

Weeping, Wailing, and Writhing: Corporeal Mourning in Premodern Japanese Post-Death Scenes

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Introduction

A father weeps and collapses to the ground at the cremation of his only daughter. A mother is so distraught at the death of her child that she nearly falls from her carriage. Of the various descriptions of mourners' behavior in early Japanese prose, it is prostration—crawling, writhing, falling, stumbling—in particular, whether voluntary or not, that conveys their full-bodied response to bereavement. For scholars of the canonical eleventh-century *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 (The Tale of Genji, c. 1008), scenes that make use of these corporeal responses to grief reveal the depth of a mourner's sorrow: when faced with the finality of a child's death, parents cannot summon the strength to remain standing.¹

While this specific loss must be incomparable, characters also fall, stumble, and go weak after the passing of other relations. For instance, the protagonist, Genji, involuntarily dismounts his horse after the funeral of his secret lover Yūgao 夕顔; later, during the cremation of his wife Murasaki 紫, he is unable to walk on his own and must be supported in order to remain standing. Other characters react similarly: daughters lie face down, grieving the loss of their parents (Ichijō no Miyasudokoro 一条御息所 and Hachi no Miya 八の宮), and the forlorn suitor Kaoru 薫 stumbles about after the death of his love interest, Ōigimi 大君.

While the lyrical poignance of these depictions is difficult to miss, *Genji's* post-death scenes often draw upon literary representations of historical mourning ritual. As far back as the eighth century, in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (Records of Ancient Matters, 712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (Chronicles of Japan, 720), readers find elaborate post-death scenes that include descriptions of corporeal mourning. In addition to being personal expressions of grief, these bodily acts of intense weeping and prostration also had a ritual role to play: it was believed that extreme displays of emotion could pacify the spirits of the dead.² Hence, descriptions of

¹ Hayashida, “Genji monogatari no sōretsu,” pp. 44–45.

² Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*, p. 127.

corporeal mourning in early prose literature not only serve lyrical emotive functions; they also—and importantly—reflect traditional funerary ritual efforts to keep spirits securely outside of the world of the living.

Three post-death scenes in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* lay the basis for imperial funeral ritual: those for Izanami 伊邪那美 (the female god who helped create the world), the god Ame no Wakahiko 天若日子, and the semi-legendary prince Yamato Takeru 倭建 (72–114).³ Scholars assert that funeral poems (*sōka* 葬歌) composed during these mourning scenes not only express grief but also function to assuage the spirits of the departed.⁴ In the discussion below, reading the scenes describing these three deaths against one another, I show that in each case one finds also in the description of corporeal mourning itself a ritual significance just as evident as that detected in the *sōka*.⁵

Weeping and prostration are clearly meaningful elements in literary descriptions of corporeal mourning. One notes, after all, that in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, the inclusion—or exclusion—of descriptions of weeping-while-crawling often corresponds closely with the particular fate of the deceased in question. For example, after weeping-while-crawling in grief, the mourners of Yamato Takeru and Izanami witness their respective loved ones' transitions to an after-world. In contrast, although Ame no Wakahiko's mourners weep and compose laments, they do not crawl. Their failure, moreover, to engage in this overtly physical gesture of mourning serves as a literary device, one indicating that Ame no Wakahiko can still return to them—just as in the case of the symbolic death and rebirth of the sun goddess Amaterasu 天照, or in the revival of Ōnamuji 大穴牟遲, a god of iron.⁶ The distinct circumstances associated, then, with either omitting or including explicit physical enactments of grief, suggest that depictions of corporeal mourning were not merely a means of portraying deep sorrow. Instead, in both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, the incorporation of

³ See Saigō, “Yamato Takeru no monogatari”; Ikoma, “Kyōkai no basho (jō),” p. 21; Inō, “Kojiki ni okeru shisha,” p. 77.

⁴ Tsuchihashi, “Kodai min'yō kaishaku no hōhō,” pp. 18–37; Yoshii, “Yamato Takeru no Mikoto monogatari,” pp. 52–62; Kanpori, “Kayō no ten'yō,” pp. 1–10; Inada, “Yamato Takeru no Mikoto sōka no seiritsu,” pp. 53–56; Agō, “Yamato Takeru no Mikoto mihaburi uta no gengi (1),” pp. 11–26; Ikoma, “Kyōkai no basho (jō),” pp. 19–38; Inō, “Kojiki ni okeru shisha,” pp. 74–81; Kumagai, “Sōrei to banka,” p. 39. For the precise provenance of the *sōka* alluded to for Ame no Wakahiko, see SNKBZ 1, p. 105; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 44; SNKBZ 2, p. 115; Aston, *The Nihongi*, p. 66. For *sōka* recorded for Yamato Takeru, see SNKBZ 1, pp. 235–237; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 108.

⁵ These scenes are found in both texts but often differ. Notably, the *Nihon shoki* episode of Yamato Takeru's death does not include crawling or the composition of *sōka*, although the *Kojiki* does. There is a third scene in the *Kojiki* that contains weeping and writhing, but it is not related to a post-death ritual. In this episode, the god Ōkuninushi 大国主 is lying on the ground, crying in pain “weeping and wailing” after being stripped of his fur robe by the teeth of a sea beast. See Heldt, *The Kojiki*, pp. 28–29. All English translations of the *Kojiki* are those of Gustav Heldt, unless otherwise noted.

⁶ Ōnamuji's mines are located at the border of the world of the living and the afterworld.

weeping-while-crawling in post-death scenes is a method used to indicate that the spirit of the deceased will be securely situated in a realm outside the land of the living.

In literary depictions of post-death scenes, corporeal rituals cannot, on their own, pacify spirits. As Ikoma Nagayuki 居駒永幸 and Inō Tomoko 稲生知子 assert, ritualized crawling is not powerful enough in and of itself to send off spirits of the dead.⁷ Indeed, in the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and also in the later *Genji*, it seems a combination of rituals is required,⁸ which accords with our historical understanding of early funerary rites. For example, mourners may also compose lament poetry, sponsor funerals or memorials, and/or engage in corporeal mourning as placatory ritual. Within each of these works, characters might not explicitly express an understanding that their mourning activities will lead to spirits being appeased. Readers, though, would recognize both the lyrical and ritual effects of these combined actions, and be able to translate them unprompted as acts of spirit pacification. While each text creates a spiritual world unto itself, the distinct sustained scenes of mourning foster affective engagement by positioning their readers to detect discrepancies between various post-death scenarios.

Even today, comparing scenes across the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and *Genji* is a valuable exercise, despite the passage of roughly three hundred years over the course of their respective compositions.⁹ As I argue elsewhere, mourning characters in *Genji* engage in specific rituals meant to both express grief and pacify spirits of the fictional dead within the world of the tale.¹⁰ The myths recorded in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were well-known to *Genji*'s author, Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 (c. 978–1014, nicknamed Our Lady of the Chronicles), and she certainly would have been able to draw upon their notable post-death scenes.¹¹ Indeed, as will be evidenced below, elaborate mourning scenes in *Genji* depict placatory corporeal rituals of prostration similar to those described in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. By

⁷ Ikoma, “Kyōkai no basho (jō)”;⁷ Inō, “Kojiki ni okeru shisha,” p. 77.

⁸ Tsuchihashi, “Kodai min'yō kaishaku no hōhō”; Yoshii, “Yamato Takeru no Mikoto monogatari”; Kanpori, “Kayō no ten'yō”; Inada, “Yamato Takeru no Mikoto sōka no seiritsu”; Agō, “Yamato Takeru no Mikoto mihaburi uta no gengi (1)”;⁸ Ikoma, “Kyōkai no basho (jō)”;⁸ Inō, “Kojiki ni okeru shisha.”

⁹ For an overview of links between the *Nihon shoki*'s scenes referencing *menoto* 乳母 (wet nurses) and tenth-century fictional tales, see Schmidt-Hori, “Symbolic Death and Rebirth,” p. 451.

¹⁰ Carter, “The Secret Mourning of an Evening Death,” p. 160.

¹¹ Gatten, “Death and Salvation,” p. 17; Mostow, “Mother Tongue and Father Script,” pp. 133, 137; Bowring, *Murasaki Shikibu*, pp. 137–139. On the nickname itself see SNKBZ 28, p. 208; Bowring, *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*, p. 57. Post-death scenes involving other lyrical modes, such as poetry (as it is not prose) and *ganmon* 願文, fall outside of this analysis as they were composed for historical personages. In the case of *ganmon*, Bryan Lowe has argued that “it is difficult to decide how much control the author had over the message and how much may have been dictated by the patron.” (See Lowe, *Ritualized Writing*, p. 60.) Therefore, *ganmon* cannot be considered in this article, which stresses the intent in including scenes of weeping-while-crawling and prostration in mytho-historical and in fictional tales.

reading post-death scenes in these three works against each other, and by situating them within their respective historical contexts, we can recover crucial details about the contemporary import of corporeal mourning. Such a recovery, moreover, fills in gaps in our knowledge about literary techniques that can be used to foreshadow the fates of deceased characters.

Rituals for Quieting Vengeful Spirits

The belief was common in premodern Japan that spirits required pacification if they were to be secured in death—unable to leave realms beyond the living and hence prevented from returning to haunt their oppressors. Because spirits could act nefariously in the land of the living, anyone interested in protecting the social order considered spirit pacification to be of the utmost importance.¹² For instance, the vengeful spirit of the exiled Prince Sawara 早良 (c. 750–785) made necessary the move of the entire capital from Nagaoka 長岡 to the location of modern Kyoto.¹³ Multiple efforts were made to placate his spirit, including posthumously elevating him to the rank of emperor. Famously, a century later the malicious spirit of the wrongfully exiled Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845–903) was blamed for the death of the crown prince. In an attempt to quiet his spirit, Michizane was even incorporated into the imperially sponsored Spirit-Pacifying Ceremony (Goryōe 御霊会). Such cases provide evidence that post-death rituals were thought crucial to ensuring that the dead did not return to meddle in the affairs of the living.

The mourning rituals listed in the *Yōrō ritsuryō* 養老律令 (Yōrō Codes, 718, promulgated 757) do not reference weeping (*naku* 哭く) or crawling (*harabau* 匍匐う, *hofuku* 匍匐), yet records indicate that both were components of a highly structured response to death.¹⁴ An activity's place within a larger, acceptable, customary, and temporal sequence is important to its categorization as ritual, whether regulated or unregulated by legal or religious code. To be classified as ritual, both the order in which an activity is carried out, as well as the particular restrictions (or freedoms) involved in its practice, are crucial; the activity is rendered both meaningful and effective as ritual based upon its “execution of a preexisting script . . . or [its] explicitly unscripted dimensions.”¹⁵ Weeping-while-crawling can be said to be ritualized when mourners perform this action at specific times, and according to a preexisting script, within the funerary and mourning period. As Obata Kūchirō 尾畑喜一郎 notes, the earliest textual evidence of ritual crawling as part of post-death ritual is found in the Chinese *Liji* 礼記

¹² Meeks, “Survival and Salvation,” pp. 142–165.

¹³ Plutschow, “Tragic Victims,” p. 1.

¹⁴ Note that in another section, the code indicates penalties for failing to weep over a parent's remains. See *Ritsuryō*, pp. 72–73; Hirai, “Pre-Tokugawa Mourning Laws,” p. 22.

¹⁵ Bell, “Performance,” pp. 205–206, 208.

(Book of Rites, c. 300 BCE).¹⁶ The exact origin of this crawling in Japan is contested, but sources indicate that it was a standard component of post-death rituals by at least the eighth century.¹⁷ We can thus categorize crawling during the post-death period as ritual, given that it was “set apart from the affairs of mundane existence” through “the extensive use of scripting, repetition, and highly mannered modes of speech and movement” in order to bring about a desired outcome: resuscitation or pacification.¹⁸

Although as a behavior thus scripted, ritualized crawling (*haraban*, *hofuku*) seems to have had varied modes of performance. The precise posture of this act is unclear, but we can surmise its contours given that the same terms are also employed in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* to describe the movement of insects and reptiles. This association implies crawling with the belly close to the ground. Saigō Nobutsuna 西郷信綱 offers another theory, however, conjecturing that as a ceremonial gesture, *hofuku* involved a hunched-over posture that mimicked the behavior of birds.¹⁹ Additionally, in eighth-century texts, *hofuku* appears in depictions of painful experiences, such as childbirth and severe bodily trauma. In these instances, one can imagine a figure hunched over or prostrated close to the ground, writhing. Further expanding the possibilities, Kumagai Haruki 熊谷春樹 takes a broad approach, applying the term to stumbling.²⁰ No matter the exact pose, what is clear is that *hofuku* describes an unnatural, abnormal, or uncomfortable posture for the human body; to be in such a position expresses anguish, pain, or disorientation.

Itō Haku 伊藤博 stresses the important link between *hofuku* and pain in post-death scenes, arguing that witnessing survivors’ distress aided the deceased spirits.²¹ This link lends credence to Obata’s theory that funerary crawling was separate from other gestures involving prostration, such as the ritual entrance and exit a person would make when in the presence of the sovereign.²² Like other scholars, Obata instead attributes a particular ritual efficacy to prostration when it occurs during a funeral.²³ These various thinkers agree, in other words, that the distress signaled by human *hofuku* is both a demonstration of grief and a placatory ritual.

As is the case with the posture itself, the intended result of the *hofuku* ritual is also unclear. Scholars continue to debate whether it was meant to resuscitate the

¹⁶ Obata, “Takechi ōji mikoto,” p. 15.

¹⁷ Saigō, “Yamato Takeru no monogatari,” p. 24; Itō, “Banka no sekai,” p. 14; Kumagai, “Sōrei to banka,” p. 33; Obata, “Takechi ōji mikoto,” pp. 15–22; Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*, p. 44; Ikoma, “Kyōkai no basho (jō),” pp. 20–21.

¹⁸ Sharf, “Ritual,” pp. 247–248.

¹⁹ Saigō, “Yamato Takeru no monogatari,” p. 25.

²⁰ Kumagai, “Sōrei to banka,” p. 33.

²¹ Itō, “Banka no sekai,” p. 14.

²² Obata, “Takechi ōji mikoto,” pp. 15–22.

²³ Ibid.

deceased or rather to appease the spirit and discourage it from returning. For example, Saigō, Kumagai, and Itō situate the ritual in the *mogari* 殯 period, when mourners waited to ascertain death and attempted to call back the spirit of the dead.²⁴ In this setting, *hofuku* would be performed in hopes of resurrection or resuscitation. On the other hand, Obata and Inō postulate that *hofuku* could be a way to quiet the spirit even after death had been confirmed, and hence, as a means of securing the dead in an afterworld.²⁵

These differing interpretations need not be mutually exclusive. Kumagai demonstrates that rituals with a compound purpose held a crucial place during the *mogari* period, serving either to revive the deceased by calling back their spirits or, for those who could not be resurrected, to instead “appease” (*chinkon* 鎮魂) their spirits.²⁶ Akima Toshio 秋間俊夫 and Gary Ebersole support this viewpoint, stating that if the *mogari* ritual was unsuccessful in reviving the deceased, it would transition into being a placatory rite. Crawling “around the temporary enshrinement tomb, singing and weeping . . . constitute[d] a distinctive form of praise of the dead by stressing the extent to which the deceased’s absence . . . affected the living” and “is an act of homage.”²⁷ Ritualized *hofuku* thus can be seen as having a double effect: either reviving the dead or securing the spirit in an afterworld.

Similar to *hofuku*, intense crying during post-death rituals was an accepted, scripted, public demonstration of grief and spirit placation. Once death was suspected, women in a household would begin to wail and cry loudly. Subsequently, in addition to these household women, professional ritualists known as “weeping women” (*nakime* 哭女) were employed to supplement their efforts, and the volume of their tears was recorded.²⁸ The crying of both categories of women was meant as an offering to assuage spirits.²⁹ Ebersole asserts that these mourning women, both professional ritualists and household members, worked together to call “the absent spirit of the deceased back into the corpse, pacifying it, and getting it to remain in a specific site or object.”³⁰ Although men were not deterred from engaging in this ritualized weeping, Saigō believes that the performance of weeping became an integral part of a woman’s responsibility during the mourning period.³¹ The designation of wailing as a female obligation also recalls the fact that Emperor Tenji’s 天智 (r. 668–671) female consorts stood

²⁴ Saigō, “Yamato Takeru no monogatari,” p. 25; Kumagai, “Sōrei to banka,” p. 33; Itō, “Banka no sekai,” p. 13. For a summary of these arguments, see Ikoma, “Kyōkai no basho (jō),” pp. 20–21.

²⁵ Obata, “Takechi ōji mikoto,” pp. 15–22; Inō, “Kojiki ni okeru shisha,” p. 76.

²⁶ Kumagai, “Sōrei to banka,” p. 39.

²⁷ Akima, “The Songs of the Dead,” p. 493; Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*, p. 54.

²⁸ Gorai, “Koai to nakime,” p. 774.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 773.

³⁰ Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*, pp. 127, 171. See also Bargen, *A Woman’s Weapon*, p. 11.

³¹ Saigō, “Yamato Takeru no monogatari,” p. 24.

vigil by his tomb “still shedding tears” even as other mourners dispersed.³² Indeed, in the mourning scenes under analysis in this article, female mourners are often depicted prostrated in grief, weeping.

As discussed, these corporeal mourning rituals were believed to be efficacious in recalling the dead or securing them in the afterlife. It must be noted, however, that the “afterworld” in premodern Japan was not a single place. Early beliefs about what happened to the spirit after one died varied tremendously, as can be seen in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.

One concept of an afterworld in these texts is Yomi no Kuni 黄泉国, or the Land of Yomi. Although the specifics of its location and depicted impurity are greatly contested, for the purposes of this article, a key aspect of this afterworld within the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* is that movement to and from the land of the living is not precluded.³³ Yet this is not the only description of posthumous existence within those texts. According to Akima, “we have sufficient reason to believe that the ancient Japanese often took a bird for an incarnation of a dead person’s spirit.”³⁴ Some early Japanese believed that spirits resided on the top of a “mountain of death” (*shide no yama* 死出の山) and that white birds carried them to this “heavenly” place inaccessible to humans. In both cases, the divide between life and death requires a journey—be it by traversing the slope of Yomotsu Hirasaka 黄泉比良坂 that provides entrance to Yomi no Kuni or via the flight of a bird.

Later, between the eighth and eleventh centuries, epistemic changes occurred that altered the understanding of a desirable outcome after death, where one could be “secured.” By the mid-Heian period (c. 1000), the world of the Japanese aristocracy operated according to a decidedly Buddhist episteme;³⁵ and as evidenced within *Genji*, constructs of the afterworld were heavily influenced by Buddhist teachings of an afterlife. Textual evidence demonstrates that while various concepts of the afterworld continued to circulate, the desired final resting place among the aristocratic elite was a Buddhist Paradise. Despite, however, the epistemic difference between the mid-Heian period and earlier centuries, in all of these constructs of an afterworld or afterlife, if a spirit had not been secured in that location through ritual means, post-death it would still be able to act within the world of the living.

Literature as *Chinkon* Ritual

Arguments for premodern Japanese prose literature’s ability to operate simultaneously within both the lyrical and ritual modes are strong. In the intersecting fields of Japanese literature and religion, there exists the understanding that the

³² Collins, “Integrating Lament,” p. 59; *Man’yōshū* 2: 155; SNKBZ 3, p. 112.

³³ Ambros, *Women in Japanese Religions*, p. 28.

³⁴ Akima, “The Songs of the Dead,” p. 494.

³⁵ LaFleur, *The Karma of Words*, pp. 9–14.

“spirit of words,” or *kotodama* 言霊, has the power both to express emotions in the lyrical mode and to affect spirits of the dead in the ritual mode. Accordingly, the reutterance of a text’s words, which house the spirit of its composer’s intentions (such as health, resurrection, or placation), can effectively reawaken their inhering spirit. Seen in this light, literary passages that on first glance appear to be mere encapsulations of a survivor’s grief or sense of loss are actually far more complex. The compositions were carefully crafted with the knowledge that the intentions they contained had the power to affect the spirits of the dead for long periods of time. Tropes, then, began to emerge, effectively creating a literary/poetic manual, conditioning and training readers in precisely how to understand scenes meant to express grief, mourn the dead, and calm spirits. In other words, through intentional structuring of post-death scenes, authors and compilers steered readers in their interpretations of what was happening—and furthermore what would happen—to the deceased in a manner similar to foreshadowing.

Some of the earliest examples of these literary representations of mourning straddled the distinction between highly-scripted ritualized sociopolitical measures to protect the living from vengeful spirits and affectively-normative formulations meant to express grief on a lyrical level.³⁶ Scholars have convincingly demonstrated that funeral lament poems (*banka* 挽歌, “coffin-pulling songs”) in the eighth-century poetic anthology the *Man’yōshū* 万葉集 (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves, c. 759) simultaneously functioned on the ritual and lyrical levels.³⁷ Additionally, as discussed in the introduction, scholars have demonstrated the ritual efficacy of *sōka* included in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.³⁸ In all of these cases, verses that were originally sung to express the survivor’s grief and distress also worked to quiet the spirits of the dead.³⁹

Yet the power of words to affect deceased spirits was limited neither to poetry nor the eighth century. Some scholars assert that later textual descriptions of mourning activities cannot be considered anything more than historical record, or portrayal of deep emotion in the lyrical mode, a type of literary consciousness that has already shed any “magical metaphor.”⁴⁰ Others, such as Orikuchi Shinobu 折口信夫, disagree. He stresses that, in later periods, “to maximize the incantatory power, the spells began to manifest a more narratorial case: that was

³⁶ Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*, pp. 47, 129, 181–182.

³⁷ Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*; Collins, “Integrating Lament”; Duthie, *Man’yōshū and the Imperial Imagination*, p. 414.

³⁸ Tsuchihashi, “Kodai min’yō kaishaku no hōhō”; Yoshii, “Yamato Takeru no Mikoto monogatari”; Kanpori, “Kayō no ten’yō”; Inada, “Yamato Takeru no Mikoto sōka no seiritsu”; Kumagai, “Sōrei to banka,” p. 39; Agō, “Yamato Takeru no Mikoto mihaburi uta no gengi (1)”; Ikoma, “Kyōkai no basho (jō)”; Inō, “Kojiki ni okeru shisha.”

³⁹ In Japan’s early period, poems were inseparable from songs, evidenced by the fact that the word for song (*uta* 歌) also denotes poem. These compositions, now often read silently as poetry, were sung, just as later poems were voiced in a conventional melody called *shigin* 詩吟.

⁴⁰ Levy, *Hitomaro*, pp. 57–65.

the *monogatari*.”⁴¹ Takeshi Watanabe concurs, arguing that the author of the eleventh-century *Eiga monogatari* 栄花物語 (Tale of Flowering Fortunes), who was “writing after [Fujiwara no] Michinaga’s death, may also have been wary of Michinaga’s own ghost” and that she thus constructed her tale to appease the spirits of the dead.⁴² A similar strategy can be observed in other works up through the medieval period, with the *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 (Tale of the Heike, c. 1371) and specialized *renga* 連歌 creations serving as just a few examples.⁴³

One strategy of placating spirits on the page involves depicting the deceased as being irrevocably separated from the world of the living. To ensure this outcome, scholars often point to the efficacy of funeral poems. But post-death scenes also contain episodes of intense crying, bodily contortions, and prostration; and overlooking the multifaceted role played by these in favor of the single aspect of textual production (poetry) obscures the crucial function corporeal rituals served, both in prose and in historical reality. As a placatory component within elaborate post-death scenes, depictions of weeping-while-crawling were employed by compilers and authors as one literary device meant to signal to the reader that the spirit of the deceased would not return to the land of the living.

Weeping-While-Crawling in Eighth-Century Prose

As illustrated in **table 1**, the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* exhibit a clear pattern linking weeping-while-crawling with spirit pacification, such that use of the trope foretells who will be secured in a specific afterworld. In both texts, it is only when these corporeal rituals are present that the deceased enters a named afterworld and does not leave. While weeping-and-crawling may in historical fact have been performed for other figures who appear within the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, it is important to note that such details were not recorded for the sake of readers. This implies that it is precisely the literary depictions of these rituals—

Table 1. Overlapping Post-Death Scenes between the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*

Deceased figure	Corporeal mourning	Afterworld/afterlife	Resurrection
Izanami	Yes	Yomi no Kuni	No
Ame no Wakahiko	No	Unknown	Possible
Amaterasu	No	Heaven’s Boulder Cavern	Yes
Yamato Takeru	Yes	Transforms into white bird	No

⁴¹ Orikuchi, “Koten ni arawareta,” p. 65. This translation is by Takeshi Watanabe. See Watanabe, *Flowering Tales*, p. 65.

⁴² Watanabe, *Flowering Tales*, p. 178.

⁴³ McCullough, “Appendix C,” p. 471; Meeks, “Survival and Salvation”; Horton, “Renga Unbound,” pp. 443–512; Kimbrough, “Reading the Miraculous Powers.”

the words describing their performance—that indicate whether the deceased will be contained in a *specific* afterworld within the pages of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. While a mourner’s weeping-while-crawling signals unfathomable grief, when the individual mourning acts of particular characters are read against each other, their use as ritual and their place in a sustained literary technique within post-death scenes becomes apparent.

Izanagi Weeping-While-Crawling for Izanami

In both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, the first description of a mourner weeping-while-crawling appears after the death of Izanami. After she and her brother/husband Izanagi 伊弉諾 have created the world and its myriad gods, Izanami dies upon giving birth to the god of fire.⁴⁴ As soon as Izanagi suspects she has died, he engages in a “calling-out” ritual (*tamayobi* 魂呼び) to revive the deceased, questioning if he has lost her in exchange for a child.⁴⁵ Both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* (at left and right, respectively, in the extracts below and thereafter) record that Izanagi then wept and crawled around her body, as he:

crawled around her mighty head and
he crawled around her mighty feet,
weeping and wailing all the while

sunawachi mimakurabe ni harabai
miatobe ni harabaite nakishi toki ni
minamita ni nareru

乃ち御枕方に匍匐ひ、
御足方に匍匐ひて哭きし時に、
御涙に成れる⁴⁶

crawled at her head, and
crawled at her feet,
weeping and lamenting

sunawachi makurabe ni harabai
atobe ni harabaite
naki namita o nagashitamau

即ち頭辺に匍匐ひ、
脚辺に匍匐ひて、
哭泣き流涕したまふ⁴⁷

In this instance, weeping-while-crawling occurs during the *mogari* period, the time ordained for confirming death and for reviving the dead. This period ends only when the person revives, when signs of decomposition appear, or when the corpse is discarded.⁴⁸ Therefore, Izanagi’s ritualized corporeal mourning was done initially to revive or resurrect Izanami—a demonstration of his longing for her return.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ SNKBZ 1, p. 41; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 13; SNKBZ 2, p. 41; Aston, *The Nihongi*, p. 21. All English translations of the *Nihon shoki* are those of W. G. Aston, unless otherwise noted.

⁴⁵ SNKBZ 1, p. 42; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 13; SNKBZ 2, p. 43; Aston, *The Nihongi*, p. 22; Moriya, “Yamato Takeru no Mikoto no sōsō monogatari,” p. 18.

⁴⁶ SNKBZ 1, pp. 42–43; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 13.

⁴⁷ SNKBZ 2, p. 43; Aston, *The Nihongi*, p. 23.

⁴⁸ Nakada, “Mogari’ ni okeru minzokugakuteki kōsatsu,” p. 120.

⁴⁹ Moriya, “Yamato Takeru no Mikoto no sōsō monogatari,” p. 18; Inō, “Kojiki ni okeru shisha,” p. 76. Although Susano-o 須佐之男 continuously weeps out of a desire to follow Izanami to the land of the dead, this crying is done after the post-death rituals and is not part of the ritualized crying.

Despite the performance of these calling-back rituals, the *Kojiki* indicates that they were not successful; the narrative goes on to describe Izanami's burial and post-death existence. In the *Kojiki*, the reader also learns that "the remains of the spirit Izanami were laid to rest" within a mountain on the border of two lands.⁵⁰ While the individual accounts in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* differ somewhat, both texts locate Izanami in Yomi no Kuni after her death. In this land she is able to move her body, stepping "out the door of the hall to greet" Izanagi when he comes to visit her.⁵¹ She is able to hear and to speak, indeed replying to his plea to "come back with [him]."⁵² Additionally, both texts note that Izanami ate at the hearth of Yomi no Kuni, indicating her ability to eat and to feel hunger.⁵³

Although Izanami is physically located in Yomi no Kuni, Izanagi still has hopes to revive her in the land of the living, and he enters the afterworld to appeal for her return. He is forbidden from laying eyes on Izanami while she asks the gods of that land for permission to leave; but unable to wait, Izanagi looks at Izanami and finds her body in decay.⁵⁴ Izanagi flees in terror and blocks passage to the world of the living by placing a giant boulder across the path that leads to Yomi no Kuni.⁵⁵ While it cannot be said that Izanami has been thereby placated, given that after her entombment she is driven by anger and shame to have a thousand mortals killed every day, her body at the very least has been successfully trapped in Yomi no Kuni, unable to be reborn in another realm: in other words, she has been secured in death.

Although it is apparently the boulder that traps Izanami in the afterworld in this story, other accounts within the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* indicate that barriers and entombments do not preclude a return to the land of the living (see the discussions of Amaterasu and Ōnamuji below). Izanami's physical isolation in Yomi no Kuni has been achieved rather by various post-death rituals, including weeping-while-crawling. Comparing this post-death scene with that of Yamato Takeru, for example, who also goes to a particular afterworld, we find a single similarity between the two scenes: the involvement of weeping-while-crawling. Therefore, we can conclude that it is the inclusion of the corporeal ritual in the text that signals Izanami will be secured in death.

Consorts and Children Weeping-While-Crawling for Yamato Takeru

In the other shared mourning scene in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* that features weeping-while-crawling, we learn of the posthumous fate of Yamato Takeru,

⁵⁰ SNKBZ 1, p. 43; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 14.

⁵¹ SNKBZ 1, p. 45; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 14.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.; SNKBZ 2, p. 45; Aston, *The Nihongi*, p. 24.

⁵⁴ Matsumura Takeo associates Izanagi's confirmation of Izanami's decay with *mogari* rites of praying for the rebirth of the dead. See Matsumura, *Nihon shinwa no kenkyū*, vol. 2, pp. 456–457.

⁵⁵ SNKBZ 1, p. 49; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 16; SNKBZ 2, pp. 47–49; Aston, *The Nihongi*, pp. 25–26.

who dies after being cursed with a grave illness. Yet although this character's story is found in both texts, the specifics related of his post-death observances differ between the two. In the *Kojiki*, Yamato Takeru's consorts and children constructed a barrow for his corpse and

started crawling around the bordering paddies while they wept and sang.

ta o harabai megurite naki, utayomi shite

田を圃匍ひ廻りて哭き、歌為て⁵⁶

Scholars debate the precise post-death period during which this ceremony would have taken place. Both Ono Asami 小野諒巳 and Inō assert that this kind of ritualized weeping-while-crawling is enacted not during *mogari*, but rather in the course of the mourning period following the certain determination of death.⁵⁷ For these scholars, such prostration is not part of a desire for “resurrection” (*yomigaeri* 蘇り) of the dead (as in the case of Izanami) but is instead most likely performed with the aim of pacifying the spirit of the deceased.⁵⁸ Others, such as Saigō, Itō, and Moriya Toshihiko 守屋俊彦, argue that the corporeal mourning for Yamato Takeru links back to Izanami's post-death scene, and is accordingly likewise performed as part of the “calling back” (*shōkon* 招魂, *fukkatsu* 復活) of the spirit that takes place during the *mogari* period.⁵⁹ It is worth noting that, just as Kumagai and Ebersole were reluctant to exclude rites of pacification from the *mogari* period, Itō does assert that over time the original idea of *shōkon* faded in favor of a greater emphasis being placed on *chinkon*.⁶⁰ For Itō, however, the tragedy of the Yamato Takeru story cannot be fully understood unless one reads it under the assumption that the funeral songs, performed while weeping-while-crawling, have the power to bring back the souls of the dead.⁶¹ Unfortunately, as was the case for Izanami, the rituals in the *Kojiki* do not succeed in resurrecting the dead in the land of the living. Yamato Takeru's spirit does not return, but transforms into a “giant white bird that soared into the heavens,” eventually rising to “[fly] away.”⁶² Setting aside the debate over the *intended* effect of corporeal performance, readers of the *Kojiki* are clearly able to see that the inclusion of mourners' prostrations coincides with a definitive positioning of the deceased in the afterworld.

In addition to weeping-while-crawling as a demonstration of pain and grief,

⁵⁶ SNKBZ 1, p. 235; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 108.

⁵⁷ Ono, “Kojiki ni okeru Yamato Takeru no Mikoto,” pp. 78–79; Inō, “Kojiki ni okeru shisha,” p. 76.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Saigō, “Yamato Takeru no monogatari,” p. 25; Itō, “Banka no sekai,” p. 13; Moriya, “Yamato Takeru no Mikoto no sōsō monogatari,” p. 18.

⁶⁰ Itō, “Banka no sekai,” p. 13.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² SNKBZ 1, p. 235; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 108.

Agō Toranoshin 吾郷寅之進 and Itō point to another detail in the account of Yamato Takeru's funeral in the *Kojiki*: the mourners' lacerated feet.⁶³ While singing funeral songs, Yamato Takeru's consort and children run after the white bird, and

weeping . . . in their grief forgetting the pain they felt in feet lacerated by cut stalks of dwarf bamboo.

sono shino no karikoi ni, ashi o kiriyaburedomo, sono itami o wasurete, nakioitoki

其の小竹の刈杖に、足をきり破れども、其の痛みを忘れて、哭き追ひき⁶⁴

Itō concludes that this display of bodily pain is the crucial element that identifies these songs as placatory.⁶⁵ When comparing the funerary rites performed for Yamato Takeru in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, it is important to consider how the category of corporeal mourning has been expanded so that painful acts are also able to mollify spirits of the dead.

The *Nihon shoki* account of Yamato Takeru's death differs in many ways from the one found in the *Kojiki*. In this version, upon learning of Yamato Takeru's death, the emperor "beat[s] his breast"—and there is no mention of the actions taken by Yamato Takeru's consort and children.⁶⁶ Instead, it is the painful gesture of beating one's breast, and the weeping accompanying it, that serve as the corporeal rituals intended to placate the spirit of the deceased. The emperor's effort is successful: the account relates that after being interred in a *misasagi* 陵 (imperial tomb), Yamato Takeru, "taking the shape of a white bird, came forth from the *misasagi*, and flew towards the Land of Yamato."⁶⁷ The text makes clear that the spirit has completed its transit from the land of the living: immediately after the bird flies away, "the ministers accordingly opened the coffin, and looking in, saw that only the empty clothing remained, and that there was no corpse."⁶⁸ In this account, it is the performance of painful corporal mourning ritual while weeping that assuages the spirit of the deceased. The result thereby effected is the spirit's successful transition to a particular afterworld.

The Ambiguous Case of Ame no Wakahiko

The rituals undertaken to mourn Ame no Wakahiko are likewise portrayed differently in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. In both texts, news of the god's death is received when his wife cries so loudly that the sound reaches the heavens—ritual crying that would have been considered an accepted act of spirit calling. Next, Ame no Wakahiko's father joins in the mourning (in the *Kojiki* he goes down to

⁶³ Itō, "Banka no sekai," p. 14.

⁶⁴ SNKBZ 1, p. 235; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 108.

⁶⁵ Itō, "Banka no sekai," p. 14.

⁶⁶ SNKBZ 2, p. 385; Aston, *The Nihongi*, p. 210.

⁶⁷ SNKBZ 2, p. 386; Aston, *The Nihongi*, p. 210.

⁶⁸ SNKBZ 2, pp. 385–386; Aston, *The Nihongi*, pp. 210–211.

earth to assist in post-death rituals, whereas in the *Nihon shoki* the corpse is brought to heaven). In both accounts, too, the mourners then assign various birds to carry out subsequent ritual tasks, such as carrying funeral offerings, sweeping the hut, preparing food, grinding grain, and other mourning rites. The mourners then offer songs (unrecorded though assumed to be funeral poems) for eight days in hopes of resurrecting the dead or calming his spirit.⁶⁹ These descriptions are similar to those found in the post-death scenes for Izanami and Yamato Takeru, which feature ritualized crying, calling of the spirit, and attempts at pacification. Neither text, however, includes the performance of weeping-while-crawling where Ame no Wakahiko is concerned.

The immediate result of these rituals is the mourners' belief that Ame no Wakahiko has been brought back to life. Misidentifying the god Ajisukitakahikone 阿遲鉏高日子根 as her departed son, Ame no Wakahiko's mother calls out, exclaiming that he "did not die" after all.⁷⁰ Ame no Wakahiko's wife concurs, declaring that the man in front of her is indeed her husband. Yet Ame no Wakahiko has in fact perished, and the women's conviction represents a simple case of mistaken identity. It is nonetheless significant, however, that the *mourners* do in this case believe that—despite the performance of all the varied rituals listed above (weeping, carrying funeral offerings, sweeping the hut, preparing food, grinding grain, composing songs, etc.)—*the dead could still return*. In other words, they understood that the rituals they had performed for Ame no Wakahiko would not have irrevocably secured him in a land beyond the living.

Although scholars stress the connections between the post-death scenes for Izanami, Yamato Takeru, and Ame no Wakahiko, it should be noted that in the final of these cases the long list of post-death rituals conducted does *not* include the painful corporeal act of weeping-while-crawling. Kumagai contends that a prostration ritual is in fact performed for Ame no Wakahiko, albeit for a surrogate (his doppelgänger, Ajisukitakahikone).⁷¹ In this reading, the gestures of Ame no Wakahiko's wife qualify as prostration when she

clung to his hands and feet
and wept with grief

teashi ni torikakarite
nakikanashibiki

手足に取り懸て
哭き悲しびき⁷²

clung to his garments and to his girdle,
partly rejoiced and partly distracted

obi ni yojikakari
katsu yorokobi katsu madou

衣帯に攀係り
且喜び且慟ふ⁷³

⁶⁹ Kumagai, "Sōrei to banka," p. 39.

⁷⁰ SNKBZ 1, p. 105; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 44. A similar scene is recorded in the *Nihon shoki*, see SNKBZ 2, p. 115; Aston, *The Nihongi*, p. 67.

⁷¹ Kumagai, "Sōrei to banka," p. 33.

⁷² SNKBZ 1, p. 105; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 44.

⁷³ SNKBZ 2, p. 115; Aston, *The Nihongi*, p. 67.

This portrayal differs significantly, however, from other depictions of corporeal acts meant to pacify the dead or prompt their return. First there is its use of distinct terminology. In the *Kojiki*, the “prostration” shown here is not *hofuku*, but rather a type of “clinging” (*torikakarite* 取り懸て), focused moreover on an object so situated that it requires the mourner to bend or crouch. In the *Nihon shoki*, the text suggests that the mourners had previously been in a prostrated position, since they then proceed to “climb up” (*yojikakawari* 攀係り) in order to reach Ajsukitakahikone’s clothing. In a second and third difference, this clinging is not performed while weeping; nor is it performed when mourners, believing Ame no Wakahiko to be dead, long for his resuscitation. Indeed, it is only after the women assume that the resurrection has occurred that they prostrate themselves by thus clinging to the body. Finally, this gesture is enacted at a moment of elation from which physical pain is absent. Hence, this type of prostration cannot be considered a placatory ritual; instead, it represents a pure expression of joy.

Just as the texts omit any depiction of prostration during the *mogari* period, it also gives no indication of where Ame no Wakahiko’s spirit has found its final resting place. Readers are informed that he has been buried on “Mt. Mourning,” or Moyama 喪山, but are given no further details about the afterworld he inhabits. Although Ame no Wakahiko does not return to the pages of the *Kojiki* or the *Nihon shoki*, with readers kept ignorant of the name or location of the particular afterworld in which Ame no Wakahiko’s spirit dwells, uncertainty remains about whether or not he can, or will, ever return.

The Absence of Painful Corporeal Post-Death Ritual: Amaterasu and Ōnamuji

The significance of corporeal mourning is, of course, indicated by descriptions of its practice in the wake of a figure’s death. But its import can also be discerned within the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* by its *absence* from post-death scenes. In another overlapping “death” scene that lacks such a ritual, Amaterasu is not secured in a realm beyond the living. While here too the accounts in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* differ, in both texts, Amaterasu enters Ame no Iwaya 閼天石 (Heaven’s Boulder Cavern) and casts the world of the living into darkness. After this “burial” in the cave, which Alan Miller equates to a symbolic death, the gods gather to determine how to call Amaterasu back into the world of the living.⁷⁴ Rites performed for this purpose include setting cockerels to crowing; performing divinations; singing prayers; and making and hanging a mirror, jeweled strands, and paper strips. When none of these methods succeeds, a goddess performs a shamanic dance that finally tempts Amaterasu to open her cavern.

Although Amaterasu’s “post-death” scene features numerous and varied calling-out rituals (which are effective at “reviving” the deceased), it includes neither any

⁷⁴ Miller, “Ame No Miso-Ori Me,” p. 32.

depiction of weeping-while-crawling, nor any physical experience of pain. Indeed, the corporeal ritual that does succeed in bringing Amaterasu back (the dance) is met with loud laughter. Here, as in the case of Ame no Wakahiko's family rejoicing at his return, far from being preoccupied with demonstrations of total bodily pain and grief, Amaterasu's "mourners" are instead focused on festivity. Rather than securing the god in death, as Fuminobu Murakami argues, the corporeal ritual of the dance results in Amaterasu being "reborn by entering and leaving the cave, as symbolized in the *chinkonsai*" dance.⁷⁵ In the end, Amaterasu is brought back to life.

A similar structure appears in the *Kojiki*'s post-death scene for Ōanamuji. One day, after catching a large flaming boulder, he is "immediately burned to death."⁷⁶ His mother then weeps and pleads with the gods for her son's resuscitation. Two goddesses descend, scrape him off the stone, and smear him with mother's milk. As the result of this bodily ritual he is then "transformed into a handsome youth."⁷⁷ After undergoing this resurrection, however, Ōanamuji is subsequently "crushed to death" between two halves of a split tree.⁷⁸ His mother again weeps, finds him, releases him from the tree, "and [brings] him back to life."⁷⁹ In these passages, we see that corporeal rituals performed by women result in resurrection, even though no prostration and no physical pain are involved in these various reviving acts. While there is certainly great debate over the substance used first to revive Ōanamuji, in no analysis does the production of the "milk" seem to involve bodily anguish.⁸⁰ Much as with the case of Amaterasu, the twice-deceased Ōanamuji is revived without the performance of any painful corporeal ritual.

In these two sequences, therefore, as expressed in **table 2**, there is no depiction of painful corporeal ritual and also no prostration. In the end, Amaterasu and Ōanamuji are revived, reborn, and not secured in death. In both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, then, when painful corporeal ritual is not incorporated into literary depictions of post-death ceremonies, the foreshadowed expectation is essentially inverted, and the reader is prepared instead for the return of the deceased. Whether or not the mourning scenes for Izanami, Ame no Wakahiko, and Yamato Takeru are reflective of historical reality cannot be empirically validated, since accounts of their deaths were recorded only centuries after the eras with which they were ostensibly associated. All the same, the fact that the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* even included these scenes of weeping-while-crawling within their texts does point to how crucial their compilers felt it was to definitively place their characters in lands beyond that of the living.

⁷⁵ Murakami, "Incest and Rebirth," p. 457.

⁷⁶ SNKBZ 1, p. 79; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, pp. 29–30.

⁷⁷ SNKBZ 1, pp. 79–80; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 30.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ SNKBZ 1, p. 80; Heldt, *The Kojiki*, p. 30.

⁸⁰ Oikawa, "Kojiki jōkan ni noru Ōanamuji," p. 3.

Table 2. *Kojiki* Post-Death Scenes without Painful Corporeal Mourning

Deceased figure	Painful corporeal mourning	Burial place	Resurrection
Amaterasu	No	Heaven's Boulder Cavern	Yes
Ōnamuji	No	Inside a tree	Yes
Ame no Wakahiko	No	Mt. Mourning	Possible

Corporeal Mourning in *The Tale of Genji*

In the fictional world of *Genji*, the mere fact that spirits return after death indicates that the dead are not inanimate objects, exquisite corpses that require no further investigation. As spirits, the dead can exert power over the living—and in unpredictable ways, for no matter the positive attributes they possessed while still living, they have the potential to turn destructive. The validity of this conclusion is demonstrated by all the work the mourning characters undertake to perform on behalf of these spirits. The post-death rituals *Genji* characters engage in not only express grief, but also help to placate deceased spirits within the world of the tale.⁸¹ Since spirits in *Genji* are known to be able to see the actions of the living, negligence could enrage a spirit and cause it to return. While fictional spirits might not be able to materialize in the real world, they could return to harass the living in the fictional world.

As Ebersole documents, premodern Japanese literary depictions of post-death rituals “were at once part of an intellectual discourse and a social practice . . . [created] not only for aesthetic pleasure but as a means of ordering and controlling potentially dangerous aspects of the world.”⁸² The aim of these passages was “to get [the spirit] to stop wandering and to rest in a stable location” in the afterworld.⁸³ As I will detail through close readings below, we find in the portrayals of particular *Genji* characters’ post-death scenes echoes of the placatory weeping-while-crawling ritual seen in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. Their mourners’ corporeal reactions to such deaths, accordingly, should be read thus as placatory rituals even though they do not foreshadow the placement of a character’s spirit in a specific afterlife.

Of the characters who die in *Genji*, only a handful are granted narrations of post-death scenes that include descriptions of mourning rituals. Yet although space does not permit a thorough analysis of such scenes for all characters who are in fact granted them, it is notable that among these a number do feature

⁸¹ Carter, “The Secret Mourning of an Evening Death,” p. 160.

⁸² Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*, pp. 17, 19.

⁸³ Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*, p. 127.

portrayals of weeping and prostration, the latter of which, as defined above, incorporates instances of writhing, falling, and stumbling. While these acts do not entail physical pain, they do convey the mourner's emotional distress (similar to the case of Izanagi). Post-death scenes in *Genji* of this sort, in other words, can reasonably be said to include ritual weeping and prostration.

First, there is the scene at Aoi's 葵 cremation grounds: her father, the Minister of the Left, "could not rise" (*tachiagaritamawazu* 立ち上がりたまはず), was "weeping in shame" (*hajinakitamau* 恥ち泣きたまふ), and "writhe[d] upon the ground" (*mogoyo* もごよふ).⁸⁴ Here, despite the fact that a different term is used to indicate writhing, the minister's demonstration of emotional pain, as well as his prostration on the ground while weeping, mirror earlier representations of mourners as examined above. In another scene following the death of her mother, Ichijō no Miyasudokoro, we see how the Second Princess "lay close beside her [corpse]" (*tsuto soifushitamaeri* つと添ひ臥したまへり), and how she was later blinded by tears and "lay prostrate with vain misery" (*fushimarobitamae* 臥しまろびたまへ).⁸⁵ Here, although the daughter's weeping and her prostration are not concurrent, both actions are presented as extreme responses to death, her grief bringing her literally to the ground. In her mother's post-death scene, then, the Second Princess too can be said to express emotional pain through weeping and prostration—again following our precedents of placatory ritual. A near mirror image of Ichijō no Miyasudokoro's post-death scene is seen when the daughters of Hachi no Miya at Uji 宇治 come to learn of his death. They are shocked by this news, which "deprived them of their senses, leaving them unable—for even their tears had vanished—to do anything but lie prostrate on the ground."⁸⁶ It initially appears that the daughters do not cry in this scene. In fact, however, though at first they do cry (there must first be tears in order for them to "vanish"), because their anguish is so extreme, they are soon no longer able even to produce tears, and can only lie prostrate (*tada utsubushi fushitamaeri* ただうつぶし臥したまへり).⁸⁷ Here again, the components that qualify corporeal mourning as placatory ritual—pain, weeping, and prostration—are found to be present. While *Genji* does not reveal the final resting place for Aoi, Ichijō no Miyasudokoro, or Hachi no Miya, their mourners' corporeal acts must be read nonetheless as placatory rituals.

If, as Kumagai suggests, the definition of writhing can be extended beyond full-bodied prostration to include stumbling, the act can also encompass near-falling. In *Genji*, after the death of Kiritsubo no Kōi 桐壺更衣, her mother is overwhelmed by a sharp pang of grief that causes her to "nearly [fall] from the

⁸⁴ SNKBZ 21, p. 47; Tyler, *The Tale of Genji*, p. 177. All English translations of *The Tale of Genji* are those of Royall Tyler, unless otherwise noted.

⁸⁵ SNKBZ 23, pp. 438, 443; Tyler, *The Tale of Genji*, pp. 734, 736.

⁸⁶ SNKBZ 24, p. 189; Tyler, *The Tale of Genji*, p. 856.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

carriage” (*kuruma yori mo ochinubyō madoitamaeba* 車よりも落ちぬべうまろびたまへば).⁸⁸ While not accompanied by weeping, the mother’s near prostration is certainly caused by painful anguish. Similarly, an extremely distressed Genji involuntarily falls from his horse (*uma yori suberitorite* 馬よりすべり下りて), after intense bouts of crying, while returning from Yūgao’s funeral.⁸⁹ He will later come close to falling again during the cremation of his wife Murasaki. Indeed, in this later scene, he is forced to “lean on others as though he thought he trod on empty air” (*sora o ayumu kokochi shite* 空を歩む心地して), while her surviving ladies-in-waiting “writhed about, [as] they might even fall from their carriages” (*kuruma yori mo marobi ochinu beki o zo* 車よりもまろび落ちぬべきをぞ).⁹⁰ Their stumbling and writhing is not explicitly here accompanied by tears; but these characters are elsewhere described as weeping, and to say that they do so copiously is an understatement. Genji’s grandson, Kaoru, later mimics Genji’s mourning response after the death of Hachi no Miya’s daughter Ōigimi, when he “wavered as though walking on air” (*sora o ayumu yō ni tadayoitsutsu* 空を歩むやうに漂ひつつ).⁹¹ In each case, like Izanagi himself, mourners for Kiritsubo no Kōi, Yūgao, Murasaki, and Ōigimi are prostrated by the emotional pain of deep loss. These expressions are part of the placatory endeavor of post-death scenes.

In *Genji*, descriptions of weeping and writhing do not, it is true, foreshadow spirits’ appeasement or rebirth in a specific realm. Many characters, including Genji, do not even receive post-death scenes, though their spirits also do not return to the tale, presumably secure in a positive rebirth. Other characters have elaborately described post-death scenes, indicating that their spirits benefit from other types of mourning ritual, and their presumptive positive rebirth cannot, as such, be traced solely to literary depictions of corporeal mourning.

The differing results of mourners’ prostrations can be traced to several deviations between the constructs featured in the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and *Genji*. Notably, the terminology has changed. In the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, *haraban* and *hofuku* are almost exclusively employed—but neither of these terms appears in *Genji*. In the latter text, the mourning body performs a different yet related form of prostration: near-falling, stumbling, or lying on the ground. In none of these cases, moreover, is the prostration coupled with corporeal pain. Finally, compared with the two earlier texts, scenes of corporeal mourning in *Genji* do not serve as foreshadowing devices, though these scenes yet retain their placatory function. In other words, although descriptions of prostration in *Genji* do not, on their own, indicate that a spirit will be secured in death, these various gestures they do involve must still be regarded as placatory rituals, and not as mere expressions of grief in the lyrical mode.

⁸⁸ SNKBZ 20, p. 25; Tyler, *The Tale of Genji*, p. 6.

⁸⁹ SNKBZ 20, p. 180; Tyler, *The Tale of Genji*, p. 73.

⁹⁰ SNKBZ 23, pp. 510–511; Tyler, *The Tale of Genji*, p. 761.

⁹¹ SNKBZ 24, p. 330; Tyler, *The Tale of Genji*, p. 909.

Conclusion

As the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and *Genji* demonstrate, until at least the mid-Heian period, bodily displays of extreme distress, such as weeping, wailing, and writhing, were crucial components of an array of efforts found within literary texts to appease spirits, mirroring the actions of real mourners. In extended prose descriptions of post-death scenes, corporeal mourning marks not only the grief of surviving loved ones, but also the presence of placatory ritual. Historically, such physical expressions were not powerful enough on their own to anchor a spirit in an afterworld or afterlife—but their inclusion as a literary device in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* serves to signal that a character will in fact be secured in a specific afterworld. In contrast, even though the earlier texts' end results are not mirrored in *Genji*'s own post-death scenes, in the latter tale, mourners' physical gestures are revealed to be not only indications of personal grief, but also placatory rituals of prostration.

Through this investigation we can see that although textual depictions of corporeal mourning certainly do function on the lyrical level, we must also not overlook the profound literary and religious meaning inherent on the ritual level. This knowledge not only gives us better insight into eighth-century post-death ritual and prose literature, but also allows us to approach instances of bodily responses to death in later premodern texts with a more nuanced eye.

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