapids to visit me? Remembering that time as if it were just yesterday, I wrote:

<i>omoizuru</i>	Memories come rushing back
<i>hodo ni mo nami wa</i>	just like the waves
<i>sawagi keri</i>	that churn
<i>uki se wo wakete</i>	in Nakagawa's joyless rapids
<i>nakagawa no mizu</i>	whose waters keep us apart. ⁵⁹

Had it come to the point, I wonder, when even the slight rustling of the black bamboo in the untended garden could upset me?

1976, p. 133.

Abutsu's 'long night of doubt' refers to the state of ignorance or unenlightenment.

⁵⁶Shiogama is a town at Chiga Bay, and so the epithet means 'as close as can be'. Chiga also suggests *chika*, 'close'.

⁵⁷This particular monument is said to have been raised to commemorate the defeat of the Ainu in the ninth century, and was located in Tenmabayashi in present-day Aomori, far from Kyōto.

Michinoku no is a poetic preface for *fumi*, or 'letter', in this instance *ishibumi*.

⁵⁸Possibly a reference to *Genji Monogatari*, where Genji goes to stay in a temple north of the capital:

'Though he would pass the night in the thoughts of the evanescence of things to which the setting was so conducive, he would still, in the dawn moonlight, remember the lady who was being so cruel to him.'

Seidensticker, p. 199.

Also, *Shin-Kokinshū*, 1260: *ama no to wo / oshiakegata no / tsuki mireba / uki hito shi mo zo / koi shi kari keru*.

When I see the moon / as day is ushered in, / I yearn / even for the heartless love.

H. H. Honda, tr., *The Shin Kokinshu*, Hokuseido, 1970, p. 346.

⁵⁹*Nakagawa no mizu* is a poetic idiom indicating water that separated lovers.

yo to tomo ni
omoizureba
kuretake no
urameshikaranu
sono fushi mo nashi

I look back through
 the forest of months
 and see there was no season
 not spent bitterly staring
 into these black bamboo shoots.⁶⁰

I tried writing him a letter written in a style that would look casual. He answered, 'I've been rather busy with various things and, while of course I've thought of nothing but you, there hasn't been a chance to pay a call.' His indifferent scribbles depressed me.

kiehatemu
keburi no nochi no
kumo wo dani
yomo nagamejina
hito me moru to te

When I am gone
 and turned to smoke,
 I doubt my clouds
 will earn his gaze;
 he's so concerned what others think.

Such were my feelings, but I kept them to myself and so they rankled in my heart. What a hopeless situation!

About that time I was so ill that I began to worry that my life might be in danger. To die at the convent would have been a burden for the nuns, so when an unexpected chance arose, I decided to leave and go to nearby Otagi, where I arranged for a simple lodging.⁶¹ I wanted at least to let him know my plans, but writing without his first inquiring of me did not seem right. I was overcome by tears as I left the gate of the nunnery.

Just then a carriage came into view ahead of me. The attendants were clearing the people out of the way with much gusto, and they appeared so splendid that I wondered who might be in the carriage. Then I realized they were escorts of the man against whom I bore so much secret resentment. Although he would probably not notice me, still, as I sat within my palanquin I felt unpresentable and embarrassed. The chance to follow him once more with my eyes caused a mixture of joy and sadness in me. At last our ways parted, and I felt depressed and kept looking back for him.

When I arrived at my destination, I saw that the place was truly unbearable—it was even more disagreeable and common than I had heard. Even the evening sky appeared gloomier and more depressing than when I was at the nunnery. No friends were there to keep me company, so I lay down alone on the cheap bedding, uncomfortable and restless, unable to sleep soundly.

⁶⁰There is a word play here on *yo*, 'time', and *fushi*, 'season', both of which have secondary meanings relating to bamboo. *Fushi* are the joints of the bamboo trunk, while *yo* are the spray of leaves sprouting from these joints.

⁶¹Commentators disagree about the location of Otagi and offer various possibilities: Otagi temple, mentioned in *Genji Monogatari*, in Higashiyama; Atago to the west of Kyoto; or in Shūgakuin in present-day Sakyo-ku, Kyoto.

*hakanashina
mijikaki yoha no
kusa makura
musubu tomo naki
utatane no yume*

Though I bind my grass pillow
and lie down to rest,
how brief these nights are,
and how fleeting, too, are
my dreams in fitful slumbers.⁶²

The days went by, but no one came to visit and I felt downhearted. I clung to the sutra, regarding it as my only reliable friend. In my mind I repeated obsessively the words, 'The world is in no wise firm or secure.'⁶³ I depended on the efficacy of this phrase to wake me from this dreaming in a sorrowful world. And so I led a bleak existence, wondering if I might die that day or the next.

On the night of the 16th day of the Fourth Month, I left the window blind open and sat looking out at the garden for a long time, waiting for the moon to rise. The grasses by the flimsy fence grew silver in the full moon's light and the garden filled me with sadness.

*oku tsuyu no
inochi matsu ma no
kari no io ni
kokorobosoku mo
yadoru tsukikage*

I await the end of my life
that is as transient as dew;
disheartening is the moonlight
that finds its lodging
in this temporary hut.

I heard the sound of a distant flute coming from somewhere. My heart froze when I suddenly felt as if I was at his side again, listening to him playing his flute.

*machinareshi
furusato wo dani
towazarishi
hito wa koko made
omoi ya wa yoru*

Even at home, where
I had accepted waiting,
he did not call—
would such a man
think of me here?

But it seemed that my life in this world was destined to endure even this suffering,⁶⁴ for I gradually began to feel better. I thought there was no need to go on forever like this, so I returned home. The trees of my garden are not pines, but even so they seemed to look down on me from above, and I felt ashamed.⁶⁵

⁶²'Binding a grass pillow' indicates sleeping on a journey away from home. Note that the story's title appears in the last line of the poem.

⁶³From the Lotus Sutra: ' . . . , "The world is in no wise firm or secure, / But it is like water-bubbles, like a will-o'-the-wisp!" '.

Hurvitz, p. 261.

⁶⁴*Senzaishū*, 842, by Koshikibu 小式部:
*omoiidete / tare wo ka hito no / tazune mashi
/ uki ni taetaru / inochi narazuwa.*

Were yours not a life of suffering also, / I do not think / you would have remembered / this someone / and come visiting here.

⁶⁵*Kokinrokujō* 古今六帖, 3057: *ika de nao / ari to shiraseji / takasago no / matsu no omowamu / koto mo hazukashi.*

I won't let it be known / I live still; / I would be ashamed— / What would the pines / of Takasago think?

The pines growing at Takasago Shrine were famous for their longevity.

kie kaeri
mata iku beshi to
omoi ki ya
tsuyu no inochi no
niwa no asajifu

Little did I guess that
though I thought I would die,
it seems I shall live:
a life like the dew
on my garden's weeds.⁶⁶

Autumn came and I spent my days in useless lamentation. I passed the long nights with my thoughts for I was kept awake by the noisy singing of crickets near my room and the endless pounding of the fulling blocks. I waited fretfully for dawn and the lamp's light on the wall behind me seemed to be my only friend. I could not stop crying, and my tears fell more heavily than rain beating against the window.⁶⁷ To console myself I kept repeating all day, 'Were there water to entice me.'⁶⁸

It was about this time that my step-father,⁶⁹ a man on whom I rely greatly, decided to make the long journey from Tōtōmi to visit sacred places in the capital. When I told him everything that had happened, he tried to cheer me up, and suggested, 'Rather than drowning in your emotions, why not come to my country residence and console yourself with the local views? It's not at all a bustling place; in fact it's a good place for someone seeking peace of mind.' Of course I regretted cutting myself off completely from the capital, and I thought fondly of various places there that I would miss. Disheartened and anxious, I tried at least to make myself think that a change in location might cause a change in me, too, and hoped that the trip would make me forget my worries.

The day to leave the capital came. But since it was after the 20th day of the Tenth Month, even the light of the early dawn moon was depressing. The sound of the wind, too, was dreadful; I felt it was blowing through my very bones. Everyone was awake and dashing around, while I, in the privacy of my own heart, asked what was to become of me if I left on a journey like this. There were many reasons to feel downcast, but there was no way to remain behind. When we left the capital, all I could see in front of me were my own

⁶⁶*Shin-Kokinshū*, 987, by Saigyō 西行: *toshi takete / mata koyu beshi to / omoi ki ya / inochi narikeri / saya no nakayama*.

Little did I guess / I'd ever pass either so many / Years . . . or this mountain / Again in one, now long, life: / Over Mt Dead-o'-Night!

William R. LaFleur, tr. *Mirror for the Moon*, New Directions, New York, 1978, p. 87.

⁶⁷In this passage, Abutsu has twice borrowed from poems by Po Chū-i when referring to the sounds of the fulling blocks and the rain against the window.

Autumn poems 'Tōi' 擣衣 and 'Shūya' 秋夜, in *Wakan Rōeishū* 和漢朗詠集, Meiji Shoin,

1911, pp. 193 & 129.

⁶⁸*Kokinshū*, 938, by Ono no Komachi: *wabinureba / mi wo ukigusa no / ne wo taete / sasou mizu araba / inamu to zo omou*.

Like a root-cut reed / Should the tide entice / I would come / I would come I know but no wave asks / No stream invites this grief.

Translated by Sam Houston Brock, in Donald Keene, ed., *Anthology of Japanese Literature from the Earliest Era to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, Grove, New York, 1960, p. 265.

⁶⁹That is, Taira Norishige. See p. 391, above. Tōtōmi was a coastal province in present-day Shizuoka prefecture.

dark tears. Nothing can compare with those feelings of loneliness and sadness.

Soon we came to Mt Ōsaka. Even the renowned limped waters of the barrier made me think of endless tears.

*koewaburu
ōsakayama no
yamamizu wa
wakare ni taenu
namida to zo miru*

Reluctantly crossing
Ōsaka Pass—
in its mountain stream
I see endless tears
of unbearable parting.⁷⁰

It began to rain after we had got as far as Noji in Ōmi. When I looked back toward the mountains around the capital, I could see nothing but mist. The increasing distance from the capital distressed me and I asked myself why I ever decided to undertake this journey. My regrets had no limit, and no matter how I tried to stifle my tears, I wept aloud.

*sumiwabite
tachiwakarenuru
furusato mo
kite wa kuyashiki
tabigoromo kana*

Because I was suffering daily
I decided to leave my home;
but coming this far
fills me with regret—
these robes of travel!

Many things caught my eye along the way, but there was no one close by whom I could ask where we were. We traveled a good distance through fields and mountains, and I had no idea where we would be lodging. Everything seemed to be a dream and I just followed the others trustingly. I wasn't used to the long country roads, and so, as may be imagined, I became completely exhausted as the days passed. I hardly felt alive when at last we reached the boundary between Mino and Owari.⁷¹

At a certain place—was it Sunomata?—we came to a wide, turbulent river.⁷² Travelers from both directions waited there and kept the ferry boats plying ceaselessly back and forth. Amid all the turmoil, the shouting and hullabaloo made me feel quite nervous. The important members of my party at last all managed to cross. While waiting for our palanquins and horses, I stepped down to the river bank and looked back at where we had crossed. Common people of mean appearance were piling grimy cargo into a boat. For some reason or other a heated argument broke out, and a man fell into the water. I was not used to anything so alarming, and my having reached such a crossing brought home to me how far away we were from the capital. My weeping grew so intense that it was hard to bear, for I was troubled at not knowing when I might return. Only a few days had passed, but I was already thinking about my friends at home. I longed to hear news from the capital, but since this wasn't

⁷⁰Mt Ōsaka served as an entry and exit route for the capital. Literally meaning Mt Meeting-Hill, it often suggests in poetry the meeting (or not meeting) of a lover.

⁷¹Now the boundary line between Gifu and Aichi prefectures.

⁷²Sunomata is located in present-day Gifu prefecture; the river is the Kawakamigawa.

the field at Sumida River I did not see a capital-bird of whom I could inquire for news.⁷³

*omoiidete
na wo nomi shitau
miyakodori
atonaki nami ni
ne wo ya nakamashi*

Recalling the capital-bird,
whose mere name provoked
yearning for home;
shall I, too, cry before these waves
that vanish without a trace?

Once we entered this province we came to some large rivers. The tidelands of Narumi Bay were even more intriguing than I had heard.⁷⁴ Flocks of plover flew by. The fishermen's salt kilns had aged into many curious shapes, and I found them novel and intriguing. I only wished that I had a friend from the capital with me, for then I wouldn't be so pensive and suffer inwardly so much.

*kore ya sa wa
ika ni narumi no
ura nareba
omou kata ni wa
tōzakaru ramu*

So, if already
this is Narumi Bay,
then how far must I have come
from the capital
for which I long?

When we reached Yatsushashi in Mikawa province, I thought that this place, too, must have been different in earlier times for I saw only one bridge. And although I had heard that irises could be seen in abundance here, there was no sign of them in this season when everything was withered.

Lord Narihira surely must have sighed here, saying, 'How far we have come!', for he had left a wife behind in the capital. I reflected that my situation was not so sad as his, and this thought consoled me a little.⁷⁵

Having traveled far from the capital, we at last arrived in Tōtōmi province. Hamana Bay was quite delightful.⁷⁶ A grove of pines stretched off into the distance just where the rough waves of the sea channel met the calmer waters of the lake. It was something I would have loved to paint.

I saw where I would be living; it was among frightfully delapidated residences, all with thatched roofs.⁷⁷ My house was large compared to the

⁷³*Ise Monogatari*, 9, by Narihira: *na ni shi owaba / iza koto towamu / miyakodori / wa ga omou hito wa / ari ya nashi ya to*.

If you are what your name implies, / Let me ask you, / Capital-bird, / Does all go well / With my beloved?

McCullough, *Ise*, p. 76.

⁷⁴The mud flats of Narumi Bay, located in Nagoya city, are caused by the large fall in the tide. The place name often appears in poetry, for *naru mi* can mean, 'What I have become/ come to,' as seen in the following poem.

⁷⁵Abutsu here makes another reference to *Ise Monogatari*, 9, where Narihira and other

travelers rest at Yatsushashi, and he composes a poem on irises.

Yatsushashi was located in Chiryū, Aichi prefecture, just off the Tōkaidō; the bridges apparently disappeared before the end of the Heian period. McCullough, *Ise*, pp. 75 & 203, n. 9:1.

⁷⁶Hamana, in the southwestern part of Shizuoka prefecture, is now a lake as an earthquake in 1498 closed the bay's passage to the sea.

⁷⁷Some texts have *sukoshi* instead of *sugoku*, which would change the meaning to 'slightly delapidated'.

others, which after all was to be expected, but it was enclosed by only a flimsy reed fence—a temporary residence, not where one would want to settle permanently. I tried making myself think that it didn't really matter whether the place was a palace or a hovel,⁷⁸ but all the same it looked as if it was not going to be easy to live there. A grove of pines was at the back, while a large river flowed placidly in front.

Since the sea was nearby, the waves in the bay could be heard from the house. At flood tide, the river water appeared to be flowing upstream. This change in direction was curious, but for some reason it did not appeal to me. As time went by, I yearned only for the capital; I gazed out dreamily all day long, and brooded at night. The noise of the rough waves pounding the shore sounded as if they were crashing by my bedside, and it seemed that, although I wished otherwise, the dreams in which I had been able to travel back to the capital could be no more.⁷⁹

*kokoro kara
kakaruru tabine ni
nageku tomo
yume dani yuruse
okitsu shira nami*

O white waves of the open sea,
allow me at least
my nighttime travels home,
though I suffer from a journey
of my own heart's making.

Mt Fuji seemed to be right in front of me. Its snow shone white and the smoke drawn by the wind trailed thinly into the distance.⁸⁰ I tried not to think of the poem with the line 'with no limit above',⁸¹ but I nevertheless felt apprehensive. The mountains in Kai province were also very white and could be seen stretching off to the horizon.⁸²

It was toward the end of the Eleventh Month. I was looking through the various letters from the capital and read that the woman who had raised me from childhood had fallen into such depression at my leaving her so callously

⁷⁸*Shin-Kokinshū*, 1851, by Semimaru 蟬丸:
*yo no naka wa / tote mo kakute mo / onaji
koto / miya mo waraya mo / hate shina-
kereba.*

Our lives, / This way or that, / Pass just the same. / Whether in a palace or a hovel / We cannot live forever.

Susan Matisoff, *The Legend of Semimaru*, Columbia U.P., 1978, p. 163.

⁷⁹This passage is strongly reminiscent of a scene in *Genji Monogatari*, where the exiled Genji pines away at his lonely seaside residence at Suma.

'Genji's house was some distance from the sea, but at night the wind . . . seemed to bring the surf to his bedside. . . . One night when they were all asleep he raised his head from his pillow and listened to the roar of the wind and

of the waves, as if at his ear.'

Seidensticker, pp. 235–36.

⁸⁰*Shin-Kokinshū*, 1613, by Saigyō: *kaze ni
nabiku / fuji no keburu no / sora ni kiete /
yukue mo shiranu / waga omoi kana.*

Like Mt Fuji's smoke / drawn by the wind / and vanishing in the sky, / such too is my love / that knows not where it's headed.

⁸¹*Shin-Kokinshū*, 1132, by Fujiwara Ietaka 藤原家隆: *fuji no ne no / keburu mo nao zo /
tachi noboru / ue naki mono wa / omoi nari
keri.*

The smoke from Fuji's depths / drifts higher / and higher / without limit; / so rise my thoughts.

⁸²The Akaishi Range forms part of the Southern Alps.

that her days on earth seemed to be numbered. The brush strokes in her letter were like the tracks of a bird.⁸³ I was deeply saddened and, forgetting all other considerations, decided to return in haste. I worried that everyone might think me a nuisance, but I did not let my embarrassment hamper my hurried preparations. Many people tried to detain me, pointing out that there were various dangers involved, for the road was frozen hard and there weren't any trustworthy escorts available. I wept in discouragement, and when they saw this and realized what a pitiful state I was in, they selected a few travelers to accompany me and so I was able to set out.

This greatly heartened me, though I could not help feeling depressed when I considered how I had decided to leave the capital without thinking things through, and now I was going to set out and return there. I knew that it would be difficult to come back to Tōtōmi again, and I began to miss all the things around me. Such were the workings of my flighty, troublesome heart. The pillar against which I had often leaned was rough and I had not thought fondly of it; but as you can guess, I was now depressed about leaving it. I worried that the sharp-eyed country folk might notice the following poem I left on the pillar, even though I wrote in such small letters that it would be hard for anyone to see them.

*wasuruna yo
asagi no hashira
kawarazuwa
mata kite naruru
ori mo koso are*

Rough pillar,
don't forget me.
If all goes well,
there will be chance again
to come and spend time with you.⁸⁴

Only a few people went with me on the journey this time and, depressing as that was, the experience was completely different from when I had set out from the capital. The days passed, and I showed no doubts about my affection.⁸⁵ Although this return trip had been my own idea, I could not relax. I had no idea how long it would take, but I did not care.

The weather was bright and clear, and we traveled on without delay. Then, at Fuwa Barrier the snow fell heavily and blew about in the wind.⁸⁶ The sky

⁸³In *Genji Monogatari*, the ailing Kashiwagi 柏木 writes to a princess with whom he is in love. 'There were many pauses and the words were fragmentary and disconnected and the hand like the tracks of a strange bird.'

Seidensticker, p. 639.

⁸⁴The passage and the accompanying poem are reminiscent of an incident in *Genji Monogatari*, where Makibashira 真木柱 is forced to leave the house of her husband.

'Her favorite seat has been beside the cypress pillar in the east room. Now it must go to someone else. She set down a poem on a sheet of cypress-colored notepaper and thrust

a bodkin through it and into a crack in the pillar. She was in tears before she had finished writing.

ima wa tote / yadokarenu tomo / nareki-tsuru / maki no hashira wa / ware wo wasuru na.

And now I leave this house behind forever.
/ Do not forget me, friendly cypress pillar.'
Seidensticker, p. 500.

⁸⁵The text is obscure at this point, and some words seem to have been omitted by the copyist.

⁸⁶Fuwa Barrier, at Sekigahara, Gifu prefecture, was one of the three ancient checkpoints

had darkened so much that we stopped for a while near the Barrier Office. From inside, the guard glared at us with an unfriendly expression, wondering what we were up to, and it was all rather frightening.

<i>kakikurasu</i>	Under a dark sky,
<i>yuki ma wo shibashi</i>	while waiting for a break
<i>matsu hodo ni</i>	in the snowfall,
<i>yagate todomuru</i>	a man detains us—
<i>fuwa no sekimori</i>	the barrier guard at Fuwa.

It started to rain as we entered the capital, and Mt Kagami was enveloped in cloud. I recalled that when we left, too, it had been there that it had begun to rain.

<i>kono tabi wa</i>	This time, Mt Kagami,
<i>kumoraba kumore</i>	if you must be cloudy, be so;
<i>kagamiyama</i>	the capital where I shall see
<i>hito wo miyako no</i>	those whom I have longed for
<i>haruka nara ne ba</i>	is near at hand.

Such were my feelings. But in fact the thought that my lover was close was a mere dream. I considered when I might be able to meet him again, and my mood once more became somber.

Later in the day the skies cleared splendidly and white clouds floated above the mountains near the capital. I asked someone what were those mountains, and was told that they were the peaks of Hira and Hiei. I looked upon even the fleeting clouds with longing.

<i>kimi mo sa wa</i>	He, too, is probably looking
<i>yoso no nagame ya</i>	at this same sky,
<i>kayou ramu</i>	and so we share
<i>miyako no yama ni</i>	the floating white clouds
<i>kakaru shira kumo</i>	over the capital's mountains. ⁸⁷

We arrived home at sunset. It was probably my imagination, but everything seemed run down; here and there the house was damp and leaky. There was nothing really appealing about the place, but still, I felt it would be difficult to part with this poor ramshackle house, and I was moved as I gazed upon it. When I looked in on the elderly woman, she seemed to be better already. I was deeply touched to think that no one else so yearned for me, such a pitiful person, as she did.

Perhaps I had learned something from my urge to drift off like the floating

set up to protect the capital. By Abutsu's time it had fallen into ruin and thus often appeared in poetry to evoke images of desolation and loneliness.

⁸⁷Compare *Genji Monogatari*: *nagamuramu* / *onaji kumoi wo* / *nagamuru wa* / *omoi mo*

onaji / *omoi naru ramu*.

She gazes into the skies into which you gaze.
/ May they bring your thoughts and hers into
some accord.

Seidensticker, p. 258.

reeds, for I decided afterward that it must be my fate from a former life to stay and rot away in this humble place. I was determined to stop worrying over my troubles and destiny in this world. But my heart does not always act according to reason, and I could not help wondering what would become of me.

*ware yori wa
hisashikaru beki
ato naredo
shinobanu hito wa
aware tomo mi ji*

Even though these tracings
may outlast me,
he who no longer thinks of me
will not look on them
with feeling.⁸⁸

⁸⁸Abutsu ends her account by quoting a poem by Nakatsukasa 中務 found in *Shoku-* | *Gosenshū*, 1140.