

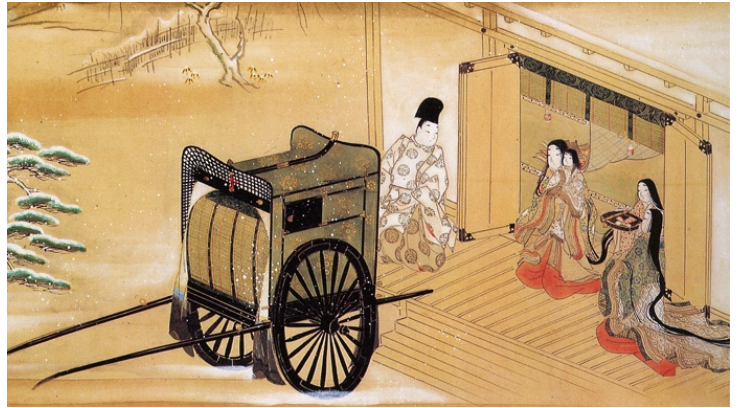
LADY AKASHI

[Akashi no kimi \(明石の君\) "Gentlewoman Akashi"](#)

The only daughter of the Monk Akashi and Nun Akashi. The father is very interested in giving her to Genji, when he arrives in their region as a result of his exile. She gives birth to a daughter with him, and this daughter will become a First Consort (chūgū 中宮), a remarkable outcome (and this daughter will give birth to Prince Niou who is one of the two main male characters of the last third of the narrative)—although in order to achieve this, Akashi has to give up her young daughter to be adopted and reared by Murasaki. Akashi is named after the shoreside location where she resides when Genji discovers her.

There are three female "Akashi"s in this narrative: Nun Akashi (the mother), Lady Akashi (the woman who is partnered to Genji) and Consort Akashi (her daughter who becomes the imperial consort).

*The illustration is of Lady Akashi giving away her baby girl, to be taken to Genji's residence under the care of Murasaki.



[Names used in the translations:](#)

Seidensticker and Washburn use "the lady at Akashi" or variations of that

In Chapters 5, 12, Tyler apparently uses: his daughter

In Chapter 13, Tyler apparently uses: the daughter of the Akashi Novice

In Chapters 14, 18, 25, 28, 35, 41, Tyler uses: the lady from Akashi

In Chapter 19, Tyler uses: the lady at Ōi (this is where she lives once she moved near to Genji after departing Akashi)

In Chapters 23, 33, 34, 40, Tyler uses: Akashi

[Mentions in the work ...](#)

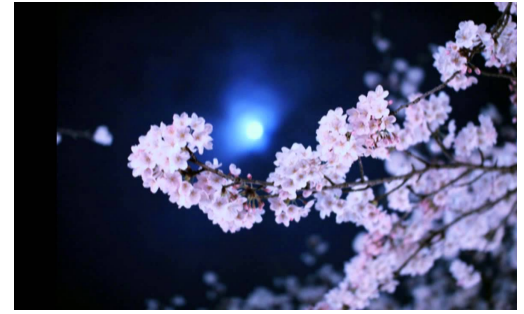
Mentioned in about 28 sections across 20 chapters, a large number, beginning with Chapter 5 but beginning in earnest with Chapter 13, which is named after her.

OBOROZUKIYO

Oborozukiyo no kimi (朧月夜の君) "The Misty Moon Gentlewoman"

Oborozukiyo is little sister to Kōkiden and so rates a proper name; however, she is named after the romantic moon on the night that Genji and her discover each other. The "misty moon" is associated with romantic spring nights.

The photo is of a "misty moon."



Brief description

The sixth daughter of the Minster of the Right, therefore little sister to the powerful Kōkiden and is herself a woman of substantial social rank. Genji and her engage in an affair that is eventually discovered and which leads to his exile. Even after this, they continue to see each other now and then, or exchange poems.

Names used in the translations:

Seidensticker and Washburn use "the lady of the misty moon" and "Oborozukiyo"

In Chapter 8, Tyler uses: the lady of the misty moon

In Chapter 9, Tyler uses: the Mistress of the Wardrobe

In Chapter 10, Tyler uses: the Mistress of the Wardrobe, then the Mistress of Staff

In Chapters 12, 14, 21, 34, Tyler uses: the Mistress of Staff

In Chapter 35, Tyler uses: the Nijō Mistress of Staff

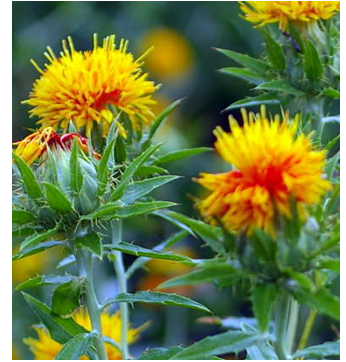
Mentions in the work ...

Although a secondary character, beginning in Chapter 10 she is mentioned in about 45 sections, a large number, scattered across 21 chapters, also an unusually large number, and perhaps reaches across (from first mention to last mention) more of the narrative than any other woman.

SAFFLOWER WOMAN

Suetsumuhana (末摘花) "Safflower"

The Safflower Woman is a princess, but presented as unattractive (one handbook asserts she is the only truly unattractive woman in the narrative), unfashionable, and inept at communication (either verbally or in writing). She has a long nose that is reddish at its tip. Based on this, Genji nicknames her "Safflower", which was used by Heian artisans to extract a red dye after collecting just the petals of the thorny flower. The name means "end-pinch/pluck-flower" but also "end-pinch/pluck-nose" since "hana" means both "flower" and "nose". While clearly the wordplay is primary here, the association is more extensive than that: the safflower was thought of as causing pain when plucked (because of the thistles) and the plant itself is unattractive although the color it produces was considered precious. The modern Japanese name for this plant is "benihana".



Brief description:

The Safflower Woman is a late child of Prince Hitachi. He has passed away by the time of the narrative. Genji's initial interest seems simply to be curiosity, and perhaps a competitive drive with his friend Tō no Chūjō. When he discovers after intimacy that she is unattractive, he is appalled but resolves to look after her. She has a long wait for his return during his exile, but he does return to her and installs her in his Nijō Eastern Estate.

Names used in the translations:

All three translators use various ways to indicate she is a princess: "the lady", "Hitachi princess", "the princess" and, in the case of Tyler "Her Highness". Tyler also refers to her as "daughter of the Hitachi Prince". All use some variation of "Safflower" once this nickname has been given to her by Genji.

Mentions in the work ...

Mentioned in about 28 sections across 7 chapters beginning with Chapter 6 which is named after her and which describes Genji (and Tō no Chūjō)'s new interest in her. Aside from this chapter, most other references are in Chapter 15 which is also primarily about her, when Genji visits her after his exile.

YUGAO

Yūgao (夕顔) "Moonflower" "Evening Faces"

The yūgao is similar to a morning glory. It is a white gourd flower that blooms in late summer and which withers in one night. Thus its timing matches the story's timing, its glowing evening whiteness suggests the beautiful white face of a woman but its brief blooming time and the white color evoke a sense of death—this woman has both a lovely and ominous name.

There is another "gao" in this narrative "Asago" (Morning Glory). It seems interesting that we have both evening and morning faces for women but as far as I can tell there is not much to be discovered by comparing these two characters.



Brief description:

Yūgao is the daughter of a highly ranked (Rank 3) Middle Captain but both parents died early. According to the "rainy night" story that Tō no Chūjō offers, he kept her as a wife for three years, and she gave birth to a girl (Tamakazura, also called the "little pink" or "wild pink"). She sends a poem out on a fan to Genji when he is in the neighborhood, on the way to visiting his sick wetnurse. Genji suspects that this is his friend's ex-wife (or wife-in-hiding, however you want to take it). He is powerfully attracted to her, and spirits her away to an abandoned mansion, where she is killed by a spirit which we are to suspect is Lady Rokujō. This profoundly disturbs Genji but, in a round-about way, it is this disaster which leads to his discovery of the love of his life, Murasaki, since she is discovered when her travels out of the capital to receive medical attention from an ascetic.

Sometimes I wonder if Murasaki has "punished" Yūgao, narratively speaking, by having her die as a result of being too forward (sending a poem to a man rather than waiting for him to send something first).

Names used in the translations:

Seidensticker and Washburn use "Yūgao" and "lady of the evening faces"

Tyler uses "a young woman" in her primary chapter, which he titles "The Twilight Beauty"

Mentions in the work ...

Mentioned in about 23 sections across 5 chapters beginning with Chapter 2 but primarily in Chapter 4, which is named after her. Some suggest that Yūgao is to be paired with the famous woman later in the narrative, Ukifune, since both are ill-fated in part because the two primary male characters (Genji and Tō no Chūjō in one instance, Kaoru and Niou in the other) compete for the woman's affection and because one happens very early in the narrative and the other very late in the narrative.

UTSUSEMI

[Utsusemi \(空蝉\) "Cicada Shell"](#)

Cicadas were known for their ephemeral existence since they are in the ground for many years before having a very brief life above ground. However, the primary allusion here is to what a woman's kimono gown was sometimes called: formal gowns are stiff enough that they can stand on their own even if the woman has left them. This refers to Utsusemi's escape from Genji.

[Brief description](#)

Utsusemi is a minor but interesting character in the narrative. Although Genji forced himself on her, she later refuses further advances based on her lowly social status, sure that nothing good can come of the relationship. Parent-less, second wife (as in, after the first wife died) to the old and unappreciative Iyo Deputy. She has a little brother, Kogimi. She lives in the mansion of the son of her husband's deceased first wife, the Governor of Kii.

There are some who think that this fictional character is meant to be a self-portrait of the author Murasaki.

[Names used in translations](#)

Seidensticker and Washburn: The young wife of Iyo, wife of the Iyo Deputy, young wife of the Vice Governor of Iyo, stepmother to the Governor of Kii

Tyler: a young woman, stepmother to the Governor of Kii

[Mentions in the work ...](#)

Mentioned in about 14 sections across 7 chapters beginning with Chapter 2 (when Genji forces himself upon her at the mansion of the Governor of Kii, where he is a night guest). She is most frequently mentioned early in the work and Chapter 3, though brief, is named for her. Her story is picked up here and there giving us a sense of how her unhappy life played out.

