

Aoi no Ue

Nippon Gakuyutsu Shinkōkai, trans. Japanese Noh Drama vol. 2 (Tuttle, 1955) pp. 89-101.

INTRODUCTION

Aoi-no-Ue belongs to that division of the Fourth Group which is known as *onryō-mono* or 'revengeful ghost' pieces. Unlike other *onryō-mono* pieces, in which a woman, whose love was not requited during her life, turns after death into a revengeful ghost and attacks her rival, *Aoi-no-Ue*¹ has for its heroine, Princess Rokujō,² who is alive, but whose jealousy assumes the form of a spirit which leaves her body.

In the *Tale of Genji*, Princess Rokujō, who becomes consort to the Crown Prince at the age of sixteen, is widowed at twenty. Ten years later she is courted by Genji, whose affection, however, is soon transferred to other women, beginning with Yūgao³ mentioned in the play. The jealousy of Princess Rokujō is transformed into a revengeful ghost which steals out of her when she herself is not aware of it and haunts and torments Aoi-no-Ue,⁴ consort of Genji, whose servants once humiliated her in a quarrel over a standing-place for her coach at the festival of the Kamo Shrine⁵—hence the frequent allusion to coaches and wheels in the text. The heroine appears in the noble figure of a princess in Part One and in Part Two she assumes a furious demon form. She is invisible to everyone except the sorceress Teruhi who appears in Part One and the holy man, Kohijiri⁶ of Yokawa, who appears in Part Two and performs the exorcism. Lady Aoi, persecuted to sickness by the demon, is not seen on the stage, but she is represented by an embroidered *kosode* kimono which is placed folded at the front of the stage. So the

¹ *Aoi* (hollyhock) is a personal name; *no*, a post-position meaning *of*; and *Ue*, an honorific for the wife of a nobleman.

² The most jealous of the mistresses of Genji. Her jealous spirit left her body while she was unconscious and torments and kills two of her rivals, Yūgao and Aoi-no-Ue.

³ First loved by Tō-no-Chūjō, a close friend of Genji, she gave birth to Tamakazura, a girl, and later became a mistress of Genji. She was suddenly killed by an evil spirit.

⁴ Daughter of the Minister of the Left. She died after giving birth to Yūgiri, a girl.

⁵ A Shinto shrine in Kyoto, comprising the Upper Shrine and the Lower Shrine situated about a mile apart on the river Kamo. After the transfer of the Imperial court to Kyoto (794 A.D.), the shrine rose in importance, the deities becoming guardians of the new capital. Eventually it came to be revered as one of the Three Shrines of Japan, the others being the Ise Shrines and the Iwashimizu Hachiman-gū Shrine. Its annual festival called the Aoi Matsuri (Hollyhock Festival) is still celebrated in grand style. The buildings are a typical example of the Heian shrine architecture.

⁶ A holy man of Yokawa, which is one of the Three Quarters of Mt. Hiei. See *Settai*, p. 116, note 3. *Kohijiri* ('lesser sage') is a title in the sect of mountain ascetics.

kosode may be regarded as one of the *dramatis personæ* who never speaks, and when it is carried from the Mirror Room on to the stage by a stage-attendant, the Curtain is often raised just as in the case of actors. (When the musicians and stage-attendants enter, the Curtain is merely pushed aside.)

Part One is laid in the sick-room of Lady Aoi. Cure by faith and by physic has proved inefficacious for the suffering lady, and it is suspected that she is a victim of persecution by some evil ghost. To ascertain whether it is the spirit of a living or a dead person, Teruhi, a sorceress, is ordered to perform a birch-bow divination.¹ Teruhi twangs a bow-string to call up the spirit. Attracted by the sound the wraith of Princess Rokujō appears. Finding her rival in love with Genji, her jealousy intensifies, and remembering past humiliations, she turns furious and beats the sick lady, trying at the same time to carry off her soul. A counter-measure is taken in Part Two. A holy man of Yokawa is sent for, who, suspending the rites which he has been performing, hurries to the scene. Though the demon keeps on resisting, the monk finally suppresses it by special incantations. A striking contrast is to be noted between the pathetic, beautiful figure of a love-lorn princess, a form in which the ghost appears in Part One, and the terrible and furious role of a demon it assumes in Part Two.

In Part One the *shite* wears a *deigan* (silver-painted-eye) mask, which represents a beautiful young noble lady; while in Part Two she wears a *Hannya* mask with horns on the forehead and a wide-open mouth with golden teeth, representing the fiendish look of a jealous woman. Each mask requires a different costume. The change of costumes is made at the Stage-attendants' Seat, while the play goes on. In the meantime the holy man of Yokawa is sent for.

There seems to be some awkwardness in assigning some of the speeches in this play. The dialogue preceding the second chorus in Part One in which the *tsure* takes part should be a monologue of the *shite* and in the incantation scene in Part Two, the speech of the *waki*, which is mostly chanted by the chorus, is taken over three times by the *shite*. Though apparently illogical, this sort of practice is usual in Noh drama.

Author: UNKNOWN

Source: *Genji Monogatari* (Tale of Genji), Vol. IX: *Lady Aoi*.

¹ A magical art by which a sorceress conjures up an evil spirit by twanging a bow-string and forces it to reveal itself or tell its intentions.

AOI-NO-UE

Persons

TERUHI, A SORCERESS SHAMANESS	<i>Tsure</i>
COURTIER OF THE EMPEROR SUZAKU	<i>Waki-zure</i>
GHOST OF PRINCESS ROKUJŌ IN THE FORM OF A NOBLE WOMAN	<i>Shite in Part One</i>
MESSENGER OF THE MINISTER OF THE LEFT	<i>Kyōgen</i>
KOHJIRI OF YOKAWA	<i>Waki</i>
PRINCESS ROKUJŌ AS AN EVIL SPIRIT	<i>Shite in Part Two</i>

Place

Mansion of the Minister of the Left in Miyako

Season

Indefinite

PART ONE

A Stage-attendant places in the front part of the stage an embroidered kosode kimono which represents LADY AOI on her sick-bed.

1

TERUHI, wearing a *tsure* mask, wig, painted gold-patterned under-kimono, brocade outer-kimono and white broad-sleeved robe, and the COURTIER OF THE EMPEROR SHUJAKU, wearing a cavity cap, heavy silk kimono, lined hunting robe, and white broad divided skirt, appear, cross the Bridgeway and enter the stage.

TERUHI takes the Waki Seat and the COURTIER stands by the Shite Seat.

COURTIER I am a courtier in the service of the Emperor Shujaku.¹ The demon that has possessed Lady Aoi, daughter of the Minister of the Left, is unyielding. His Lordship has invited most revered and eminent priests to perform secret and solemn rites of exorcism as well as ministrations of physic. All has been tried without avail.

I have been ordered to call in Teruhi, a sorceress, who is known far and wide for her skill in birch-bow divination. She is to ascertain by the bow whether the evil spirit is that of a living or dead person. I shall ask her.

TERUHI



Cleansed be Heaven,
Cleansed be Earth,
Cleansed be all within and without,
Cleansed be all Six Roots.²
On a horse of dapple-grey,
Swiftly comes a haunting spirit
Tugging at the reins.



Turns to TERUHI.

With the azusa music, TERUHI faces the kosode kimono.

Chants an incantation to call up an evil spirit.

2

While the entrance music *issei* is being played, the GHOST OF LADY ROKUJŌ, wearing a silver-painted-eye mask, long wig, serpent-scale-patterned under-kimono, embroidered outer-kimono in *koshimaki* style, and brocade outer-kimono in *tsuboori* style, appears, advances on the Bridgeway and stops by the First Pine.

¹ A fictitious emperor, elder brother of Genji.

² I.e. six organs of perception: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

Rokujō
issei

Riding the Three Vehicles of Law
Others may escape the Burning House.¹
Mine is but a cart
In ruins like Yūgao's house ;²
I know not how to flee my passion.³



Enters the stage and
stands by the Shite
Seat.

shidai

Like an ox-drawn cart, this weary world,
Like an ox-drawn cart, this weary world
Rolls endlessly on the wheels of retribu-
tion.

CHORUS
jidori

Like an ox-drawn cart, this weary world
Rolls endlessly on the wheels of retribution.



Rokujō
sashi

Like wheels of a cart for ever turning
Are birth and death in all living things ;
Six Worlds⁴ and Four Births⁵
You must journey ;
Strive as you will, there is no escape.
What folly to be blind
To the frailty of this life,
Like the banana stalk without a core,



¹ It is written in the Book of Parables of the *Lotus Sutra* that once a wealthy man had a fire break out in his house. He told his numerous children to run out quickly, but they were absorbed in their play and would not obey him. The father then told them that there was a cart drawn by sheep, another drawn by deer, and a third drawn by oxen, waiting for them at the door. Beguiled by the trick the children hastened out of the burning house. This parable describes Buddha's various doctrines for saving mankind.

² Genji's affection shifted to Yūgao, who was killed by Rokujō.

³ Quoted from a poem in the *Zenrinji-dono Shichihyakushu*.

I know not how to escape
My love-lorn thoughts.
'Tis like a broken-down cart,
This sad heart of mine !

⁴ I.e. six worlds (or realms) of heavenly beings, human beings, Asuras, beasts, hungry ghosts and hell, through which a soul is destined to transmigrate eternally according to the merits or demerits of its deeds in its successive lives. See also *Yuya*, p. 46, note 2.

⁵ I.e. viviparous birth as with man, oviparous birth as with birds, birth from moisture as with worms, mosquitoes, etc., and apparitional birth, i.e. sudden birth without any apparent cause, born by spontaneous generation. This is the ancient Indian classification of all sentient beings.

Like a bubble on the water!¹
 Flowers of yesterday are but a dream to-day.²
 How sad my fate!
 Upon my sorrow others heap their spite.
 Now the ghost has come,
 Drawn by the birch-bow's sound,
 To find a moment of respite.

sage-uta

Ah, how shameful that even now
 The eyes of others I should shun
 As on that festive day.³

age-uta

Though all night long I gaze upon the
 moon,
 Though all night long I gaze upon the
 moon,

I, a phantom form, remain unseen by it.
 Hence, by the birch-bow's upper end,
 I shall stand to tell my sorrow,
 I shall stand to tell my sorrow.

Whence comes the sound of the birch-bow,
 Whence comes the sound of the birch-bow?



As if listening, TERUHI steps forward.

3

TERUHI
 ROKUJŌ
 TERUHI

Though by the mansion-gate I stand,
 Having no form, people pass me by.
 How strange! I see, though I know not
 who,
 A lady gentle-born riding in a ragged
 coach,



Steps back and weeps.

¹ Allusion to the lines in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* (維摩經):

Our life, like a bubble of water, cannot long endure,
 And, like a banana stalk, has no hard core within.

² An echo from Po Chu-i's phrase:

The glory of yesterday declines to-day.

³ See Introduction, p. 89. Refers to the day when Aoi-no-Ue and Rokujō quarrelled over the coach.



And one who seems a waiting-maid,
Clutching the shaft of the ox-less coach
And weeping, swathed in tears.
Oh! pitiful sight!
Is this the evil spirit?

COURTIER

Who it is I now can guess. Tell me
straight your name.

ROKUJŌ



In this world
Where all like lightning passes,¹
There should be none for me to hate
Nor no fate for me to mourn,
Why did I leave the way of truth?
Attracted by the birch-bow's sound,
Here I now appear. Am I unknown to
you yet?

I am the ghost of Princess
Rokujō.

In those olden days when
I walked the world,
On spring mornings I was
invited

To the flower feasts of the Palace,
And on autumn nights
I viewed the moon in the royal garden.

Gaily thus, I spent my days
In bright hues and scents.

Fallen in life, I am to-day no more
Than a morning-glory that withers with the
rising of the sun.²

To the COURTIER.

Turns to TERUHI
who now is possessed by
ROKUJŌ.



Stepping forward to-
wards the Orchestra,
ROKUJŌ speaks to
TERUHI.



¹ An echo from the *Hōgyoku-ron*: Man's life is as brief as a flash of lightning or a spark from flint.

² Quoted from a poem in the *Horikawa Hyakushū*:

I must get up at dawn to see
The morning-glory in flower,
Whose beauty will be gone
Before the sun begins to shine.

My heart knows no rest from pain ;
Bitter thoughts grow like fern shoots
Bursting forth in fields.
To vent my vengeance, here have I appeared.



CHORUS
sage-uta
age-uta

Know you not in this life,
Charity is not for others?
Be harsh to another,
Be harsh to another,
And it will recoil upon you.¹
Why do you cry?



ROKIJŌ

My curse is everlasting,
My curse is everlasting.

Oh, how I hate you !
I will punish you.

TERUHI

What shame !
For Princess Rokujō, gentle-born,
To vent your vengeance²
And act as one low-born.
Are you not ashamed?
Stop and say no more.



ROKIJŌ

Say what you will, I must strike her now.
So saying I walk towards the pillow of Lady
Aoi and strike her.

TERUHI

Now that things have come to such a pass,
There is nothing more to do.
So saying, she walks towards the Princess
Rokujō.

*Rokujō gets up and
gazing on the kosode
kimono and stooping
down, weeps. She stares
at it again.*



*Walks to the kosode
and defiantly strikes it
with the fan.*



¹ Refers to a poem in the *Shin Kokinshū* :

I will not grieve against my lot,
Remembering my harshness to others :
This is a retribution come
While I am still alive.

² In the original the word is *uwanari-uchi* which means 'second wife beating.' In the Muromachi period it was a practice for the divorced wife's relatives or the wife herself to force their way into the man's home and beat the new wife in order to vent their anger.

ROKUJŌ

For this you will soon suffer.²
Present vengeance is the retribution
Of past wrongs you did to me.

TERUHI

The flame of consuming anger

ROKUJŌ

Scorches only my own self.¹

TERUHI

Do you not feel the fury of my anger?

ROKUJŌ

You shall feel the fulness of its fury.

CHORUS

This loathsome heart!

This loathsome heart!

My unfathomable hate

Causes Lady Aoi to wail in bitter agony.

But long as is her life in this world,

Her love of the Shining Prince will never
end—

The Shining Prince, lovelier than a firefly

That flits across the marshland.

ROKUJŌ

I shall be to him

CHORUS

A stranger, which I was once,

And I shall pass away

Like a dewdrop on a mugwort leaf.

When I think of this,

How bitter I feel!

Even were I living,

Our love is already an old tale,

Never to be revived even in a dream.

Yet all the while my longing grows the more

Till I am ashamed to see my love-torn self.

In my ragged coach, standing by her pillow,

I shall place the Lady Aoi

*Rokujo goes back
to her seat.*



*Fixes her gaze on the
kosode.*



*Rokujo pulls the
kosode over her and
stooping, withdraws to
the Stage-attendants'
Seat.*



¹ Quoted from the lines in the *Dai-Shōgon-ron* :

Man's self is like dried-up wood,
His anger a flaming fire ;
Ere others fire destroys,
It consumes its own self first.

And secretly bear her off,
And secretly bear her off.

PART TWO

1

The MESSENGER OF THE MINISTER OF THE LEFT, wearing a striped kimono, sleeveless robe and trailing divided skirt, is seated at the Kyōgen Seat.

COURTIER Is there any one here?

MESSENGER I am at your service.

Comes forward before the COURTIER.

COURTIER Lady Aoi who is possessed by the demon is grievously ill. Go! fetch the Kohijiri of Yokawa.

MESSENGER I understood that Lady Aoi who is possessed by the demon was very much better. Now I am told that she is worse than ever. Therefore I am ordered to go to Yokawa and bring back with me the Kohijiri. I must make haste.

Goes back to the Shite Seat.

I have arrived. If you please, I wish to be announced.

Goes to the First Pine and, turning towards the Curtain, calls.

The KOHIJIRI, wearing a small round cap, brocade stole, heavy silk kimono, broad-sleeved robe, white broad divided skirt, and carrying a short sword, and a rosary of diamond-shaped beads, appears and advances on the Bridgeway and stops by the Third Pine.

KOHIJIRI Before the window of Nine Ideations,¹

¹ I.e. perceptions by the five senses, the apperceptive faculty (意識), the cogitating faculty (末那識), the all-conserving mind (阿賴耶識), and the all-undefiled consciousness (菴摩羅識),—technical terms in Buddhist psychology.

On the seat of Ten Vehicles¹
 I am filled with the waters of *yoga*,²
 Reflecting the Moon of Three Mysteries.
 Who is it that seeks admission?



MESSENGER I am a messenger from the Minister. Lady Aoi who is possessed by the demon is grievously ill, and I am commanded to ask you to come at once and perform the exorcism.

KOHJIRI Of late I have been engaged in performing special rites and cannot leave, but since it is a request from the Minister, I will come presently. You return at once.

The KOHIJIRI enters the stage and stands at the Shite Seat, when the COURTIER turns to him.

MESSENGER I will go before you.

I have returned, my lord, accompanied by the Kohijiri.

COURTIER I am much obliged to you for coming.

KOHJIRI I received your message. Where is the sick lady?



Turns to the kosode.

COURTIER She is there in the gallery.

KOHJIRI I shall at once perform the exorcism.

COURTIER Pray do so.

KOHJIRI The healing rites he now performs,
 Wearing his cloak of hemp,
 In which, following the steps of En-no-Gyōja,³

With the notto music the KOHIJIRI tucks up his sleeves in front of the Orchestra and goes towards the kosode.

¹ Ten Vehicles leading to Nirvana.

² A Sanscrit word meaning 'union.' It is a spiritual practice to attain perfect union with truth by regulating one's mind and body.

³ The originator of mountain asceticism. He was born in Kazuraki County, Yamato Province. His real name was En-no-Ozunu, *gyōja* being a title meaning 'ascetic.' At the age of thirty-one, he abandoned the world and, retiring to Mt. Kazuraki, disciplined himself for thirty-four years, abstaining from all cooked food. As a result he acquired the magical art of commanding demons, and went about various provinces working miracles. He was exiled on a false charge to Izu Province in 697 and, receiving pardon, returned to Miyako in 703. He founded monasteries on Mt. Ōmine in Yamato Province.

He scaled the peak¹
 Symbolic of the sacred spheres
 Of Taizō and Kongō,²
 Brushing away the dew sparkling as
 Seven Jewels,³
 And a robe of meek endurance⁴
 To shield him from defilements,
 And fingering his red-wood beads,
Sarari, sarari—so he chants a prayer.

2

The GHOST OF PRINCESS ROKUJŌ, having changed the silver-painted-eye mask to a Hannya mask and covered her head with her brocade outer-kimono, stands with a hammer-shaped staff in her hand behind the KOHIJIRI and fixes her gaze on him.

KOHIJIRI	<i>Namaku, Samanda, Basarada.</i>	
ROKUJŌ	Return at once, good monk, return at once. Else will you be burdened with regret.	<i>Turns towards ROKUJŌ and tries to vanquish ROKUJŌ by his incantation, but she puts her</i>

¹ I.e. Ōmine. It lies about 40 miles south of Yoshino. Ōmine is a comprehensive name for a whole range of mountains extending over 30 miles. It contains several high peaks above 5,000 foot, which are included in the 'Yoshino-Kumano National Park.' During the months from April to September groups of ascetics under a qualified leader enter these mountains for practising austerities following the example of the founder, En-no-Gyōja. It is a rule to repeat the practice three times a year. Those who have accomplished many 'mountain-enterings' and have been initiated into the mysteries of the sect are regarded as master ascetics, and their prayers and invocations are said to possess superhuman powers. The Kohijiri in the present play was such an accomplished master.

² Taizō-kai ('Womb-like, all-embracing Sphere') is a view of the whole sentient world with all states of existence from buddhas to devils as embraced in the infinite love of the Great Sun Buddha (*Mahāvairocana*), of whom all sentient beings are manifestations. The pictorial representation of this view is one of the most important *mandala* of Esoteric Buddhism, the other being that of Kongō-kai. Kongō-kai ('Diamond Sphere') represents the powers and works of the Great Sun Buddha's supreme wisdom, which is likened to a diamond, because as the latter is hard and unbreakable, and can break all other things, so the former is unflinching and can, moreover, destroy mortals' attachments.

³ The Buddhist Paradise is said to be adorned with seven jewels (treasures). See *Tamanoi*, p. 7, note.

⁴ Endurance of all insults and injuries from others. The *Lotus Sutra* says, 'The garment of Buddha is the spirit of meekness and forbearance.'

KOHJIRI

However evil the evil spirit,

The mystic power of holy men
will never fail.

With these words he fingers once
again his sacred beads.



brocade outer-kimono
around her waist and
takes a defiant attitude.
Then she kneels, sup-
porting herself with her
hammer-shaped staff.

Chants his incanta-
tion.

CHORUS

Gōzanze Myōō of the East,

ROKUJŌ

Gundari-yasha Myōō of the South,

CHORUS

Daiitoku Myōō of the West,

ROKUJŌ

Kongō-yasha Myōō

CHORUS

Of the North,

ROKUJŌ

The most Wise Fudō Myōō of the Centre¹—

CHORUS

*Namaku, Samanda, Basarada,
Senda, Makaroshana, Sowatayauntara,
Takamman.*²

“Who hears my teaching
Shall gain profundity of wisdom ;
Who knows my mind
Shall gain the purity of Buddhahood.”



Rokujō, subdued,
drops her staff and
covers her ears.

¹ Awe-inspiring kings (*Vidyārāja*) are incarnations of the Great Sun Buddha. They assume features of terrible anger in order to quell the rebellious spirits of man and demon. The following five are especially venerated in Esoteric Buddhism to which they belong. Gōzanze Myōō (*Trailokya-vidyārāja*) sits in the east. he has three faces and eight arms, expressing great anger, and destroys the three vices of covetousness, anger and folly. Gundari-yasha (*Kuṇḍali-yakṣa*) Myōō sits in the south; he has one face and eight arms, and destroys all the furious spirits and devils. Daiitoku (*Yamāntaka*) Myōō sits in the west; he has six faces, six arms and six feet, rides a great white ox and carries various weapons in his hands to destroy all poisonous serpents and evil dragons. Kongō-yasha (*Vajra-yakṣa*) Myōō sits in the north, wrapped with flames; he has three faces and six arms, carries various weapons in his hands and destroys all the fierce yasha (devils). Lastly, the Great Holy One, i.e. Dainichi Daishō Fudō (*Acalanātha*) Myōō, sits in the centre, expressing great anger; he is in reality a form which Dainichi Nyorai (*Mahāvairocana Tathāgata*) takes in order to conquer all evil spirits. His right hand clasps a sword, which symbolizes the infinite wisdom of the Great Sun Buddha, and his left hand holds a rope, which symbolizes Buddha's supreme love. He stands on a rock amid the flaming fire. See also Vol. I, *Funa-Benkei*, p. 182, note.

² This is a romanized reproduction of a Chinese transcription of a *dharani*. A *dharani* is a passage of Sanscrit which is left untranslated in Chinese Buddhist sutras, because, if translated, it would lose its mystical meaning. In the present case the *dharani* is a formula for vanquishing evil spirits. It is used in exorcism by a devotee of Fudō Myōō (*Acalanātha*). The original Sanscrit reads: *Namaḥ Samanta-Vajrāṇām caṇḍa-mahā-roṣaṇa sphaṭaya hūṃ traka hāṃ māṃ* (“I dedicate myself to the Universal Diamond. Be this raging fury destroyed! etc.” [‘Universal Diamond’ is a symbol of all virtues and powers])