With *Textures of Mourning: Calligraphy, Mortality, and the Tale of Genji Scrolls* (University of Michigan Press, 2018), I aimed to write a book about the interwoven politics of reading, writing, and dying. Regarding its contribution to premodern Japanese literary studies, my recourse to scholarship in art history, performance studies, psychoanalytic criticism, and critical race theory stemmed from a desire to model less positivist, more multidimensional modes of engaging these texts. Their resistance to our desires for transparency and unitary meaning become generative—not qualities to be lamented or eradicated.

The story I wanted to tell about legibility and subjection centers on medieval Japanese texts. However, *Textures* explores how some folks manage to evade death while others seem destined to die, with subtler parallels to our own contemporary moment. Who perishes and how depends on macro- and micro-structures of domination and exploitation, whose supremacist legacies orchestrate “fate.” Proximity to death absent mortal risk denotes privilege—for fictional characters in the 11th-century *Genji* and for living beings today. Reading *Genji* and its handscroll renditions dramatizes this issue: how asymmetries staged in death’s presence shape bodies, sensations, capacities for interpretation and intervention.

In the spirit of Ruthie Gilmore’s definition of racism as “the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death” (*Golden Gulag*, 28), we might say that *Genji* highlights the calibrated, disproportionate exposure of vulnerable bodies to privation and premature death. Systemic enforcement of premature mortality upon certain populations surfaces across eras and cultures, providing a locus at which to translate shared concerns from one site of inquiry to another. Collaborating to analyze aesthetic, legal, economic, religious, and environmental dimensions of such systems of privation might inspire a more diverse range of students and colleagues. *Textures of Mourning* hopes to help kindle this style of questioning.