The Romances
The Ancestor of All Romances
The first match was between an illustration for The Bamboo Cutter, the ancestor of all romances, and a scene centering upon Toshikage from The Tale of the Hollow Tree. From the left came this view: “The story has been with us for a very long time, as familiar as the bamboo growing before us, joint upon joint. There is not much in it that is likely to take us by surprise. Yet the moon princess did avoid sullying herself with the affairs of this world, and her proud fate took her back to the far heavens; and so perhaps we must accept something august and godly in it, far beyond the reach of silly, superficial women.” The Picture Contest (絵合)

The Tale of the Hollow Tree (宇津保物語)
Kiyowara Toshikage (清原俊蔭)
Sent to China as imperial envoy, aged 16
Adventures in Hashi (波ス) [Persia?]
Return to Japan with magical koto (琴)
Daughter left alone and in poverty lives in a hollow tree with son Nakatada
Reunion with Minister of the Right Kanemasa
Secret koto tradition passed on to Inumiya

The Tale of Lady Ochikubo (落窪物語)
Cinderella heroine: beautiful & talented, but kept in the lower room of the shinden (寝殿) mansion
Wicked-stepmother theme (継子いじめ)
also found in 宇津保物語 and 住吉物語
Revenge & reconciliation
“Let no one in the world hate their step-children. Step-children are the most valuable of children.”
“She made me become a nun. And she knows how fond I am of fish. Step-children are very crafty.”

The Tale of Genji
Murasaki Shikibu (紫式部)
Real name Kyōshi? Pseudonym taken:
either from Murasaki-no-Ue (紫の上), the wife of the protagonist, an ideal Heian lady;
or from the color of wisteria, the 藤 of Fujiwara (藤原), the clan to which she belonged and the 式部省 Ministry
Her previous pseudonym was Tô Shikibu (藤式部), supporting the 藤 theory

Murasaki Shikibu’s father Fujiwara Tametoki, belonged to a cadet branch of the Fujiwara clan, studied at the University (大学寮), enjoyed a successful career in the Ministry of Ceremonial or Shikibu-shô
Found patron in Emperor Kazan
Senior Secretary at the 式部省
986: Kazan retired, leaving Tametoki without a position for ten years; wrote poems to Michinaga
996: appointed Governor of Echizen

Murasaki Shikibu’s life
Talented writer & poetess
Skilled at Chinese (Nihongi no tsubone, 1008)
999: Married Fujiwara Nobutaka
Daughter Kenshi
Later known as Echigo-no-Ben & Daini-no-Sanmi
Possible author of Sagoromo monogatari (狭衣物語)

1000: Married Fujiwara Nobutaka again
Daughter known as Echigo-no-Ben & Daini-no-Sanmi
Possible author of Sagoromo monogatari (狭衣物語)

1001: Murasaki widowed following epidemic
1002: Perhaps began writing in retirement
Similarities with Christine de Pizan (1363-c.1434)

1004: Entered service (salon) of Michinaga’s daughter Akiko (Shôshi)
She left a diary Murasaki Shikibu nikki (1008-1010)
In the diary she mentions the Tale and Michinaga’s enthusiasm/interference
1011: Emperor Ichijô dies at 31, forcing Akiko to move to a detached palace, living on till 1074
1011: Tametoki appointed Governor of Echigo; leaves with son Nobunori, who soon dies
1016: Tametoki takes tonsure
1031: No mention of Murasaki Shikibu participating in pilgrimage to Sumiyoshi Shrine

Motivation
Ishiyama Temple legend found in the Kakaishô (河海抄) commentary by Yotsuji Yoshinari (四辻善成 1326-1402)
Commissioned for the Virgin of the Kamo Shrine
Started with Suma (12) & Akashi (13), on reverse side of temple scrolls
To preach morality or immorality?
Traumatic shock theory and mujôkan 無常観
Genji’s own theory:
“It is a matter of the writer being so moved by things, both good and bad, which he has heard and seen happening to men and women, that he cannot keep it all to himself but wants to commit it to writing and make it known to other people — even those of later generations.”

Puzzles Posed by the Tale
Did Murasaki Shikibu write it (all)?
Did she complete it? And if so when?
Why are there “parallel chapters”?
Was it written in a different order?

Was there a model for the “Prince”?
Why are there plot inconsistencies?
Why is one chapter left blank?
Is it really a novel?

The Writing of the Tale
Murasaki Shikibu probably started writing in 1002; some think she finished it in 1030.
1008: parts being circulated; in her diary she complains of Michinaga taking an old draft (thus no single holograph?)
Some think it was never finished, but an important clue is provided by daughter of Sugawara no Takasue, author of Sarashina nikki (更科日記) in an entry dated 1021.
“And so it was that she presented me with fifty-odd volumes of The Tale of Genji in a special case, together with copies of Zai, Tôgimi, Serikawa, Shirara, Asauzu, and many other tales. Oh, how happy I was when I came home with all these books in a bag! In the past I had been able to have only an occasional hurried look at fragments of The Tale of Genji, and much of it had remained infuriatingly obscure. Now I had it all in front of me and I could sit undisturbed behind my curtain, bent comfortably forward as I took out the books one by one and enjoyed them to my heart’s content. I wouldn’t have changed places with the Empress herself.”

Sarashina nikki (更科日記)

Authorship of the Tale
Murasaki Shikibu clearly implies in her diary she is writing Genji no monogatari.
No evidence her father Tametoki provided the outline, or that Michinaga edited it, or that daughter Kenshi wrote the last 10 chapters (宇治十帖).
Growing maturity behind the obvious changes in style?
“This chapter [Kiritsubo] should be read with indulgence. In it Murasaki, still under the influence of her predecessors, writes in a manner which is a blend of the Court chronicle with the conventional fairy-tale.”

[Arthur Waley]
Ordering of the Chapters
Ishiyama Temple legend in the Kakaishô suggests order of composition may have been different.
Quires probably circulated independently and had neither numbers nor titles for identification (cf. discovery by Prof. Tamai in 1924 of misbinding of Sarashina nikki). Consensus was gradually reached on both titles (derived internally from poems) and ordering.
Early scholars focused on:
74-year chronological framework
430+ main characters and their relationships

Narabi-no-maki (並びの巻き)
Action in narabi-no-maki runs parallel with neighboring chapters:
Abe Akio (阿部秋生) explained this by proposing different order of composition for first 20 or so quires
Theory later expanded to cover first 33 quires by Takeda Munetoshi (武田宗俊)

Genji monogatari is usually divided into three divisions (bu):
1. 33 chapters (Kiritsubo ➔ Fuji-no-uraba)
2. 8 chapters (Wakana-no-jô ➔ Maboroshi)
3. 13 chapters (Niou-no-miya ➔ Yume-no-ukihashi)

Takeda divided first 33 chapters into 2 groups:
Murasaki-no-ue: 17 chapters
(1, 5, 7-14, 17-21, 32-33)
Tamakazura: 16 chapters
(2-4, 6, 15-16, 22-31)

Differences between two groups seen in style, technique, characterization, etc.
Characters limited to the second group (Yûgao, Utsusemi, Suetsumuhana, Tamakazura) are more skillfully drawn and have knowledge of the other group (e.g. Fujitsubo) but not vice versa.
Can be explained if the second group (16) was written after the first (17), then reordered:

Research
Analysis of the distribution of 300 subjective adjectives & adjectival verbs
Primarily abstract (aware nari, okashi, ayashi), reflecting personal value judgements and emotions
Cluster analysis performed on 50 categories, arranged by frequency to discover if distribution pattern matched the Takeda theory
Result: Good correlation with first 21 chapters (i.e. with original Abe theory)

Inconsistencies
Two unusual gaps:
Between 1st and 2nd chapters
Between 41st and 42nd chapters
Sudden appearance of characters (Lady Rokujô)
Allusion to yet-unrelated events (affair with Fujitsubo)

Most inconsistencies appear in the early chapters and can be partially explained by a difference between the order of composition and the established, chronological order.

Structure of the Tale
Over 25,000 lines in Taisei edition (35字 per line)
50% longer than Utsuho monogatari
Poems number 795 (cf. 1,003 in Utsuho)
Inevitable that it should have been composed in serialized form, creating episodic structure (not a novel?).

Plot
Hikaru Genji (光源氏), the “Shining Prince” born; demoted to Gen clan
Married off to cold Aoi; pursues affairs in friendly competition with Tô-no-Chûjô Yûgao, Utsusemi, Lady Rokujô &c.
Fujitsubo, Emperor’s consort (oedipal complex); son becomes Emperor Reizei
Murasaki, reared as ideal Heian lady Suetsumuhana, Oborozukiyo (scandal)
Low point: exiled in Suma
Move to Akashi marks change in fortunes
Son Yûgiri marries Tô-no-Chûjô’s daughter Genji finds Yûgao’s daughter Tamakazura Daughter becomes consort of future Emperor
Retribution
Disastrous marriage to unfaithful Onna San-no-Miya
Son Kaoru really fathered by Kashiwagi (dies of shame)
Murasaki dies ➔ Genji vows to retire; Kumogakure
Japanese Literature Part 4

3 quires of Takekawa (spurious?) [Genji now dead]
10 Uji chapters: focus on Kaoru & Prince Niou
Ukifune’s attempted suicide, Kaoru’s doubts

World’s First Novel?
Key role of the “Appraisement of Women on a Rainy Night” (雨夜の品定め) scene
Realistic psychological characterization

Unifying themes:
Mono-no-aware [本居宣長]
Mujōkan [無常観]
Historical (rise of the Fujiwara)
Suggestion and anticipation
Parallelism (sin & retribution)

Roman-à-Clef?
Possible models for Hikaru Genji include:
Fujiwara Korechika (rapid rise & exile)
Sugawara no Michizane (talent)
Ariwara no Narihira (amours)
Fujiwara Michinaga (power & splendor)

English translations
1882 tr. by Suematsu Kenchô (末松謙澄)
1925-33 tr. by Arthur Waley
Madly Singing in the Mountains (1970)
1976 tr. by Edward Seidensticker
Genji Days (1977)
2001 tr. by Royall Tyler

Emaki (源氏物語絵巻)
Produced a century after the appearance of GM, but making an important contribution to Japan’s artistic heritage, creating an enduring “cultural memory” of the work & period
(though faded & fragmented)
Of more than 100 illustrations only 19 survive, with 65 text leaves (oldest extant GM manuscript)

The Pillow Book
Reputation
“Sei Shonagon has the most extraordinary air of self-satisfaction. Yet, if we stop to examine those Chinese writings of hers that she so presumptuously scatters about the place, we find that they are full of imperfections. Someone who makes such an effort to be different from others is bound to fall in people’s esteem, and I can only think that her future will be a hard one. She is a gifted woman, to be sure. Yet, if one gives free rein to one’s emotions even under the most inappropriate circumstances, if one has to sample each interesting thing that comes along, people are bound to regard one as frivolous. And how can things turn out well for such a woman?” Murasaki Shikibu’s Diary

Sei Shonagon (清少納言)
Kiyowara Nagiko, daughter of Kiyowara Motosuke
Literary family, descended from Emperor Temmu
Two marriages, neither successful; died in poverty?
Entered court service (Sadako) at around 30? c.993
In her prime throughout 7 years spent in the palace
Famous Pillow Book (枕草子) composed 995 ~ 1002?
Makura ni koso wa haberame
("Let me make them into a pillow," I said.)
Prime example of zuihitsu (随筆)
Later emulated in Tsurezuregusa (徒然草) of Yoshida Kenkô (吉田兼好) ca. 1331

Content
Contains 300+ sections
Manuscripts: unordered (zassan) more reliable than ordered (ruisan)?
mono-zukushi: place names, mountains, trees, etc., interspersed with her personal impressions; likes & dislikes ("Annoying Things", "Rare Things", "Presumptuous Things", etc.)
Also travel notes, diary-like entries, observations, remarks
Fresh, direct, crisp and concise writing style quite different to complex prose of Murasaki
In spring it is the dawn that is most beautiful.
As the light creeps over the hills, their outlines are dyed a faint red and wisps of purplish cloud trail over them.

Motivation
“I wrote these notes at home, when I had a good deal of time to myself and thought no one would notice what I was doing. Everything that I have seen and felt is
included. Since much of it might appear malicious and even harmful to other people, I was careful to keep my book hidden. But now it has become public, which is the last thing I expected. . . . How could my casual jottings bear comparison with the many impressive books that exist in our time?"

*It Is Getting so Dark (#326)*

Other Heian Prose

Giko monogatari (擬古物語)
Imitating the old:
*Sagoromo monogatari*
(1069~81)
*Hamamatsu chûnagon monogatari* (11th century)
*Tsutsumi chûnagon monogatari* (1055~1385)
*Torikaebaya monogatari* (12th century)
*Sumiyoshi monogatari* (13th century)

Sumiyoshi monogatari (住吉物語)
Daughter of Chûnagon Kenzaemon-no-Kami
Tormented by stepmother (*mamako-ijime*)
Himegimi escapes to Sumiyoshi
Son of Minister of the Right
Tricked by stepmother
Prays to the Hase Kannon (*觀音*)
Poem in dream reveals lover’s whereabouts ➔ happy reunion
Marriage, children, promotion
Stepmother dies in poverty

Rekishi monogatari (歴史物語)
Gilding the past:
*Eiga monogatari* ●
(11th century)
*Ôkagami* ●
(11th century)
*Imakagami* (1170)
*Mizukagami* (12th century)
*Masukagami* (1238~1376)

Setsuwa monogatari (說話物語)
Bringing the past alive:
*Nihon rei’iki* (c.822)
*Sambô ekotoba* (984)
*Konjaku monogatari* (12th century?)
*Uji shûi monogatari* (c.1215)
*Kojidan* (1212~15)
*Jikkinshô* (1252)
*Kokonchomonjû* (1254)