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Spirit possession and emotional suffering in „The Tale of Genji" and its selected adaptations. A study of love triangle between Prince Genji, Lady Aoi and Lady Rokujō

Considered a fundamental work of Japanese literature – even the whole Japanese culture – *The Tale of Genji*, written a thousand years ago by lady Murasaki Shikibu (a lady-in-waiting at the Imperial Court of the empress Shōshi[1] in Heian Japan[2]), continues to awe the readers and inspire the artists up to the 21st century. The amount of adaptations of the story, including more traditional arts (like *Nō* theatre) and modern versions (here films, manga and anime can be mentioned) only proves the timeless value and importance of the tale. The academics have always regarded *The Tale of Genji* as a very abundant source, too, as numerous analyses and studies have been produced hitherto. This article intends to add to the perception of spiritual possession in the novel itself, as well as in selected adaptations.

From poems to scents, from courtly romance to political intrigues: Shikibu covers the life of aristocrats so thoroughly that it became one of the main sources of knowledge about Heian music[3]. Murasaki's novel depicts the perfect male,

[1] For the transcript of the Japanese words and names, the Hepburn romanisation system is used. The Japanese names are given in the Japanese order (with family name first and personal name second).

[2] The Heian period (794–1185) is considered to be the most exquisite and sublime time of Japanese court culture. Peace and tranquillity prevailed, no armed conflicts disturbed the stately existence of the nobility. Aristocrats gathered in capital city, Heian-kyō (today's Kyōto) and devoted themselves to poetry, dance, music and other cultural activities.

[3] See: R. Garfias, *Music of a Thousand Autumns: The Tōgaku Style of Japanese Court Music*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975, pp. 22–23.

court ladies' ideal hero – Hikaru Genji, son of the Emperor and "a jewel beyond compare"[4] – and tells his life story in the peak of the Heian period. The protagonist of the novel, also known as the Shining Prince[5], is equipped with all possible qualifications of a perfect Heian gentleman. Genji is not only handsome beyond describing ("How very handsome Genji was!"[6]), unbelievably polite or extraordinarily elegant, but he also recites the most beautiful poems and dances in amazingly sophisticated way. "Even persons to whom Genji was nothing were drawn to him"[7], writes Shikibu affectionately and it is no wonder that just a mere sight of the beautiful prince can make a woman dream about their perfect romance or adore Genji from afar.

Significance of lady Murasaki's novel might be also measured in the number of received reactions and their extremity – from utmost appraisal possible to rejection and accusation of immorality. On the one hand, *The Tale of Genji* has been canonised and described as the most important Japanese novel ever ("our nation's number-one novel of all time"[8], "the oldest, the grandest, and the greatest novel in our country"[9]). In the late 19th and in the beginning of 20th century it has also served as a proof that Japanese literature, as well as its Western counterpart, may produce a true realistic novel (or a predecessor of it). Thus, according to Tsubouchi Shōyō, it would "elevate the image of Japan as a civilised nation in the eyes of the Westerners"[10]. This way of thinking was also reflected by first, abridged translation into English (1882) by Suematsu Kenchō. Suzuki Tomi presents Kenchō's concern and aim as mostly political – as to "impress the advanced European nations with Japan's social and cultural achievements"[11].

On the other hand, both the plot and the form *The Tale of Genji* have been highly criticised. In modern times, some criticised the form: the writing was described as poor, and the novel itself as boring (as Watatsuji Tetsurō put it: "I hesitate to call it a masterpiece: it's monotonous, repetitive, and even partially beautiful sce-

4 M. Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji,* transl. E. Seidensticker, New York 1990, p. 48.

5 This sobriquet refers to Genji's stunning features, as "he had grown into a lad of such beauty that he hardly seemed meant for this world". See: ibidem, p.18.

6 Ibidem, p. 137.

7 Ibidem, p. 86.

8 Fujioka Sakutarō in his *Kokunugaku zenshi: Heian-chō hen* (*Complete History of Japanese Literature: The Heian court*, 1905, work marking the beginning of modern scholarship on Heian literature), as quoted by H. Shirane, see: H. Shirane, *"The Tale of Genji" and the Dynamics of Cultural Production* [in:] *Envisioning the "Tale of Genji": Media, Gender, and Cultural Production,* ed. H. Shirane, New York 2008, p. 7.

9 Ikeda Kikan in secondary-school textbook from 1951, see: T. Suzuki, "*The Tale of Genji", National Literature Language, and Modernism* [in:] *Envisioning the "Tale of Genji"...*, op. cit., p. 277.

10 Ibidem, p. 249.

11 Ibidem, p. 245.

nes are clouded by the dull monotony of the whole"[12]). The author, lady Murasaki Shikibu, was not spared either: some regarded her remarks as insufficient, because she was a woman ("No matter how talented (…), a woman is a woman. Her observation of human beings is shallow"[13]). Nevertheless, the approving comments were in majority, but it is the amount of both positive and negative commentaries given to the work written a thousand years ago that prove importance of the novel to Japanese literature and culture.

Belief in spirits in the Heian period

Heian Japan seems to be a setting where supernatural and real worlds entwined closely. The people of the Heian period, aristocrats and commoners, believed in a great variety of spirits and demons[14], as well as their ability to affect human existence (in both positive and negative way). General term applied to the hostile spirits was 怨霊, *onryō* (literally meaning "vengeful" or "spiteful" spirit), and that would include both spirits of the dead and spirits of the living. As Hori Ichirō notes, it was the belief in the spirits of the dead (*shiryō*) which flourished the most[15]. Some people were thought to have turned into malevolent spirits after their death (especially when the death itself was sudden or mysterious) and caused a great deal of misfortunes as such. For example, Sugawara no Michizane[16] was considered to have transformed into a spiteful spirit, and his vengeful attacks (including causing deaths of some courtiers and natural disasters, like a lightning that struck the imperial palace) ceased only after his deification and when a shrine in Kyōto was dedicated to him[17].

Spirits were also believed to be able to possess people – both spirits of the living and spirits of the dead. The latter, *shiryō* (literally, "spirit of the dead", 死霊, 死, *shi*, meaning "death" and 霊, *ryō*, meaning "ghost, soul, spirit"), was easily detected, though the exorcism rites could have lasted for a very long time (ritual manuals, handed down within Nichiren Buddhism, prescribed seventeen days)[18]. Another possessing spirit is *ikiryō* – literally a "living spirit", 生霊 or 生き霊 (生 or 生き, *iki*, meaning "living"), a phenomenon unique to Japan, ha-

12 W. Tetsurō, *"Genji monogatari" ni tsuite* (*On "The Tale of Genji"*, 1922), as quoted by T. Suzuki, op. cit., p. 268.

13 M. Hakuchō, *Koten o yonde* (*On Reading Classics*, 1926), as quoted by T. Suzuki, op. cit., p. 269.

14 The most general term to all spirits would be either *rei*, 霊 (also read as *ryō* in compounds), or *tama*, 魂, which can be both translated as "soul, spirit, ghost".

15 I. Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan: Continuity and Change*, Chicago and London 1968, p. 111.

16 Poet and scholar who lived in Heian period (845–903), today is revered as Tenjin, god of learning.

17 M. D. Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai,* Berkeley 2009, p. 6.

18 J. P. Laycock, *Spirit Possession around the World: Possession, Communion, and Demon Expulsion across Cultures*, Santa Barbara 2015, p. 183.

ving roots in native beliefs[19]. *Ikiryō* detaches from a living body in order to haunt and torment other people. The crucial element is the fact that the person from whom the *ikiryō* emerged did not necessarily have to be aware of the fact – at least at the beginning. As Nancy Barnes notices, only an extraordinary cause would provoke a living person to "assume a kind of secondary existence and rush out invisibly to attack its enemies"[20]. Among the possible causes, jealousy, a fiercely and powerful emotion, was most likely to evoke an *ikiryō*. To free a possessed person from spirit's power, special exorcisms were performed – in case of *ikiryō* they usually lasted seven days and included recitation of sutras, as well as burning special incense[21].

A whole range of spirits is widely portrayed in various Japanese legends, folk tales and literary works – and in *The Tale of Genji* one of the most famous *ikiryō* appears: the one that detached from Lady Rokujō and possessed Lady Aoi. In the adaptations of the Aoi's possession scene, though, the term *ikiryō* is applied along with *onryō* and sometimes more general term *mono no ke* (物の怪), which can be translated as a "spectre".

Lady Aoi, Lady Rokujō and spirit possession in the novel

Although *The Tale of Genji* contains a few incidents of spirit possessions, the case of Lady Aoi is the best known and most often reinterpreted in the periods to follow. Trying to explain the popularity of this very example of spirit possession, one should consider two main factors. Firstly, Lady Aoi is an important character in the novel because of her official status as prince Genji's first principal wife. In Murasaki Shikibu's novel, Lady Aoi is a noble daughter of the Minister of the Left[22], "beautiful and [...] [has] advantage of every luxury"[23]. She married Genji at the age of sixteen, when the prince himself was only twelve – this age difference is often signalised when their relationship is addressed in the novel and may serve as one of the reasons why the couple appears to be distant[24]. Another reason would be the fact that their marriage was arranged, a normal practice for Heian aristocrats.

19 B. Brockman, *Spirit Possession, Exorcism, and the Power of Women in the Mid-Heian Period*, (Electronic Thesis or Dissertation), 2001, p. 21 [on-line:] http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=wuhonors1338405581 [30.07.2015].

20 N. Barnes., *Lady Rokujo's Ghost: Spirit Possession, Buddhism, and Healing in Japanese Literature*, "Literature and Medicine" 1989, vol. 8, p. 107.

21 J. P. Laycock, op. cit., p. 183.

22 *Sadaijin*, 左大臣 (along with the Minister of the Right, *Udaijin*, 右大臣), was one of the most important government positions in Japan in Nara and Heian periods.

23 M. Shikibu, op. cit., p. 27.

24 "The bride was older, and somewhat ill at ease with such a young husband" – M. Shikibu, op. cit., p. 26.

What is more, Genji's principal wife, Aoi, is expected to give birth to the prince's first son and future successor. This proves that while Hikaru Genji was intimately involved with numerous ladies introduced in the tale, it is Aoi who was his official love interest, which makes not only their romance but also her spirit possession a public event. Moreover, as Doris Bargen states, the scene of Aoi's possession is "very explicit"[25] on the emotional level, which makes it influential and gives an excellent material that may be used by future authors to explore the matter of spirit possession and its consequences. This is because Murasaki Shikibu intuitively understood psychical relationships that twentieth-century anthropologists refer to as »spirit possession«"[26] and while it was not her intention to theorise, she characterised Lady Aoi's spiritual illness with psychological realism and authenticity. The case of Lady Aoi's spirit possession and her subsequent death are described in the chapter "Aoi"[27] of *The Tale of Genji*. According to Bargen, the novel presents her suffering as "prolonged state of mental dissociation"[28], which cannot be ceased by medicaments or exorcisms. Chapters preceding Aoi's possession and death are filled with "rumours of [Aoi] young husband's growing number of mistresses"[29] that reach the lady and cause her a great distress and emotional suffering. Despite being formally his first wife, Aoi often feels insecure, neglected and even insignificant in comparison with ladies that are romantically involved with Genji. Aoi, who is often characterised as a proud and sophisticated lady, surely feels not only lonely but also humiliated when her husband chooses to spend his time with other women.

The main focus of the story introduced in the chapters preceding the death of the prince's wife is a growing tension between Lady Aoi and Lady Rokujō[30], one of Genji's lovers and "a particularly dangerous woman from his past"[31]. Rokujō is a widow of the former Crown Prince (that is why she is referred to as "Miyasudokoro[32]" in the original text) and mother of Akikonomu, vestal priestess at Ise

25 D. Bargen, *Spirit Possession in The Context of Dramatic Expressions of Gender Conflict: The Aoi Episode of The Genji monogatari*, "Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies" 1988, vol. 48, No. 1, p. 98.

26 Ibidem, p. 96.

27 It is worth pointing that while this chapter was entitled "Aoi" in Japanese original and Waley version of the novel, it was renamed to "Heartvine" and "Heart-to-Heart" in respectively Seidensticker and Tyler translations.

28 D. Bargen, op. cit., p. 98.

29 Ibidem, p. 102.

30 In Waley's version, she is called "The lady of Sixth Ward", "lady Rokujō" in Seidensticker's and "Rokujō no Miyasudokoro" in Tyler's translation.

31 R. Tyler, *Rivalry, Triumph, Folly, Revenge: A Plot Line through "The Tale of Genji"*, "Journal of Japanese Studies" 2003, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 253.

32 *Miyasudokoro* (御息所), literally meaning "the emperor's resting place", was the title applied to the ladies who had given birth to an imperial child. See: N. Fujii, *Historical Discourse Analysis: Grammatical Subject in Japanese*, Berlin 1991, p. 243.

Shrine and later an empress. Shikibu presents Rokujō as very refined and exquisite woman, seven years older than Genji. The Shining Prince courts her persistently and finally wins her but doing so, loses his interest[33]. He engages with other ladies (such as Yūgao, "the Lady of the Evening Faces"), while Rokujō awaits him during long, lonely nights – soon she becomes fiercely jealous.

However, while Murasaki Shikibu describes Rokujō rather as the jealous type ("The Sanjō people went over the list of Genji's ladies one by one [...] only the Rokujō lady and the lady at Nijō seemed to have been singled out for special attentions, and no doubt they were jealous"[34]), in this emotional love triangle it may be easily proved that both women had reasons to be jealous of each other. Rokujō, of course, envies Aoi's position and her official relationship with the Shining Prince, but at the very same time Aoi, whose "marriage had not been happy"[35], wishes for a genuine romance, passion and emotional bond, similar to the one that was once between Genji and Rokujō. Despite their very different positions, "two women compete for Genji"[36], explains Bargen, and the prince, while being aware of the tension, fails to mediate between them.

The most dramatic, "real-life" confrontation of Lady Aoi and Lady Rokujō takes place during the Kamo festival in the Fourth Month, which is also described in the chapter "Aoi". Lavish ceremonies include majestic procession throughout the capital and everyone wishes to catch even a glimpse of it. Even Lady Aoi, who rarely leaves her residence to attend such events, especially during pregnancy, eventually decides to go and admire Genji who was among other attendants of the procession. When Aoi and her entourage reach their destination in an elegant carriage, other carriages are moved aside to allow her the best view – all but for two old carriages, "obviously belonging to someone who did not wish to attract attention"[37]. It is Lady Rokujō with her daughter who also wants to observe Genji and the celebration and "briefly forget her unhappiness"[38]. Nevertheless, Rokujō's men in attendance are not inclined to yield place to Lady Aoi. A quarrel among drunken servants results in a fight and finally Rokujō is forced to retreat, with her carriage shafts broken. She regrets coming there with all her heart, as she has wanted to come quietly and now she has been recognised. The utmost misery for Rokujō happens when Genji passes and, recognising the carriage of his wife, pays respect to Aoi rather than to Rokujō. The latter lady feels "utterly defeated"[39].

33 "He had overcome the lady's resistance and had his way, and, alas, he had cooled toward her" – M. Shikibu, op. cit., p. 36.

34 Ibidem, p. 157.

35 Ibidem, p. 157.

36 D. Bargen, op. cit., p. 99.

37 M. Shikibu, op. cit., p. 149.

38 Ibidem, p. 149.

39 Ibidem, p. 151.

Seemingly trivial yet emotionally traumatic for both ladies, carriage incident at Kamo festival lead to even more drastic consequences – "the stage is set for the next act in the drama of love and hate"[40] and the actual scene of spirit possession soon follows. It is worth pointing here that Tyler uses the phrase "chain of consequences"[41] while describing the tragic series of events concerning Genji and Lady Rokujō (jealousy, carriage quarrel, Aoi's possession and death being only a part of a much longer story he analyses). This expression may suggest that at least some of the events occur without deliberate intent or action of any character involved, almost like a bad fortune or a cruel caprice of fate. In the same chapter[42] of the novel a careful reader will surely notice that the narration shifts between the story of Aoi and the story of Rokujō, which intertwine with each other. The feelings of the two ladies – jealousy, loneliness, hurt pride and "the wrath of a neglected woman"[43]– are characterised parallely and collide in the final act of Aoi's story where her possession, childbirth and death are described.

While the title may suggest that the chapter focuses on Aoi, the scene opens with a detailed study of Rokujō feelings and emotions. Murasaki Shikibu describes the lady as suffering from psychological distress so profound that it manifests with physical symptoms: "her very soul seemed to jump wildly about, and at last she fell physically ill"[44]. And at the very same time, as the author narrates the story in a parallel way, Aoi, pregnant with Genji's child, begins to feel growing presence of malign spirits[45]. Despite multiple prayers, religious chants and presence of skillful exorcist, one of the spirits tends to be not only persistent, but especially vile[46]. While the spirit chooses not to identify itself and remains mysterious, its connection to one of Genji former lovers seems to be obvious – as "jealousy or resentment is a plausible motive for spirit possession"[47] – and among those, Lady Rokujō is rumoured to be a primary suspect. As the dangerous presence of the spirit continues, Aoi "sometimes [weeps] in loud wailing sobs, and sometimes

40 D. Bargen, op. cit., p. 106.

41 R. Tyler, op. cit., p. 253.

42 "Aoi" chapter.

43 D. Bargen, op. cit., p. 102.

44 M. Shikibu, op. cit., p. 156.

45 Various terms are applied to the spirit in the Japanese version, sometimes it is identified as *onryō*, sometimes as *ikiryō*, at first even the term *mono no ke* (物の怪) is used. See: M. Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji,* modernised by Eiichi Shibuya [on-line:] http://jti.lib.virginia.edu/japanese/genji/modern.html [22.07.2015].

46 Here, a gender interpretation may be introduced, as Brittany Brockman notes, "The inability of the male exorcists to subdue the spirit of Lady Rokujō may be seen as a strong assertion of power over the patriarchal social norms which hold jealousy to be among the worst emotions, and to which only women are susceptible" – cf. B. Brockman, op. cit., p. 40.

47 D. Bargen, op cit., p. 100.

[is] tormented by nausea and shortness of breath"[48]. Once again, just like in case of Rokujō, strong emotions or vile intentions manifest with physical symptoms – "classic signs of hysteria"[49], as Bargen diagnoses – and both ladies continue to feel "utterly miserable"[50]. Moreover, while Genji's wife is suffering from both psychological trauma and premature labour pains, Rokujō starts to experience prolonged moments of confusion and "sometimes in a daze she would ask herself if her soul had indeed gone wandering off"[51]. The "great distress"[52] of two women continues and finally reaches its culmination when Aoi, weakened both by her state of pregnancy and due to presence of malign spirit, calls for her husband. However, as Genji joins his "critically ill"[53] wife, he quickly realises that "it was not Aoi's voice, nor was the manner hers […] and then he knew that it was the voice of the Rokujō lady"[54].

Describing the scene of possession, Murasaki Shikibu focuses rather on emotions than the presence of supernatural. Genji and the spirit share a short, poetic conversation which leaves him "horrified and repelled"[55]. The moment of possession lasts only briefly and, as mysteriously as the spirit has manifested, it disappears and Aoi seems to be recovering. The author chooses this moment to shift the point of focus and moves to analyse the behaviour of Lady Rokujō who "was not herself. The strangest thing was that her robes were permeated with the scent of the poppy seeds burned at exorcisms"[56]. It is worth pointing that even though Genji identifies angry spirit as Rokujō and at the very moment perceives her as an antagonist, the lady herself is oblivious to the fact that she has (probably unwillingly) participated in the event of spiritual possession. Rather than angry, she is characterised as confused, "overcome with self–loathing"[57], distressed and plagued with nightmares. What is more, while Lady Rokujō refers to Aoi as her "rival"[58], she demonstrates no joy or satisfaction hearing about the events that had occurred in Genji's household. Analysing psychological aspects of this scene, Bargen points that Lady Rokujō's reaction is consistent with the fact that she "wishes

48 M. Shikibu, op. cit., p. 157.

49 D. Bargen, op. cit., p. 13.

50 M. Shikibu, op. cit., p. 157.

51 Ibidem, p. 158.

52 Ibidem, p. 158.

53 Ibidem, p. 159.

54 Ibidem, p. 162.

55 Ibidem, p. 162.

56 Ibidem, p. 163.

57 Ibidem, p. 163.

58 Ibidem, p. 163.

not Aoi's destruction but Genji's devotion"[59] and thus, rather than an antagonist, she is a victim of her own tragic feelings for the Shining Prince.

As the story unravels, Murasaki continues to put Prince Genji and his feelings in the centre of attention while Aoi is just featured in the background. There is no detailed description of childbirth and even the tragic moment of her sudden death is described in just one, simple sentence – "Aoi was again seized with a strangling shortness of breath; and very soon […] she was dead" [60] – while the rest of the chapter focuses mostly on Genji's grief and Lady Rokujō attempts to rebuild their relations. "No doubt Aoi had been fated to die"[61], states Shikibu, and for a careful reader of the novel it is obvious that the lady is a subject of greater plot[62], one that centres around Genji and Rokujō and the major tale of love, pride, anger and despair.

Aoi's possession, although having a profound impact on both Genji's emotions and the novel storyline, is at the same time a very mysterious scene. The moment of possession is described rather briefly and no definite explanations are given about the spirit intentions or its origins. All information given in the chapter can be simply analysed as speculations or thoughts of Prince Genji (he is the one to label the spirit as Rokujō) or other spectators of the event[63], diverting the reader from any certain conclusions. Of course, the lack of definite answers corresponds well with the general character of the novel. As pointed by Royall Tyler, narrator in *The Tale of Genji* "rarely confirms or denies [...] possibilities"[64], leaving the reader free to search for their own conclusions. Moreover, Murasaki's novel is "loosely plotted"[65], which means that Murasaki Shikibu deliberately left blank spaces in Prince Genji's storyline (perhaps even, using Roman Ingarden's terminology, "places of indeterminacy"[66] which wait to be filled in by an individual reader's

[59] D. Bargen, op. cit., p. 27.

[60] M. Shikibu, op. cit., p. 165.

[61] Ibidem, p. 169.

[62] Cf. "The operations of Rokujō's living spirit allow the author to remove the excessively respectable, hence in the long run uninteresting and constricting, Aoi from the narrative establish Rokujō as a potential threat to Genji in future, and seal the long intimacy of Genji and Murasaki's married life." (R. Tyler, op. cit., p. 273). Both Murasaki herself (as an author) and Tyler (as a critical reader of the novel) seem to treat Aoi as a temporary plot device and a character of lesser importance than Genji's other lovers, such as Rokujō or Murasaki. Moreover, this interpretation corresponds well with the image of Aoi in various adaptations where her part is often reduced. In the no play *Lady Aoi* (attributed to Zeami) she is only represented simply by a kimono, while in Mishima's modern version of the play she is practically mute for the majority of the story.

[63] See: "The exorcists were asked about the possibility [that the spirit is lady Rokujō – A. K.], but they gave no very informative answer" – M. Shikibu, op. cit., p. 157.

[64] R. Tyler, op. cit., p. 251.

[65] Ibidem, p. 251.

[66] For more information on the subject see: H. Markiewicz, *Places of Indeterminacy in a Literary Work* [in:] *Roman Ingarden and Contemporary Polish Aesthetics*, ed. P. Graff, S. Krzemień-Ojak, Warszawa 1975, pp. 159–171.

interpretation), allowing "those who aspire to a more comprehensive view of the tale"[67] to pursue their own ideas, plot possibilities or speculations. Moreover, it may also be read in the light of theories of Hans Georg Gadamer who states that while "one intends to understand the text itself […] the interpreter's own thoughts too have gone into re-awakening the texts' meaning"[68]. Similarly to Ingarden's places of indeterminacy, Gadamer notes that in the process of understanding, original text merges with reader's own imagination and interpretation. Thus, it is no wonder that almost each and every important scene in *The Tale of Genji* has a vast number of adaptations. What is more, especially in case of historical works, like *The Tale of Genji*, it is important to point that readers tend to "regain the concepts of a historical past in such a way that they also include our own comprehension of them"[69]. Consequently, each of numerous adaptations of Murasaki's novel may serve not only as a reinterpretation of Genji's story but also as an important evidence of social and cultural context in which it was itself created.

Lady Aoi on the stage – Aoi no Ue and Nō theatre

As already mentioned, *The Tale of Genji*, tale of love, pride, anger and despair has become a source of inspiration for many works of art, including traditional Japanese theatre. In the Muromachi period (1336–1573), with the actual emergence of *Nō*, Shikibu's *opus magnum* became one of the key foundational texts which inspired playwrights, along with *The Tale of Ise* and *The Tale of Heike*. Nine plays based on *The Tale of Genji* are the part of the current repertoire and the one drawing from the story of Lady Aoi – *Lady Aoi* (*Aoi-no-Ue*) – is thought to be a part of the *Nō* canon[70].

The *Nō* version of the *Lady Aoi* which has survived to modern days is probably Zeami's revision of a previous, anonymous work, written for Inoue's troupe in the first half of the 15th century which makes it the oldest *Genji*-based *Nō* play[71]. It differs from the usual pattern of female-spirit *Nō* plays of a sort, "in which a spirit or a ghost of a beautiful female character from the Heian court appears on the stage and recalls her former life"[72]. The case of *Lady Aoi* is rather a re-enactment of a the famous scene, loosely based – as we shall soon observe – on Murasaki's work and paradoxically tells the story not about Lady Aoi, but about Lady Rokujō.

67 R. Tyler, op. cit., p. 251.

68 H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and method*, ed., transl. J. Weinsheimer, D. Marshall, New York 1996, p. 388.

69 Ibidem, p. 374.

70 R. Yamanaka, *The Tale of Genji and the Development of the Female-Sprit Nō* [in:] *Envisioning the "Tale of Genji"*..., op. cit., p. 81.

71 H. Shirane, *Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to 1600*, New York 2007, p. 925.

72 R. Yamanaka, op. cit., p. 82.

In the first act of *Lady Aoi*, the female shaman called Teruhi[73] is due to perform an exorcism on Lady Aoi (represented on stage simply by an embroidered *kosode* kimono) who lays sick and possessed by a demon. Teruhi chants a proper incantation for the evil spirit to come forth and then spirit of Rokujō enters, with a long wig, mask with gold-painted eyes and a lavish kimono. She passionately complains of her agony ("How sad is my fate! (…) I shall stand to tell of my sorrow"[74]), then finally reveals her identity and laments for the old days, full of happiness.

> Happily thus I spent my days [at the palace]
> Among bright hues and scents.
> Fallen in life, today I am no more
> Than a morning glory that wither with the rising sun
> My heart knows no respite from pain
> Bitter thoughts grow like fern shoots
> Bursting forth in the field.
> I have appeared to take my revenge[75].

The spirit of Lady Rokujō reveals deep trauma concerning the events at the Kamo Festival[76], confesses her hatred for Aoi and attempts to destroy her because "as long as she [Aoi] lives, her bond with the Shining Genji will never end"[77]. This corresponds well with perception of Rokujō as a victim of her own feelings rather than a demonic villain, which was mentioned earlier.

In the second act of the play, the Holy Man[78] from Yokozawa is called to aid Lady Aoi whose condition has worsened even more than before. He starts performing exorcisms and again, the spirit of Lady Rokujō appears – yet this time wearing a different mask, *hannya*, the mask of a female demon. They both struggle, the Holy Man chanting exorcism and the spirit resisting, trying to assault both Aoi and the Holy Man. Yet finally, the spirit of Lady Rokujō subdues to the exorcisms:

> How fearful is the chanting of sutra!
> My end at last has come.
> Never again will this spirit come[79].

[73] In some translations Teruhi is presented as a "witch", not a "shaman". See: A. Waley, *The Nō plays of Japan*, London 1954.

[74] H. Shirane, *Traditional Japanese Literature*, op. cit., p. 929.

[75] Ibidem, p. 930.

[76] In some earlier versions of the play she entered the stage, riding a broken carriage. See: H. Shirane, *Traditional Japanese Literature...*, op. cit., p. 926.

[77] Ibidem, p. 932.

[78] In some translations he is called "saint" or simply "priest". See: A. Waley, *The Nō plays of Japan...*, op. cit.

[79] H. Shirane, *Traditional Japanese Literature...*, op. cit., p. 936.

She rises, "as if rid of her course"[80] and the play ends with chorus' remark of her becoming peaceful: "The demon's heart grows gentle […] she enters nirvana, released from the cycle of death and rebirth"[81].

As Yamanaka Reiko points out, this particular *Nō* version of Aoi's possession bears few resemblances to the original chapter from *The Tale of Genji*. The characters of shaman Teruhi and the Holy man have been added and they both "considerably enhance the *dramatic* conflict"[82]. Shirane Haruo notes the absence of any direct citation from the novel, pregnancy of Lady Aoi is not mentioned in the play and the perpetrator of the whole conflict, Genji himself, does not appear in the *Nō* version at all (in Murasaki's novel he is the one to recognise Rokujō as the spirit who possessed Aoi)[83]. Rokujō in *Lady Aoi* ask for no forgiveness – as spiruits in *Nō* theatre often do – dedicating herself to vengeance instead. What is interesting, other *Nō* plays with Rokujō as a leading character do not differ that much from the original – for example *Nishinomiya* where the spirit of the Lady Rokujō dwells on the brief meeting with Genji in Saga fields[84]. Lady Rokujō does not appear in the flesh in the play at all, it is only her spirit[85] who we encounter. Therefore, it would be hard to dispel the doubts whether Aoi's possession had been a deliberate act of a living person – on the contrary to the novel, where Rokujō is unaware of being involved in the spirit's possession and clearly has not sent her spirit or "ordered" it to act according to her will.

Modern Nō adaptation – Mishima Yukio's The Lady Aoi

The issue of Aoi's possession and subsequent death was also addressed by Mishima Yukio, 20th century Japanese author, poet and playwright, in his play *The Lady Aoi*. The author reinterprets the scene in a contemporary, minimalistic setting with limited properties and only a few characters present on the stage. As stated by Arthur Waley, one of *The Tale of Genji* translators, in *The Lady Aoi* Mishima "achieved an integration of the legendary and the actual most completely"[86] and managed to connect spiritual atmosphere straight from *The Tale of Genji* with characteristic features of the modern world. Thus, while Mishima's reinterpreta-

80 Ibidem, p. 936.

81 Ibidem, p. 936.

82 R. Yamanaka, op. cit., p. 84.

83 H. Shirane, *Traditional Japanese Literature...*, op. cit., p. 926.

84 R. Yamanaka, op. cit., pp. 87–88. Lady Rokujō is a central character of three of nine Genji-based *Nō* plays, including *Lady Aoi*, *Nonomiya* and *Shikimi tengu*.

85 She identifies herself as *onryō*, saying "I am a vengeful spirit of Rokujō Miyasudokoro". For Japanese version of the play, see: [on-line:] http://www.the-noh.com/en/plays/data/program_006.html [25.07.2015].

86 A. Waley, *Review: Five Modern Nō Plays. By Yukio Mishima*, "The Journal of Asian Studies", vol. 17, no. 3 (May 1958), p. 487.

tion of the scene surely fits "modern theatrical tastes"[87], it is the same old story of Genji, Aoi and Rokujō that builds the plot. Waley is also the one to notice and point that while the form of the play that Mishima uses may link to Zeami's work, "in *Aoi* Mishima follows *The Tale of Genji* rather than the *Nō* play"[88].

The event of possession takes place in hospital where Lady Aoi – here named Wakabayashi Aoi – lies sick from mysterious illness and her husband –Wakabayashi Hikaru, described as a spitting image of prince Genji[89] – comes with an evening visit. Despite the modern setting and altering the names of the characters, Mishima ensures that a reader will be provided with numerous links to Murasaki's original text. Everything seems quiet, almost peaceful, yet a certain anxiety and suspense is definitely noticeable since the very beginning of the play. Aoi, despite being mentioned in the title, is unconscious and silent for majority of the play and does not participate in the dialogue, which corresponds very well with how the lady is shown in the original text of the novel. According to the explanation given by the nurse, the Aoi suffers from various "sexual complexes"[90] and is tormented by terrible dreams. Mentioning Aoi's troubled sleep is not only a direct reference to her symptoms described in original text of Murasaki's novel but it also creates oneiric atmosphere that continues to be present throughout entire play.

The nurse, a character that may serve here as a quasi-narrator as she explains current situation both to Hikaru and to the readers of the play, informs Aoi's concerned husband that his wife is nightly visited by "a beautiful middle-aged woman, very well dressed, who arrives in a sleek automobile that seems to fly through the streets"[91]. Such description is an excellent example of how Mishima connects modern technology and elements of contemporary world with the presence of supernatural. Moreover, as the nurse confesses that visits of mysterious nightly guest make her feel anxious, the atmosphere of suspense intensifies and at this point even a reader unfamiliar with the story of Lady Aoi's possession may certainly feel looming presence of something unholy or unearthly.

When the awaited guest finally arrives, Hikaru quickly recognises his former lover, Rokujō Yasuko, even though it has been years since they have last met. The lady informs Hikaru with no remorse that she has been deliberately causing Aoi pain, as she would not tolerate another woman as his wife or lover. What is interesting in comparison with the scene of possession in Murasaki's *The Tale of Genji* is the fact that in Mishima's version of the story an explanation of both the cause and the process of possession is given straight from the visiting lady. "My spirit would leave my body even while I was still alive, and it would go to torture her.

87 N. Barnes, op. cit., p. 117.

88 A. Waley, *Review: Five Modern Nō Plays*…, op. cit., p. 487.

89 Y. Mishima, *Aoi no Ue* [in:] *Kindai Nō Gakushū*, Tokyo 1963, p. 426.

90 Ibidem – own translation.

91 N. Barnes, op. cit., p. 118.

My living ghost would afflict her and torment her and torture her"[92], she states contemplating the fate of Hikaru's wife. However, despite the threats she is making, Rokujō is at the same time disturbingly alluring. She mesmerises Hikaru with stories from the times they were together and draws him into a dream world built with memories they shared long time ago. Immersed so deeply in Rokujō's words, "enveloped by a dream-web (…) Hikaru does not realise that Aoi is calling for help"[93] and only after a few distressed sobs from his wife he manages to "wrench himself out of Madame Rokujō's world back to Aoi's"[94]. Similarly to the event that occurred in *The Tale of Genji*, Hikaru proclaims his love to Aoi, causing Rokujō to disappear and leaving him frightened and confused with the situation that has just happened. In response, he reaches the phone and tries to contact Rokujō – once again Mishima easily links modern technology with spiritual realm. It is also worth pointing that even though he manages to escape from the dream-web, Hikaru's attention is still focused on Rokujō rather than on Aoi, which seems to correspond with the story given by Murasaki Shikibu in her novel.

As the story reaches its finale, Hikaru tries to speak with Rokujō via telephone and Mishima presents their conversation in dualistic way, as Rokujō's voice can be heard both from outside of the hospital room and through the telephone and simultaneously she both continues their former dialogue from earlier and seems to be confused by his phone call in the middle of the night. Similarly to the scene in the novel, Aoi dies suddenly and does not seem to be a point of focus even at the moment of her death. As she "collapses and dies"[95], Rokujō continuous questions via telephone seem to muffle her final cries.

As the play is over, the reader is left with numerous unanswered questions and simply labelling the characters simply as "victim" or "aggressor" seems uneasy. Although the nightly visitor identifies herself as the Rokujō's angry spirit and threatens Aoi with death (that later indeed follows), the telephone conversation at the end of the play gives a new insight and portraits Rokujō as oblivious and confused rather than cruel, which is another interesting similarity to the novel's original text. "They remain hopeless victims of their personal fantasies and supernatural forces"[96], diagnoses Nancy Barnes, as she analyses the situation of the main characters of Mishima's play. Moreover, she points that while Mishima does not label Rokujō as an aggressor, as she has no control over the actions of an angry spirit,

92 Y. Mishima, *The Lady Aoi* [in:] idem, *Fire Modern No Plays*, transl. D. Keene, New York 1973, pp. 167–168. Mishima firstly uses the term 魂 (*tamashii*), which English version translates into spirit (but it may also be a "soul") and later 生霊 (*ikiryou)* as "living ghost". Moreover, in the same part of dialogue the ghost refers to itself as 物の怪 (*mono no ke*) as well. Cf. Y. Mishima, *Aoi no Ue*, op. cit., p. 434.

93 N. Barnes, op. cit., p. 118.

94 Ibidem, p. 118.

95 Ibidem, p. 118.

96 Ibidem, p. 119.

he does not blame Aoi or Hikaru either. Making Aoi unconscious and silent for the majority of the play, Mishima removes all possible hints of Aoi's jealousy (that were, as previously stated, present in the original text of *The Tale of Genji*) or her active participation in the rivalry with Rokujō. He even changes the timeline of the events so that Hikaru's romance with Lady Rokujō would happen prior to his marriage with Aoi, making him a faithful husband. However, while there is no obvious evil or no defined crime leading to deadly consequences, "in the uncharted world of the modern Nō play, no means exist to cure Aoi's illness or save Madame Rokujō"[97], explains Barnes simply. There is no healing force – neither modern medicine nor ancient prayers and exorcisms can bring peace or redemption.

Lady Aoi on screen – selected film adaptations

The scene of Lady Aoi's possession is shown in most of the film adaptations and in most of those cases it is a spectacular one. Yet, the first film version from 1951, directed by Yoshimura Kōzaburō and entitled simply *The Tale of Genji*, fails to portray Rokujō at all – Lady Aoi simply dies in childbirth, without any reference to a spirit possession.

First film to introduce both Lady Rokujō and the scene of spirit possession is *Shin Genji monogatari* (*The New Tale of Genji*) directed by Mori Kazuo and released in 1961. While it repeats a great amount of scenes and ideas from Kōzaburō's version[98], it introduces some additions, including the character of Lady Rokujō. Even more, the tension between Genji (played by Ichikawa Raizō), Aoi (portrayed by Wakao Ayako) and Rokujō (played by Nakata Yasuko) serves as an important part of the plot. In Mori's film, arranged marriage between Genji and Aoi is shown as quite unhappy. Although Genji tries to be kind, his wife seems to feel forced and reluctant to have such a husband. "Our marriage is not of love"[99], says Aoi bluntly during their wedding night. When Genji, surprised, confesses his love and assures he wants to make her happy with all his heart, Aoi reproaches him for his relationship with Lady Rokujō. "It is but for an unfounded rumour, completely untrue (…), a past thing"[100], remarks Genji eagerly, but Aoi is inconvincible.

Soon, Genji admits to his servant that his marriage was a mistake and Aoi is a cold and frigid woman. Meanwhile, young daughter of Lady Rokujō expresses her disbelief in Genji marrying Aoi, as she thought he would wed her mother instead and become her father. Although Rokujō chastens her daughter immediately for delivering such childish remarks, she secretly weeps upon her love, certain

97 Ibidem, p. 119.

98 For example, the scene of abduction of young Murasaki or secret meetings with Fujitsubo. See: K. Tateishi, *"The Tale of Genji" in Postwar Film: Emperor, Aestheticism and the Erotic* [in:] H. Shirane, *Envisioning the "Tale of Genji"*..., op. cit., p. 312, p. 325.

99 0:13, *Shin Genji monogatari*, dir. K. Mori, Japan 1961 – own translation.

100 0:14, ibidem – own translation.

she lost Genji forever. It appears that Genji's attention shifts from Aoi to Rokujō constantly, though he engages himself with other ladies as well. After a while, he visits Rokujō, tormented with his complicated relationship with Fujitsubo, his stepmother and first love interest, and swears that would never forget Rokujō and that he depends on her deeply. In the meantime, his servants allow themselves to say that his involvement with such an old lady is indeed remarkable.

Aoi, though indifferent at the beginning, grows to become jealous of Rokujō, Fujitsubo and young Murasaki, but melts after Genji confesses his devotion to her. Then it is Rokujō's turn to become jealous of Aoi and this emotion meets its climax in the famous carriage quarrel at the Kamo festival. Defeated and humiliated Rokujō, forced to yield place to Genji's lawful wife, broods over the event the same night. "Mortifying!"[101], she tells herself, and when she is about to fall asleep, a spirit emerges from her body[102]. Rokujō is aware of the fact but cannot control anything – she lays, unfit to move, and the spirit departs, paying no heed to her begging: "Do not go, do not go anywhere!"[103], pleads Rokujō. The spirit walks straight to Aoi's chambers and sits at her headboard. She immediately recognises its presence, calls for aid and starts to curl up with pain. Genji learns that his wife has become possessed (by, as servants tell him, a *mono no ke*) and tends to Aoi affectionately. Rokujō realises his attachment and, embittered, sends her spirit to Genji's wife once again ("I'll curse her! I'll haunt her to death!"[104], she exclaims). Genji recognises Rokujō's voice speaking through Aoi's mouth and, according to spirit's request, stops the recitation of sutras. The spirit leaves and soon Aoi safely delivers the child. Happy and safe, she and Genji finally reconcile and promise themselves a better life from now on. Yet, when Genji leaves, the spirit comes for the third time – in the shape of the black smoke – and kills Aoi, despite sutras being chanted constantly. Genji grieves after her death deeply, yet no reaction of Rokujō is shown – he receives only her letter, informing about her departure to Ise with her daughter[105].

What is most important in Mori's interpretation of the famous possession motive, Lady Rokujō is aware of the spirit's action from the beginning. Although at first she wishes it to do no harm, her embitterment and pain are so great that eventually she decides to take revenge on Aoi. Rokujō's determination and anger exceed the lady's portrayal in Murasaki's novel considerably. She might be even considered to be the film's villain, standing in the way of Genji's and Aoi future married bliss.

[101] 1:05, ibidem – own translation.

[102] It is quite interesting in shape, as it take form resembling a photographic negative version of the lady.

[103] 1:06, *Shin Genji...* op. cit. – own translation.

[104] 1:08, ibidem – own translation.

[105] The letter is the last statement the viewer receives from Rokujō – she is later seen at the ceremony of her daughter's consecration, yet remains silent.

Since 1961, the character of Lady Rokujō has become an important figure of *The Tale of Genji* film versions[106]. Among them, the adaptation from 2001 by Horikawa Tonkō, entitled *Love of a Thousand Years: The Tale of the Shining Genji* (Jpn. 『千年の┌ひかる源氏物語』, *Sennen no Koi: Hikaru Genji monogatari*) seems to be the most liberal one and presents an interesting vision of Lady Rokujō (here played by Takeshita Keiko). As Tateishi Kazuro notes, Horikawa's film is rather an artistic rendition of *The Tale of Genji*. Not only does the film appear to be an innovative concept of a story within a story, with Shikibu herself educating young empress Shōshi and telling her about Genji and his romances, but also it "displays preposterous «creativity»"[107]. *Love of a Thousand Years* includes many fantastic motives, for instance underwater love scene between Genji and lady Akashi (literally shot in an aquarium).

As Murasaki Shikibu narrates the story, she explains that Genji (portrayed by former Takarazuka star and *otokoyaku*, Amami Yūki), out of regard for his memories of his late mother, turned to older woman – no one else, but Lady Rokujō. The emphasis is put on the very significant age difference, as Rokujō constantly ponders on her own age ("Oh, in my young years I was a beauty!"[108], she sighs, looking at herself in a mirror) and wishes she could have met Genji earlier, when she was young. Passionate lover, Lady Rokujō is "demonised for her carnal lust and self-pity"[109]. Aoi no Ue, on the other hand, is "beautiful but secluded to her own heart"[110], as the narrator puts it. Nevertheless, the married couple is able to conceive a child, though it "seems to be a miracle"[111], according to Aoi's ironic remark. Later she becomes convinced that the child she bears is not hers, but Rokujō's and Genji's. Rokujō, wearing a spider-pattern kimono, promises herself she will not give Genji to anyone and stares intensely into a mirror. Her reflection leaves the mirror and torments Aoi – several months pregnant – causing her a great deal of pain. Genji's wife imagines her husband and Rokujō during an ardent love scene and hears Rokujō's ominous and triumphant laugh. Exorcism rites are performed, Genji again recognises Rokujō's voice speaking through Aoi and bravely fights the spirit with his sword. The child is safely delivered, but Aoi dies. Rokujō leaves for Ise without conveying any message, yet Genji is still haunted by her image and even hallucinates that her carriage crashes him. Eventually, the memory of Rokujō is faded due to new lovers and new romances.

[106] She appears, among others, in the film from 1966 directed by Takeshi Tetsuji (*The Tale of Genji*, Japan, 1966), TV film by Teruhiko Kuze (*The Tale of Genji*, Japan, 1980), and in the animated film *Murasaki Shikibu: The Tale of Genji* by Sugi Gisaburō (Japan, 1987).

[107] K. Tateishi, op. cit., p. 316.

[108] 0:32, *Love of a Thousand Years: The Tale of the Shining Genji,* dir. T. Horikawa, Japan, 2001.

[109] K. Tateishi, op. cit., p. 319.

[110] 0:35, *Love of a Thousand…*, op. cit.

[111] 0:36, ibidem.

Rokujō in Horikawa's vision is a demonic character, vicious and jealous. No daughter is mentioned in this adaptation and Genji's older lover seems to be occupied by two desires: to be young and beautiful again and have the Shining Prince for herself forever. Thus, she bears negative feelings for Aoi for two reasons: Aoi is younger, more beautiful and lawful spouse of Genji. Extreme, even exaggerated portrayal of Rokujō fits well with the general vision of Shikibu's novel in *Love in Thousand Years* and remains the most fiendish of all. Similarly to Mori's film, Rokujō consciously sends her spirit to haunt Aoi[112].

Conclusions

As mentioned earlier, the scenes concerning Aoi's possession and death (both in the original text of the novel and in its various adaptations) rarely concentrate on detailed description of supernatural intervention, they focus rather on emotions, feelings and the development of the characters (mainly Genji, as the hero of the novel) and relationships between them. In the case of the original novel, it might be also suspected that Heian readers were familiar with the mechanism of the spirit possession and needed neither detailed explanation nor theoretical background, which is why Murasaki Shikibu put emphasis on emotions of the characters and used the possession motif mainly to introduce more drama between Genji, Aoi and Rokujō. What is more, following the studies of Ōasa Yuji, Tyler states that in *The Tale of Genji* episodes of possession are "less examples of the supernatural [...] than evidences of plot construction"[113], which proves to be also helpful while searching for the reason of the confusion in formal classification of the angry spirit that haunted Aoi. In addition, in some cases "it seems not to matter who or what the spirit is"[114], explains Tyler, as it is simply the very fact of possession that matters and its (often tragic) consequences that matter. Thus, while there are obvious differences between various forms of spirit possession, it should not be surprising that some authors use different terms (such as *ikiryō* and *mono no ke* in case of Mishima's play) almost as synonyms.

"In a way, Rokujō spirit indeed functions as the ghost of Genji's past"[115], deciphers Tyler once again, pointing to the fact that the event of Aoi's possession may be viewed not only as a result of Rokujō's vile intentions but also as a consequence of Genji's former actions that is now beyond his (or anyone else's) control. This interpretation corresponds well with the fact that Lady Rokujō often seems obli-

[112] In the latest film adaptation of the novel *Tale of Genji: A Thousand Year Enigma* (*Genji Monogatari: Sennen no Nazo*, Japan, 2011), directed by Tsuruhashi Yasuo, Rokujō – despite being young and beautiful – grows jealous and vicious and kills not only Aoi, but also Yūgao (in the novel Yūgao dies because of spirits' intervention, yet it is not clearly stated whether it has been Rokujō's doing or not).

[113] R. Tyler, op. cit., p. 277.

[114] Ibidem.

[115] Ibidem, p. 281.

vious to the spirit's actions and helpless during the actual moment of possession. In the words of Earl Miner, the angry spirit possessing Aoi in *The Tale of Genji* and its later adaptations is not Rokujō *per se*, but her "passions [that – A. K.] – escape her subconscious and torment her rivals"[116]. The usage of the word "subconscious" shows that the angry spirit is neither a product of carefully plotted revenge nor it originated from devious intent. It is rather an unfortunate result of hidden emotions or suppressed pain. Moreover, while he refers to the lady as "unwitting cause of misery"[117] in Genji's life, it is obvious that Rokujō herself is no less miserable.

Nonetheless, in the mentioned film adaptations Lady Rokujō is scarcely portrayed as an innocent victim of her own fatal love. First unwilling to harm, then vindictive in Mori's version, deliberate and evil in Horikawa's, Rokujō acquires the position of the film villain who must be stopped by any means[118]. In both cases, the viewer is more likely to sympathise with Aoi – as her jealousy cannot compare to powerful envy of Rokujō – and to regret that she died just as her marriage with Genji entered a new, probably far happier phase. Yet again, spirit possession on the screen appears as a prelude to a passionate game of emotions between the three characters rather than a fantastic motive or a study of actual belief in the doing of *onryō*. One may suppose that the filmmakers decided to portray Rokujō as an antagonist in a more explicit and unambiguous way in order to intensify the films' pace.

The case of Lady Aoi (and, all the same, Lady Rokujō, as their fates intertwine with each other) remains to have an extraordinary inspirational effect on various artists since *The Tale of Genji* was written. It also shows that Murasaki Shikibu used motives and beliefs natural to the Heian people to introduce a subtle and complicated plot, and critics who concentrated on Murasaki's skills might find it a good starting point for their future analysis. It is not the spirit possession that is the most important here – it is the emotions, the development of the characters and their complicated relations with one another that play the crucial and the most fascinating role.

[116] E. Miner, *Some Thematic and Structural Features of the Genji Monogatari,* "Monumenta Nipponica" 1969, vol. 24, no. 1/2, p. 2.

[117] Ibidem, p. 12.

[118] It may be interesting to note that in all mentioned cases Rokujō's spirit is fully controlled before Genji's wife safely delivers the child. However, it does not mean that Aoi herself is spared, as the spirit finally comes to kill her. The question why the spirit could not be exorcised once and for all to save both the child and Aoi might become a starting point for another study.

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Streszczenie

Opętanie i cierpienie w „Opowieści o księciu Promienistym" oraz w wybranych adaptacjach. Studium trójkąta miłosnego między księciem Genjim, damą Aoi i damą Rokujō

Opowieść o księciu Promienistym, słynna powieść napisana przez Murasaki Shikibu u progu XI wieku, aż po dziś dzień inspiruje rozmaitych artystów. Wiele motywów zostało zaadaptowanych lub zinterpretowanych w innych dziełach sztuki, jednak wyjątkowo interesująca wydaje się być scena opętania – kiedy Aoi no Ue, żona księcia Genjiego, zostaje opętana przez ducha jego kochanki, damy Rokujō. W artykule zbadano te adaptacje *Opowieści*, w których motyw opętania jest szczególnie znaczący: warto tu wymienić klasyczne i nowoczesne sztuki *nō* oraz ekranizacje filmowe. Analizie poddano przede wszystkim relacje miedzy trójką bohaterów, ich emocje oraz pobudki: zarówno w tekście oryginalnym, jak i w adaptacjach. To właśnie te uczucia, ich rozwój oraz wzajemne relacje postaci okazują się być kluczowe – dużo ważniejsze niż właściwa opętanie oraz jego przebieg.

Summary

Spirit possession and emotional suffering in „The Tale of Genji" and its selected adaptations. A study of love triangle between Prince Genji, lady Aoi and lady Rokujō

The Tale of Genji, renowned novel written by lady Murasaki Shikibu in the beginning of the 11th century, continues to inspire various artists through the centuries.

Many motifs have been adopted or reinterpreted within other works of art, yet the scene of spirit possession – when wife of prince Genji, lady Aoi, is possessed by the spirit of her lover, lady Rokujō – seems to be exceptionally inspiring. This article traces those adaptations of *The Tale*, where the possession is highly significant: including classic *nō* play, modern *nō* play and film versions. The relations between the characters are carefully investigated, along with their emotions and motives: both in the original text and its adaptations. The key conclusion shows that in all analysed works it is not the actual possession and its mechanism that matters the most, it if for the emotions of the characters, their development and complicated relations with one another.