Riverside Mansion Mythologies
Retextualising the Past in Poetic Commentary

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Abstract   This essay explores one reading of Roland Barthes' notion of myth and intertextuality as a potential approach to understand how what I call the Riverside Mansion myth may be a model for the creation of cultural memory in late classical and medieval Japan. I argue that medieval commentaries (so-called *kochūshaku*) to *Kokin wakashū* and *Ise monogatari* constitute a method of creation of a Barthesian myth. The case study is Kawara-no-in (Riverside Mansion), a historical estate created by the ninth-century statesman Minamoto no Tōru (822-895), which became famous, among other things, for its supposed recreation of Shiogama, a place in northern Japan. Specifically, this essay considers as a so-called 'base-text' not the classic texts but the image of Riverside Mansion, and looks at elaborations in medieval commentaries of the concrete features of Tōru's reconstruction as creative forms of creating an understanding of the cultural role and meaning of Riverside Mansion.

Keywords   Roland Barthes. Commentaries. Ise monogatari. Kawara-no-in. Kokin wakashū. Metatextuality. Mythologies.

Summary   1 *Loci*. – 2 Myths. – 3 Commentaries. – 4 Colouring Riverside Mansion. – 5 Writerly Readings.

Composed when, after the Riverside Minister of the
Left had passed away, he went to that mansion and
saw how he had constructed his garden to look like
the place called Shiogama. (foretext to *Kokin wakashū*
poem no. 852; Kojima, Arai 1987, 256; Author's transl.)

Back then there was this Minister of the Left. He built
himself a very nice house beside the Kamo River at
Sixth Avenue, and there he made himself at home. ...
"When can it have been, | I came to Shiogama?"
(*Ise monogatari*, section 81; Sakakura et al. 1957, 158;
transl. Mostow, Tyler 2010, 172-3)

1 *Loci*

The myth, to borrow Roland Barthes' term, of Riverside Mansion has one
of its several anchors fixed to two ultra-short texts from the early tenth
century, the ones quoted above. Known in Japanese as Kawara-no-in
河原院, Riverside Mansion is the name of an estate built by an historical
figure, Minamoto no Tōru 源融 (822-895), a one-time statesman whose
sobriquet was 'Riverside Minister of the Left' (*kahara no hidari no oho-
imauchigimi* 河原左大臣[1]). Perhaps rather than the estate as a whole, it
is fair to say that the 'riverside' pointed specifically to its garden.

The presumably oldest of these two *loci classici* of the Riverside
Mansion myth is the 'foretext' (*kotobagaki* 詞書)[2] to a poem in *Kokin
wakashū* 古今和歌集 (Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern), Japan's
first royal anthology of vernacular verse (*waka* 和歌), completed in
914,[3] two decades after Tōru's demise. We can think of *kotobagaki* as a
form of paratext that directs the reader towards grounding the poem
that follows in a particular situation; that is, it suggests a specificity
of occasion that forces the reader's hand in interpretation. (The ubiq-
uity of foretexts stating "Situation unknown" [*dai shirazu* 題しらず] un-
derscores this function, I would argue.) Like all paratexts, the *kotoba-
gaki* is an integral part of the entire text. The foretext to poem 852 in
this anthology is the plainest statement that Tōru's garden somehow
contained a version of Shiogama 塩釜 (Salt Cauldron), a geographi-

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1   When quoting classical Japanese, I provide a transliteration of the original
orthography (the so-called *kyūkanazukai*), rather than a transcription of the pronunci-
ation in modern Japanese.

2   I borrowed this translation of *kotobagaki*, usually translated as 'headnote', from
Okada (1991).

3   The order for its compilation was given in 905; the last poem was added in 914, ar-
guably finishing its editorial process.

cal *locus* situated in the far north, in Japan's 'hinterlands' known as Michinoku. The poem by Ki no Tsurayuki 紀貫之 (?-945), a member of the anthology's editorial committee, may be translated as follows:

君まさで煙たえにししほがまのうらさびしくも見え渡るかな

kimi masade	Now that its lord is gone,
keburi taenishi	the smoke no longer rises
shihogama no	from Salt Cauldron
urasabishiku mo	Bay — such a sad and lonely
miewataru kana	sight it does present (Author's transl.)

The myth's second *locus classicus* is section 81 of the *Tales of Ise* (*Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語), a text that has undergone considerable editorial revisions and augmentations in the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries. This textual 'place' is enigmatic terrain: the section is quite hard to make sense of without recourse to a series of extra-textual assumptions. Its setting is the Riverside Mansion, where a number of noblemen gather to drink and compose poetry. Seemingly out of nowhere, "an old beggar" (*katawi wokina* かたゐ翁) who, so the reader is suddenly told, had "been roaming around below their viewing platform", also contributes a poem:

塩釜にいつか来にけむ朝なぎの釣する舟はこゝによらなん

shihogama ni	When can it have been,
itsu ka kinikemu	I came to Shiogama?
asanagi ni	In the morning calm
tsuri suru fune ha	all the boats are out fishing—
koko ni yoranan	oh that they would come my way!
	(Mostow, Tyler 2010, 172-3)

The narrator then cryptically adds:

> The thing is, he'd been to the province of Michinoku and seen many exceptionally beautiful places there. The realm has sixty provinces and more, but there's nowhere else like Shiogama. That's why the old fellow praised the Minister's place by wondering in his poem when he could have come there. (Mostow, Tyler 2010, 173)

Traditionally, two things are inferred here: first, that "this Minister of the Left" is Minamoto no Tōru and that he had designed his garden in such a way that one might pretend it could have been Shiogama; second, that the mysterious "old beggar" is none other than the presumed protagonist of *Tales of Ise*, Ariwara no Narihira 在原業平 (825-880), the grandson of an emperor. That second, not unproblematic identification I will not address here. However, the first assumption is essential in order to make sense of the poem: then it can be

read as an instance of 'elegant confusion', which was a widely used rhetorical device in poetry of praise.

Why Shiogama? This, too, is somewhat beside the point of this short essay, but it has been pointed out that the standard answer, that Shiogama was an *utamakura* 歌枕, a poetic toponym, and therefore an acceptable source of inspiration in garden design, is weak if not untenable. As a 'poetic place', Shiogama came to be associated with sadness (*urasabishi* うらさびし) and loneliness. Yet, contrary to what seems the general assumption, Shiogama was *not* a name that already early on had established itself as part of the poetic repertoire. The early tenth-century *Kokin wakashū* contains only two poems that mention the 'real' Shiogama (nos. 1088 and 1089); with Tsurayuki's poem, that adds up to a total of three. In fact, throughout the tenth century one mostly sees *waka* on Shiogama that bear on the garden at Kawara-no-in, and it is only *after* the tenth century that the original Shiogama really seems to catch on as an independent *utamakura* (Nishimura 1990). It is far from obvious, then, that Tōru chose Shiogama because it was so famous: during his lifetime in ninth-century Japan, it was not.

For this one anchor of the Riverside Mansion myth, then, we have four *loci*: two textual, and two geographical.

2　Myths

This essay is a heuristic attempt to find an approach that can synthesise the different identities of Tōru's Riverside Mansion throughout the course of Japan's late classical and medieval periods (roughly, the eleventh through sixteenth centuries), of which the association with Shiogama is only one, albeit the best-known. Barthes' notion of a 'myth' may point towards such an approach, and here I would like to see where that leads me.

In his book *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes (1957) sketched his understanding of the essential working of sign systems and how his concept of myth figures in it.[4] He begins by pointing out how semiology differentiates between the two terms *signifiant* (signifier) and *signifié* (signified: the object referred to by its linguistic or visual representation). (The classic example, I was taught, is the word 'tree', or a photo of a tree, as a signifier that refers to, or expresses, the signified organism in the park or, if one is lucky, in front of one's house.) Together, these two constitute a third term: the sign (*signe*), which

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[4]　In the second part of his book, "The Myth, Today" ("Le mythe, aujourd'hui"), and specifically the section "The Myth as Semiological System" ("Le mythe comme système sémiologique") (Barthes 1957, 217-24).

is the relationship between the two. This is a so-called semiological system of the first degree. The myth, says Barthes, has the same three-dimensional outline, but constitutes a semiological system "of the second degree". That is to say, the synthesising sign of the first degree becomes a signifier in the second degree. This means that in a myth there are two semiological systems at work: an 'object language' (*langage-objet*) in which the myth expresses itself, and a 'meta language' (*méta-langage*) that is the myth itself. The signifier of the first degree can now be regarded from two perspectives: as final result of object language and as starting point of the 'mythical system'. As a result, what is the sign in the semiological system of the first degree is the significance (*signification*) in the system of the second degree: the sign can be given new meaning. Abstract? Yes, but the point is that it allows Barthes to think of a myth as a concept that has an almost unlimited number of 'signifieds' at its disposal: the fundamental character of a myth is to be 'appropriate', he writes. The myth is 'an empty, parasitic form' that can be given new meaning, because its original contents have evaporated. Implicit in Barthes' 1957 idea of the myth is his notion of the 'empty sign'. Famously, in *The Empire of the Signs* (Fr. *L'empire des signes*; Barthes 1970), Barthes stuffed his analysis of the 'system' that was Japan with the notion of the 'empty sign': signs can be given new significance because their relationship with the signifieds is severed and is constructed anew.

In the following section in *Mythologies*, Barthes proposes as an example of a myth the notion of 'Sinity' (*sinité*) to designate the totality of associations ('bourgeois' associations, he writes somewhat condescendingly) with an imagined 'China' (Barthes 1957, 228). In analogy, and in full recognition that Barthes was interested not in cultural practices of and the creation of meaning in the distant past but of the present, we may speak of a 'Kawara-no-innity'. Like 'Sinity', this is an ugly neologism, but it is, to echo Barthes, "constructed through a reasonable analogy" (1957, 228). The 'Kawara-no-innity', then, is a mythical concept that gives access to an almost unlimited number of signifieds. Like 'Sinity' and 'Japan', the 'Kawara-no-innity' may be thought of as an empty sign.

What I call the Riverside Mansion myth is not, in the strict sense, a Barthesian myth, but it is a functional concept. While the 'Kawara-no-innity' may possess several characteristics of Barthes' myth and empty sign, it is for example not the case that there are unlimited signifieds or meaning-givers for it. As far as I can tell at this stage of my research, the 'Kawara-no-innity' is more of a quadruplicity: a myth of Shiogama, a myth of Daoist realms, a myth of bygone glories, and a myth of haunted pasts. These myths require specific languages: respectively, that of poetry and prose in Japanese (*waka*) and commentary, that of the Sinitic, that of *waka* (again), and that of prose in Japanese (as well as the poetic language of the nō theatre).

Riverside Mansion's first myth, the Shiogama myth, clad in smoke, fish, and *fūryū* 風流 (elegance), is what I briefly explore here.

3 Commentaries

The creation of the Shiogama myth takes places primarily through medieval commentaries, or 'old commentaries' (*kochūshaku* 古注釈).[5] The genre of commentary is eminently and inherently intertextual: its method is the embedding of texts in other texts, its effect (if not its goal) to beget a new text that shows its textual DNA, so to speak. A commentary is as much a text onto itself (but with 'parents') as it is a 'signpost' pointing to the First Text or base-text. A commentary does not so much explain the First Text as it reveals itself. That is why commentary traditions are such rich material for reception history and by extension cultural history. Medieval commentaries tell us perhaps more about this historical period than about whatever it is they ostensibly comment on.

Recently, Rein Raud has pointed out how one way to conceive of culture is as 'textualities': "ordered sets of texts of different status that are related to each other and come with pre-arranged modes of interpretation" (2016, 55). In such textualities there is a category of texts, the so-called 'base-texts', that are a permanent marker in a given culture, some knowledge of which is seen as proof that one is part of that culture (examples for western culture could be: the Gospel or the Eiffel Tower – the latter a very Barthesian example of an empty sign). For medieval Japan, *Kokin wakashū* and *Ise monogatari* would certainly fit that bill. What Raud calls "[t]he operational mode of a textuality" is "the imaginary space in which the base-texts are continuously (re)interpreted and result-texts produced" (2016, 68). With 'result-texts' Raud seems in the first place to think of instances of a 'text' that many of us would still consider a primary text, even if it is inspired by a base-text, but one that is not in circulation very long (the 1956 sci-fi movie *Warning from Space* comes to mind, but I could be wrong). Nonetheless, I believe we can expand this notion to encompass commentaries. Cumulatively, commentaries form what Gérard Genette has called "metatextuality" (1977, 4, 8), which is at once a genre as well as a space in which the First Text or base-text is continuously given new meaning. Commentaries may be thought of as the manifestation of this discursive space. Rather than think of commentaries as a 'delayed response' to a base-text, I am interest-

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[5] Here I make no formal distinction between 'old commentaries' (*kochūshaku*, lasting until roughly until the Ōnin war of 1467-77) and the subsequent so-called 'transitional commentaries' (*kyūchūshaku* 旧注釈) of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

ed in the corpus of commentary as discourse onto itself in which the base-text is a sign but not the object of inquiry per se. The *totality* of commentaries, that is, the commentary *tradition*, is a unit. To speak, for example, of *kokin denju* 古今伝授, (the transmission [of interpretations] of *Kokin wakashū*) is to point to a (perceived) coherence of the act of discussing *Kokin wakashū*, and not so much to an assortment of individual commentaries.

Two important aspects of the study of medieval Japanese commentaries that I will not elaborate upon here are the role that commentaries played in establishing genealogies of cultural authority, and the role of such texts in oral interaction.[6] Much important work has been done in historicising approaches to commentary. That the commentary traditions were part and parcel in confirming authority in matters of poetry and other literature is eminently clear, as is the importance of physical copies of such commentaries with attested authenticity, for example by signed certification of licensed transmission (Cook 2000, 53). In this context, the content of knowledge was perhaps less important than the legitimacy of access to that knowledge. Furthermore, in traditional Japan, we cannot assume that commentaries functioned as 'stand-alone' texts. That is to say, the commentaries are the written residue of an oral interaction between instructor and pupil; hence the term *kuden* 口伝, 'oral transmission', for written texts. These markers of exclusivity notwithstanding, I would like to treat the collectivity of commentaries as one corpus.

Moreover, rather than separate commentary traditions for *Kokin wakashū* and *Ise monogatari* respectively, I would like to weave these two strands together and take them as one metatext to explore the myth of Kawara-no-in, and to consider as base-text not the two textual *loci* but the signifier of that myth: the estate. In other words, Riverside Mansion is itself a base-text that is given new meaning through a totality of discursive lineages that incorporate the estate in their discussions, explanations, and elaborations.

4 Colouring Riverside Mansion

The metatext I indicate above, that is, said commentary traditions for *Kokin wakashū* and *Ise monogatari*, constitutes a massive corpus. Here I will highlight only a few samplings in more or less chronological order.

Interestingly, a relatively early example for *Kokin wakashū* comments not so much on the Tsurayuki poem as on its foretext. *Kokinshū chū* 古今集註 (Notes to *Kokin wakashū*), one of several commentaries with that name, is a fourteenth-century Nijō commentary to the an-

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6 For more on this in English, see for example Cook 2000; Newhard 2013; Aoki 2021.

thology's reception within the once competing but by then basically defunct Rokujō house and may reflect Nijō Tameuji's 二条為氏 (1222-1286) notes to the Rokujō edition of that anthology. On Tsurayuki's *kotobagaki* it has this to say:

> Note. The Kawara Minister of the Left is Lord Tōru. In this lord's near garden, he had built [re-constructed] all [or: completely] the famous places from the [more than] sixty provinces. After the minister [passed away], it was converted into a palace for the Kanpyō retired emperor [Uda, 867-931]. This villa occupied four blocks located south of Rokujō Bōmon, north of Rokujō, east of Made no Kōji and west of the river bank. (*Kokinshū chū*; Yoshizawa 1935, 190; Author's transl.)

It is intriguing that it makes no attempt to provide information that might explain Tsurayuki's poem. What we do encounter here is a preoccupation with Riverside Mansion's exact location that recurs in almost all of the commentaries, both to *Kokin wakashū* and to *Ise monogatari*. The mapping of Tōru's villa on the existing grid of the capital becomes something of a fixed rhetorical gesture and underscores a grounding of the base-text in a historical and almost tangible reality. The address is already present in a commentary that goes back to Kenshō 顕昭 (1130-1209), a proponent of the Rokujō school in *waka* poetry. In 1183 Kenshō presented a commentary to *Kokin wakashū* to his patron, 'dharma prince' Shukaku (Shukaku Hōshinnō 守覚法親王, 1150-1202). In this *Kokinshū chū* 古今集注, to which later commentators kept adding, a new feature of the Riverside Mansion is introduced, one that was already passed on earlier within the Rokujō school and apparently could be traced back to the eleventh century:

> This house is Riverside Mansion. It lies south of Rokujō Bōmon, north of Sixth Avenue, east of Made no Kōji, and west of the river bank, and measures four blocks. They put thirty *koku* 石 [ca. 5,400 litres] of salt water in the pond every month, and sea fish and other salt water creatures were kept in it, as is noted in Lord Kiyosuke's[7] commentary. After the Minister [passed away], it was converted into a palace retreat for the Kanpyō retired emperor [Uda]. A private [note] says, originally it was called East Sixth Avenue Mansion. Now it is a temple. Lord Takakuni's[8] commentary notes that they made a model of Shiogama in Michinoku, and filled [its pond] with salt water.

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[7] Fujiwara no Kiyosuke 藤原清輔 (1104-1177), a poet and commentator of the Rokujō school.

[8] Minamoto no Takakuni 源隆国 (1004-1077).

[A note at the top:] "Yoshimune[9] surmises that the salt water in the garden [pond] of that house was hauled by several hundreds of servants every day from Amagasaki Bay in Settsu". (*Kokinshū chū*; Kyūsojin 1980, 327; Author's transl.)

This is where the fish come in. The story that in his recreation in the garden of Riverside Mansion Tōru aimed for a degree of hyperreality is well-known. It is also a story that, the further removed in time from the historical Riverside Mansion it is, gets more elaborate and detailed. One way in which this apocryphal design strategy of Tōru's operated was to fill the pond, a central element in any garden of a Heian-era (794-1185) estate, with salt in mimicry of seawater; after all, Shiogama is situated on the sea coast. The details may vary: two, three, twenty, or thirty *koku* are mentioned; rather than seawater, the pond is filled with salt; a monthly or even a daily transport is recorded, etc. The oldest example in Japan of such a story that I have so far located concerns a different, mid-tenth-century estate in the Heian capital, but one that has a number of parallels to that of Riverside Mansion. The source is a Sinitic text by Minamoto no Shitagō 源順 (911-983), and the context is the conjuring up of an enchanting but now lost garden. This suggests that the, apparently later, story of Tōru's habit to fill up his pond with salt taps into an existing embellishment that bespeaks the wealth of the estate's owner as well as the fantastic nature of the estate itself.

The fish are, equally fantastic, sea fish such as *tai* 鯛 (sea bream) and *suzuki* 鱸 (sea bass), as is explained in a thirteenth-century commentary to *Tales of Ise*, the *Waka chikenshū* 和歌知顕集 (Collection of Manifest Knowledge about Poetry, pre-1260):

Minamoto no Tōru ... At Rokujō Takakura he had [a garden] built to look like Shiogama. On the bank [of the pond] he built a salt hut such as divers use and had smoke rise up from it. At the foot of the boards of the fishing pavilion he organised boat races and such. Each month he sprinkled three *koku* salt in the pond and released fish in it that normally live in the sea and kept them there, so that sea bream and sea bass frolicked and leaped up at the boards [of the fishing pavilion]. It was fascinating and he invited several princes. If I have to name these princes, they were the prince of the Kaya palace, Prince Saneyasu, the prince of the Urin'in, Prince Koretaka, and such.[10] The present Riverside Mansion is that Shi-

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[9] It is not known who this Yoshimune was. He left annotations to a copy of Kenshō's notes to *Kokin wakashū*.

[10]   These princes were associated with *Ise monogatari*. Saneyasu figures in section 78, Koretaka in section 82. This touches on a different discussion, namely the theme of representations of thwarted power, which I will not take up here.

ogama. He copied the actual Shiogama, but soon [Riverside Mansion] was called the actual Shiogama. (*Waka chikenshū*; Katagiri 1969, 176; Author's transl.)

Here we also see what was already intimated, that as a geographical *locus* Riverside Mansion replaced the actual or 'unmediated' (*dzika* 直) Shiogama in Michinoku. The signified Shiogama usually was Tōru's estate garden in the capital. The fourteenth-century Nijō commentary mentioned above even claims that one of the two poems in *Kokin wakashū's* section of "Songs from the East" (*adzuma-uta* 東歌, no. 1088) is, in fact, about the replica in Tōru's garden (Yoshizawa 1935, 240). The realism of this superimposition was supposedly heightened by having 'divers' or sea folk (*ama* 海人) operate salt kilns and catch sea fish, and marking the bank of the pond with sea shells:

> His house in the Rokujō area is the present Kawara-in. There he built [a garden] in the appearance of Shiogama Bay and always had smoke rise up. Boats were set afloat and he had divers go fishing [from them]. Each month he put two *koku* salt in the pond and had sea fish such as bream and bass released in it and kept them there. On the banks [of the ponds] he scattered empty shells crushed by the sea and in this way it really was no different from Shiogama. (*Waka chikenshū* [Shimabara Bunko-bon]; Katagiri 1969, 275; Author's transl.)

These details are perpetuated in various *Ise* commentaries, including the authoritative fifteenth-century *Ise monogatari gukenshō* 伊勢物語愚見抄 (Humble Views of *Ise monogatari*, 1460) by Ichijō Kaneyoshi 一条兼良 (var. Kanera, 1402-1481), in which once again a suspense of disbelief is made possible not only by the authority of commentary, but also by the precision of the identification of location:

> The Kawara Minister of the Left built a spectacular house at Sixth Avenue Riverside, dug a pond, and filled it with water, and every day he transported thirty *koku* of salt and put it in [the pond], and had sea fish and shells from the bottom of the sea live in it. He had smoke rise from divers' salt huts and amused himself in this way. This is at East Sixth Avenue Mansion. (*Ise monogatari gukenshō*; Katagiri 1969, 561; Author's transl.)

The operative language of the commentaries as a rule is Japanese. However, Kenshō's *Kokin wakashū* commentary quoted earlier proceeds with quoting in full a description in Sinitic of Riverside Mansion:

> In the Petition at the Behest of Retired Emperor Uda to Perform a Sutra Reading after the Death of the Kawara Minister of The

Left, a work by Ki no Arimasa,[11] it says, "Riverside Mansion was the residence of the late Minister of the Left, Lord Minamoto. Forest and springs he selected for the neighbourhood; the clamour [of the city] was kept at bay. He chose the [suitable] grounds and built [the mansion and garden]. Although it was on the east side of the Eastern Capital [the eastern or 'left' section of Heian-kyō], when he entered its gates and resided [there], it was as though he had escaped to the north of the Northern Hills [Kitayama]". (*Kokinshū chū*; Kyūsojin 1980, 327; Author's transl.)

Such a crossover into a different language of scholarship is not unusual in medieval literary commentaries, but usually confined to shorter passages. Here we see a second crossover as well, one into the Riverside Mansion myth of haunted pasts (the petition's point is to placate Tōru's ghost). All Kawara-no-in myths are holistically connected, of course, but what this passage also does is to underscore the enchanted nature of Riverside Mansion, emphasising its sophistication (*fūryū*). To walk through its gates is to enter a different world, far removed from the bustle of the capital.

Other Sinitic texts can be evoked to the same effect, as in these fifteenth-century lecture notes (*kikigaki* 聞書) by *renga* master Sōchō 宗長 (1448-1532) recording his teacher Sōgi's 宗祇 (1421-1502) lectures on *Tales of Ise*, the *Ise monogatari Sōchō kikigaki* 伊勢物語宗長聞書 (1491):

"He built himself a very nice house": The present Riverside Mansion is what is left of [that house]. It was a reconstruction of Shiogama Bay. "In its pond he set free whales and cetaceans; | in its mountains he kept tigers and wolves". (*Ise monogatari Sōchō kikigaki*; Katagiri 1969, 693; Author's transl.)

With the lines "In its pond he set free whales and cetaceans; | in its mountains he kept tigers and wolves" (*ike ni keigei wo hanachi, yama ni korau wo sumasu* 池放鯨鯢、山住虎狼) we enter the realm of the truly fantastic. Conversely, one might say, we enter deeper into the realm of literary embellishment and poetic hyperbole in the description of Tōru's reconstruction (*utsushidokoro* うつし所) of Shiogama. To my knowledge, this is a first instance in which commentaries quote from a now lost anonymous "Poetic Exposition on the Riverside Mansion" (*kahara no in no fu* 河原院賦), which is also quoted by Hosokawa Yūsai 細川幽斎 (1534-1610) in his *Ise monogatari ketsugishō* 伊勢物語闕疑抄 (*Doubting Commentary on Ise monogatari*, 1596; Katagiri 1969, 820).

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11 *Honchō monzui* 本朝文粋 (Literary Essence of Our Court, 1066), 14, no. 427 (Ōsone et al. 1992, 115-18, 375).

Rather than spell out the Shiogama myth of Tōru's estate, the commentaries in fact *create* it. The sparse formulations in *Kokin wakashū* and *Ise monogatari* allow for a dynamic construction of a Riverside Mansion base-text that readers actively colour in to meet their expectations.

5 Writerly Readings

As stated, my aim here is not to squeeze Kawara-no-in into a Barthesian Procrustes' bed, but rather to find a way to understand how the Riverside Mansion myth may be a model of the creation of cultural memory in late classical and medieval Japan. That is a different thing. I am not engaged with charting how a reader today might engage in deviation or "derivation" (*dérive*, Barthes' term in *Le plaisir du texte*) to find pleasure in the act of reading. Rather, I am interested in a form of reconstruction. The value of such reconstruction is partly hermeneutical: it is an exercise in understanding other cultures and as such is a testing of an approach.

While Barthes' position seems to have been that intertextuality was a decidedly modern form of readers' interaction with a text, Haruo Shirane (2008, 9) has, in an apparent and creative use of the Barthesian distinction between 'readerly' (*lisible*, fairly straightforward) and 'writerly' (*scriptible*, demanding an effort) texts, argued that traditional Japan knew both 'readerly' and 'writerly' receptions of such classic works as *The Tale of Genji*. Commentaries are given as an example of readerly reception, and parodies and adaptations are examples of a writerly reception. However, when we think of the Riverside Mansion myth and the role that commentaries play in construing it, we may accept that commentaries, too, can be a writerly engagement with base-texts and have a fully active part in the production of their meaning, of which Barthes would say that there always is a plurality. That commentaries build on one another to weave new meanings suggests their creative potential.

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