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“Fence” as metaphor in Heian literature. Part 1

(比喩としての「垣」(上))

Teresa Martinez Fernandez

Abstract

One of the most widely studied motifs in Heian period literature is that of 垣間見, *kaimami* or peeking, it is usually added, through a gap in a fence, 垣, *kaki*. Even so, the fence as such has not received as much attention as the phenomenon it purportedly gives rise to. Peeking, glimpsing and stealing glances have been attentively looked at, extending the field to gaps in blinds, curtains and shutters, and even to occasions where the only obstacles belong to the strictures of ritual, social or psychological decorum.

Here, the fence itself will be the site of interest. Different works will be scanned for appearances of this very important element, prop and metaphor, that has remained active in the literature, and in the culture, from the earliest chronicles, such as 古事記, *Kojiki*, to the Heian period tales, among which 竹取物語, *Taketori Monogatari*, 伊勢物語, *Ise Monogatari* and 源氏物語, *Genji Monogatari* will be looked at for particular occurrences. However, the fence is not only a literary object, it also figures materially in the culture, specifically in the complex of ritual surrounding funerary and accession ceremonies and, as the *Kojiki* narratives reveal, it is an unavoidable piece of architectural support for courtship and reproduction, a guarantee of genealogical continuity, as well as a metaphor for power. This complex of meanings of the fence maintains its validity throughout, because it functions as a cultural metaphor, widely used and understood, and not dependent on specific instances of textual allusion or precedence. The fence is in a sense a very real metaphor and a very solid reality. It could be said to be one of the founding signs of Japanese culture.

要約

平安時代の物語研究に於いて、「垣間見」という行為はしばしば取り上げられてきた。本稿では、その見る見られるという行為だけではなく、「垣」そのものに注目し考察していく。「垣」というのはテキストの中で小道具のようなものとして、喩的に重要な役割を果たしているのを読み取ることができる。また「垣」

はテキスト上だけのものではなく、精神文明にも物質文明にも存在し、文化的なメタファーとして国史・律令・歌・物語にも登場する。垣間見の場面の他に、血統の継続性の保証として求愛・妊娠・出産のシーンにも、葬式・即位の儀式にも現れており、文化の創始的な記号と理解できる。

Preliminaries

Fences: 垣根 *kakine*, 垣, *kaki*, or any of its variants. 柴垣, *shibagaki*, 小柴垣 *koshibagaki* and 小柴 *koshiba*, all of them brushwood fences, 葦垣 *ashigaki* or reed fence. 檜垣 *higaki*, fence made of plaited cypress; 籬 *magaki* or *mase*, roughly made fences of brushwood or bamboo the first, and of bamboo or wood the second, that are also lower. There is also 垣代 *kaishiro*, which is another name for the curtains 帳, *tobari*, *cho*, that serve to make the partitions inside the rooms. Closely related as items of domestic architecture there are 蔀 *shitomi*, shutters, and its variants: 半蔀 *hajitomi*, 立蔀 *tatejitomi*.

Further afield there are 岩垣 *iwagaki* or stone walls in remote, desolate mountain places. For really august fences there is 御垣 *mikaki*, surrounding the palace itself and shrines. There are 神垣 *kamigaki* and 斎垣 *igaki*, encircling shrines, with *igaki* marking any space that is sacred. 玉垣 *tamagaki* and 瑞垣・籬垣 *mizugaki*, denoting sacred space in general and also the palace, are both praise terms for shrine fences, *mizugaki* for the inner and *tamagaki* for the outer enclosure. Finally there is 神籬 *himorogi*, the place, usually a mountain, forest or old tree that was believed to house a god's spirit, and that became a *shinza* or god-seat when enclosed by a fence. Thus far names.

As for actions, one of the most common in the literature takes place through a gap in it. 垣間見 *kaimami* features prominently in the *monogatari* literature of the Heian period, notably *Genji Monogatari*, but once we turn from the surreptitious gaze to the fence itself, and look for other fences in the chronicles, poems and narratives preceding it, we find that looking is only part of the story. They invite, and at the same time repel, glimpses through their interstices; they can be put under siege or let open for allowed entrance, they can be toppled or even decay, but before any of this can happen they have to be set up.

The fence of the chronicles was already a metaphor, of protected enclosures and of the power of their builders, out of which at some point the further metaphor of peeking or glimpsing through its gaps became a fixture of

narratives having to do with challenges to that power and romantic intrigue. These obstacles to the gaze are the fences that we find in Heian literature, in the proliferation of *kaimami* taking place. But the fence was never purely metaphorical, and in a process that can be traced in different works, mainly *Taketori* and *Genji*, it reappears with its full materiality, literalized into the narrative, not only as an obstacle to unwelcome glances but as a defensive barrier, often watched by guards.

It will become apparent that as opposed to the *kaimami* topos, which highlights only two of the subjects, the seer and the seen; the fence, in its basic and most common formulation, necessitates three; the builder or owner of the fence, the one enclosed, and the one on the outside, attempting to steal a glance or enter the enclosure. The fence also stands in a synecdochic/metonymic relationship to the three personages involved with it, making the form of this involvement and the state of the fence itself an index of their fortunes. This triangular configuration is present in some manner from the first chronicle stories surrounding the fence. The principle guiding this study is that the fence, from its beginnings in poetry and chronicle to the fictional narratives of the Heian period and beyond, is essentially the same, and that its various aspects are closely interrelated and can be explained as evolving from and complementing each other.

Building the fence

Around the time of the final consolidation of the Yamato centralized state, texts that had been transmitted in the various aristocratic houses were collected and edited with the aim of eliminating mistakes and falsehoods and providing reliable accounts. Or such were the words of Emperor Temmu (r 673-686) in the introduction to one of these newly written texts, 古事記 *Kojiki* or Record of Ancient Matters. Both *Kojiki* and 日本書紀 *Nihon Shoki*, another chronicle compiled a few years later, contain accounts of fence building in the mythical beginning sections, which are followed by the historical chronicles concerning human sovereigns.

Building the fence means constructing, with certain definite materials, the physical enclosure that separates and defines a given place from the surrounding space. It also means setting up the "fence", the complex of ideas encompassed by it, and which stem from its basic physical properties. As the

narratives make clear, it is both a material reality and a sign. Its appearance creates a power differential.

Following the rescue of Kusi-nada-pime from the dragon Susa-no-wo looks for a place in the land of Idumo, where he builds a palace, *miya*, at Suga. The building of this palace and the composition of what is considered to be the oldest poem in the regular metric form that became the standard for Japanese poetry (31 syllables arranged in 5-7-5 7-7 lines), links the “making of song”, the establishment of regulated verse, with the foundation of the palace-surrounding fence.¹

八雲立つ	The many-fenced palace of Idumo
出雲八重垣	Of the many clouds rising
妻籠みに	To dwell there with my spouse
八重垣作る	Do I build a many-fenced palace:
その八重垣を	Ah! that many-fenced palace!

It is later said that “then taking Kusi-nada-pime he commenced procreation.” The chapter ends with a genealogy listing their descendants. The construction of a wedding palace had ceremonial, as well as practical significance.² Most ancient literary activity initially served ritual ends, and its function was to produce or propitiate desired effects; here the establishment of a dynasty by an act of incantatory power. In what manner narratives of the acts of the gods are made to relate to the practices, and their narration, of human sovereigns is difficult to determine, but it has been argued that mythic paradigms provide both a framework and a set of rhetorical tools to articulate the scripting of historical events, and that these in turn may condition the narrating of the mythic “precedents”.³

The fence appears next as part of a poetry exchange between two men at an 歌垣 *utagaki* festival. Although there are significant differences in the accounts surrounding the song competition episode, beginning with the identity of the emperor and the reign concerned, Prince Woke later Emperor Kenzo in *Kojiki*, Buretsu in *Nihon Shoki*, the content and immediate context of the songs does not differ greatly, and so only the *Kojiki* version will be cited in full. The poetic dialogue recounted in *Kojiki* is a series of aggressive exchanges between two rival suitors, Prince Woke and the scion of a prominent ministerial family, Omi Sibi, for a girl named Opuwo.⁴ The prince wishes to marry Opuwo and agrees with her to meet at the appointed place for the *utagaki*. There, he

approaches her. Seeing them, Sibi faces the prince and challenges him to answer his opening poem.

Omi Sibi

大宮の	The farther sides
をとつ端手	Of the great palace
隅傾けり	Are falling in at the corners

Woke-no-mikoto

大匠	Because the carpenter
をちなみこそ	was unskillful,
隅傾けり	It is falling in at the corners

Omi Sibi

王の	Because the heart
ころをゆらみ	Of the great lord is slack,
臣の子の	He does not enter
八重の柴垣	The many-layered twig fence
入り立たずあり	Of the Omi lad

Woke-no-mikoto

潮瀬の	As I watch the breakers
波折りを見れば	In the briny rapids,
遊び来る	By the fin
鮪が鰭手に	Of the leisurely moving tuna fish
妻立てり見ゆ	I see my spouse standing

Omi Sibi

大君の	Our great lord
王子の柴垣	The prince's twig fence,
八節結り	Though it be tied in eight sections,
結り廻し	Though it be tied clear round,
切れむ柴垣	Is a twig fence which can be pierced,
焼けむ柴垣	Is a twig fence which can be burnt

Woke-no-mikoto

大魚よし	O fisherman harpooning
鮪突く海人よ	The great fish, the tuna fish:
其があれば	If she gets away from you,
うら恋しけむ	Then won't you miss her!
鮪突く志忌	O Sibi harpooning the tuna fish!

The conflict culminates in Prince Woke and his brother Prince Oke raising an army to attack the Omi Sibi and killing him, after which peace is restored and orderly imperial succession renewed.

The fence metaphor, as enclosure to keep the woman in, out of the reach of other suitors, and as an image of the grasp on power of both contenders, articulates the exchange. Both opponents taunt and threaten each other, with the minister's son boastfully contrasting the sound state of his fences with the precariousness and vulnerability to attack of the prince's. More to the point, it serves to express the theme of usurpation. The *Nihon Shoki* narration introducing the poetic confrontation states that Sibi's father, "the Minister of State Heguri no Matori no Omi usurped the government of the country and tried to reign over Japan. Pretending that it was for the Emperor's eldest son, he built a palace, (*miya*), and ultimately dwelt in it himself."⁵ Another *Nihon Shoki* account reports a similar pattern of events, with a minister, Soga no Omi Emishi and his son Iruka, building palaces for themselves and receiving tribute from other great families. These actions placed them in direct confrontation with a prince, Naka no Oe, later Emperor Tenji, when he was still one of several aspirants to the throne. "The Omi's house was called Ue no Mikado (The Upper Palace Gate). Iruka's house was called Hasama no Mikado (The Valley Palace Gate). Their sons and daughters were styled Princes and Princesses. Outside the houses palisades were constructed, and an armoury was erected by the gate ... Stout fellows, armed with weapons were constantly employed to guard the houses."⁶(家の外に木柵を作り、門の傍に兵庫を作る ie no to ni kikaki o tsukuri, kado no hotori ni tsuwamonogura o tsukuru). This *kikaki*, of course, is another type of fence, so we find again, in a chronicle type of narrative, the fence in a context of competition and linked to power disputes. It seems that special significance was attached to buildings as indication of status. Emperor Yuryaku also chastised a local chief for not respecting architectural restraints: "The scoundrel! He has built his own house like the palace of the emperor!"⁷ There is a further element common to the two *Nihon Shoki* accounts in that in both of them, the prince is prevented from marrying a woman selected to be his bride, and to whom he sends a go-between, *nakadachi*, to arrange the marriage. Kagehime, as the woman in dispute is called in the *Nihon Shoki* version, had already formed an illicit union with Omi Sibi (Kagehime, imusaki ni Matori no Omi no ko Sibi ni okasarenu),⁸ and in the case of Prince Naka no Oe, another

entry preceding the one quoted before tells how his bride to be was “stolen” by a relation on the eve of the marriage (shikaru ni Ehime, chigirushi yo, yakara ni nusunarenu).⁹ A pattern for ministerial usurpation of royal prerogatives emerges that links the construction of fenced in buildings (*miya*, *mikado*), with competition for women destined for princes with claims to the succession. The recurrence of these narrative elements could be understood as a scripting of events conforming to existing paradigms, as well as a record of particular incidents.

Miya: Shrines and Palaces

The delimitation of differences, in this context of a particular area from the surrounding space, could be seen as one of the primordial aspects of culture. The fence is then, a remarkable piece of cultural technology. Distortion of the original space creates a whole range of new cultural phenomena, primary among them the definition of power itself. The appearance of the fence posits a privileged area of seclusion and accumulation, surrounded by a zone of desire, of lack of power. All configurations of the fence bear this meaning. In this connection it is also appropriate to consider the definition of sacred space, which at its most basic has been conceived of as a “hollowness”,¹⁰ as something made apparent by a limit or line of separation, often materializing in the form of a vessel, *utsubo*, such as bamboo stalks, gourds, peaches, boats, in which divine children are placed, or in the form of a fence. The *Kojiki* has a number of references to this, such as the “green twig fence” (青柴垣 *awo-pusi-gaki*)¹¹, that a deity creates from a boat by ritual stamping of feet and clapping of hands for the purpose of concealing himself, or the space for worship that another deity demands in “the eastern mountain of the verdant fence of Yamato”, (倭の青垣の東の山 *yamato no awo-kaki-no-himugashi-no-yama*).¹² There was a god by the name of 志婆加支神 *Shibakakinokami*, which the *Engi Shiki* identifies with the *kami* of Ise no Suzuka, and is related to the potency of fences as protectors against demonic intrusion.¹³ And in a further instance of the wooing, sacred space complex there is the lament of Aka-wi-ko, as she sings in answer to emperor Yuryaku, who had forgotten that years before he had commanded her to await his summons for marriage.¹⁴

御諸に	At Mimoro
つくや玉垣	They built a jeweled fence,
つき余し	But left part unfinished:

誰にかも依らむ On whom will you rely,
神の宮人 Courtier of the deity?

The old woman's lament seems to imply that the promise of marriage, of building the fenced wedding palace, was left unfulfilled, while linking the fence to a specific shrine, an unequivocally sacred space.

The emergence of power from these differentiated spaces establishes the need for vigilance, especially of those precincts in which birth, death and succession rituals take place. As the wedding palace makes possible a biological continuity that gives rise to a genealogy, so the enclosures surrounding the place where the transition is made from one sovereign to the other also make possible a dynastic continuity. The chronicle accounts seen earlier have made apparent the presence of the fence in the scene of wooing, competitive courtship, marriage and procreation. The genealogical renewal thus established depends not only on the continuity of the bloodline, but also on that of the *tama*, the spirit that is embodied in successions of particular individuals and that needs to be ritually activated, whenever it is perceived to weaken due to illness or death. This reinvigoration of the *tama* is achieved with specific rituals involving shaking, *furu* and tying, *musubu*; *tama-furi* and *tama-musubi*.¹⁵

The narrative placing of the practice of royal incest in the context of the succession is highly significant in view of later appearances of the incest motif as a means of staking a claim to the throne by princes who have not been designated as heirs. That very often the sister or half-sister was also the priestess sent from the court to Amaterasu's shrine in Ise further secures this theme as part of the competition for the succession complex, as is recounted in the story of Prince Otsu and Princess Oku;¹⁶ and in the case of Sao-biko and Sao-bime,¹⁷ where the brother contends for the sister's allegiance with her husband. Although narrative convention seems to reserve the sibling incest or pseudo-incest theme for tales of failed claimants to the throne, there is at least one historical, chronicled instance in which the ploy was successful. Prince Naka no Oe persuaded his sister, the emperor's consort, to abandon her husband and go with him to a new capital. The then emperor's death followed after one year and Prince Naka no Oe, after an intervening period of further conflict, became emperor.¹⁸ Ancient accounts suggest that a relationship with the Ise Priestess, already established by narrative paradigms such as the Yamato-Takeru tale, was a valid form of laying a claim to the throne, as she also conducted rituals

concerning the succession: "There are hints that in addition to *tama-furi* rituals performed by the sexual partners of the deceased emperor inside the *mogari no miya*, the Ise priestess also had some kind of power to recall the imperial spirit and transfer it to another individual."¹⁹

Ebersole's description of the palace of temporary enshrinement or interment, the *mogari no miya*, also brings together themes seen in previous instances of the fence; namely royal power, royal women, competition, and succession disputes, and for that reason will be quoted at length:

"When an adult male member of the imperial family died, all the women who had been sexually intimate with the deceased - his primary wife and his concubines - were apparently secluded within the *mogari no miya* for an extended period of time, often for several months. In addition to these women, their servants and handmaidens were probably secluded as well. It is clear, though, that the interior of the *mogari no miya* was a distinctly and exclusively female preserve. It was a locus of both special ritual activity, including *tama-furi* rituals designed to recall the spirit of the deceased, and political intrigue. ... [T]he unique position of the women secluded with the corpse of the deceased emperor seems to have translated into significant power leverage in the determination of the succession. ... The *mogari no miya* seems to have been surrounded by a high wall or fence and, indeed, had something of the appearance and even functions of a fortress. Guards were located in the space outside the temporary enshrinement palace itself but within the surrounding walls. [It] was heavily guarded, though, not so much to protect the corpse from desecration or to guard any treasures deposited there as to protect the secluded women from sexual attack."²⁰

That this last was a real eventuality, or that it was held to be so, can be understood from the following entry in *Nihon Shoki*: "The Imperial Prince Anahobe tried to force his way into the Palace of temporary interment in order to ravish (*okasamu toshite*) the Empress Consort Kashikiya-hime."²¹

Mogari, 虎落, defined as a fence made of interlocking bamboo stalks secured with rope, used as a fortress or buffer in battle, and *mogari*, 殯, as the place of temporary interment, where the corpse is laid to rest awaiting the definitive burial.

Although the nature of the assault on the imperial dignity is not the same in the case of a ministerial would-be usurper and an ambitious prince who has lost out to one of his brothers or half brothers in the competition to gain the position of crown prince, a number of the narrative markers of usurpation are present in both cases. One of the few elements that seems to be privative to princes is the approach to the female depositories of transitional imperial power; the women secluded in the *mogari no miya*, foremost among them the deceased emperor's *kisaki*, or principal consort, and the Ise priestess, who in her distant shrine also conducted ceremonies to ensure the succession. Princes represent the legitimate pool of candidates from whom the next emperor has to emerge, after the imperial *tama* is successfully attached to the crown prince in the enthronement ceremony rituals.²²

In the course of the imperial succession the next ritual phase was the enthronement, effected during the *Daijō-sai*, the Great Feast of the Enthronement, which was a new emperor's first *Niiname-sai* or Feast of the First Fruits, and followed the definitive burial of the deceased emperor after the period of temporary interment. The *Niiname-sai* was a festival performed every year in the Eleventh Month. As accession narratives suggest, the period of the *Niiname-sai* was "a time of testing of both imperial and marital legitimacy (or both in the case of heirs) which involved banging on doors, entering the residence of a *hime*, and reclining in a couch - from which one might arise with a bride and a throne, or dead or at least expelled like Susano-o if one does not do something right."²³

Following on the idea that the fence as reality and as cultural metaphor has maintained its validity across time and genre, we can read certain episodes in later literature, for instance in *The Tale of Genji*, in the light of their chronicle predecessors and of the interpretations they suggest.

The complex of actions described above, along with the description of the events that transpired during the death rituals performed after the death of an emperor in the *mogari no miya*, can well summarise Genji's behaviour following his father's death in the significant Eleventh Month, when during the period of mourning he enters Fujitsubo's residence at Sanjo and attempts to rape her. Perhaps more than a stepmother or mother surrogate, Fujitsubo is for Genji, in this light, a widowed empress in seclusion during mourning for the former emperor, and Genji's actions conform to those of a prince attempting to

disrupt the succession. She is the deceased emperor's *kisaki*, the only one of that rank among his father's consorts. Herself the daughter of an empress, the uniqueness of her exalted status is apparent in the sobriquet she is given when entering court, かかやく妃の宮 *kagayakuhi no miya*.²⁴ The episode of the assault is no fit of passion but a premeditated attack, preceded by continued and resentful brooding caused by Fujitsubo's inaccessibility, insistent requests on her women to act as mediators, and lying in wait for the opportune moment, which means hiding in a closet for a day: "She was appalled, then, when one day he found a way to approach her. He had made his plans carefully and no one in her household was aware of them."²⁵ Genji must have done something wrong, like most of the princes whose stories are told in the chronicles, because soon after this he is forced to leave the capital in disgrace. Although the remove to Suma is presented as a self-imposed exile, the political situation after his father's death and his brother's consolidation in power makes it impossible for him to remain. As Kokiden says: "A man out of favor with his majesty is supposed to have trouble feeding himself."²⁶ This mourning period complex of actions is concentrated in *Sakaki*, 'The Sacred Tree' chapter, which also includes the episode that precipitates his exile to Suma, namely the discovery of his illicit relationship with his brother Suzaku's intended consort and sister of the Kokiden Lady, Oborozukiyo. The "intrigue" with an intended imperial consort being one of the markers of dynastic struggle and attempted usurpation already established in the chronicle narratives. That Genji, in spite of his demotion to commoner status, and of the prophecy that warned of disaster if he were to become emperor, maintained throughout his career an awareness of his nearness to the throne is acknowledged in the *Miotsukushi*, 'Channel Buoys' chapter:

"He had consulted physiognomists in large numbers and they had been unanimous in telling him that he would rise to grand heights and have the world to do as he wished; but through the unhappy days he had dismissed them from his thoughts. With the commencement of the new reign it seemed that his most extravagant hopes were being realized. The throne itself lay beyond his reach. He had been his father's favorite over his many brothers, but his father had determined to reduce him to common status, and that fact made it apparent that the throne must not be among his ambitions."²⁷

This aspect of Genji as prince contending for the succession, placing this particular episode next to a discussion of historical and narrative referents highlights one of its possible meanings. What is also brought to light in the tale itself is the tension between Genji's thoughts of renunciation to the throne and the challenge to its possession his actions represent.

As has been stressed throughout this discussion, the fence is not only metaphoric; it is a very real object, as official documents dealing with court ritual show. The *Engi-shiki*, or *Procedures of the Engi era*, (901-922), describes in painstaking detail the regulations for carrying out the civil and religious administration of state ritual.²⁸ Among them and to provide specific textual examples; the ceremonies to be performed at Ise during the Tsukinami festival, described as a continual passing through gates in fences,²⁹ or, detailing of the specific measurements for the fences to be built for the ceremonies to the deities.³⁰ Further references are made to fences and worship by the Ise priestess at the Watarai shrine, cleaning around the perimeter of the fences, and distribution of all the properties and building materials, including the fences, to different persons or groups involved with the performance of ritual at Ise, when the incumbent priestess returns to the capital and leaves the shrine.³¹ The Jingi-kan itself, the government organ that administered the court's ritual affairs, was "a double compound surrounded by a double fence and situated inside and just south of the Ikuhomon, one of the twelve gates of the palace."³² Instructions for building the structures in the precincts where the Feast of the Enthronement took place, can be found in Chapter 7 of the same document, where it is stated at the beginning that "brushwood is to be used for the fences and wood to make the doors".³³ This rapid overview of officially constructed fences should be enough to establish their importance in the government ritual complex.

Many of the interrelated themes surrounding the fence in the chronicle accounts reappear later in the *monogatari* writings of the Heian period, where they can be said to provide a sort of underlying blueprint for particular episodes that in their juxtaposition, build up to an overall concern with the relationship to power. These narratives, increasingly the preserve of women writers, show characters close to but inexorably marginalized from the centre of imperial power, rehearsing the plots of usurpation and competition established by the mythistorical tellings. And in these new forms also, the fence is present.

Tales and the fence

Lady Chronicle

That the relationship between chronicle and *monogatari* was one that exercised Murasaki Shikibu's imagination is apparent from the tale itself, and from her own diary. Emperor Ichijo, listening to a reading of a section of the *Genji Monogatari*, praised her knowledge of the *Chronicles of Japan*. This earned Murasaki the animus of one Saemon no Naishi, who promptly dubbed her Lady Chronicle, *Nihongi no Mitsubone*, and proceeded to spread among the courtiers the story of her supposed conceit in her learning.³⁴ As Genji explains to Tamakazura in the *Hotaru*, 'Fireflies' chapter: "I have been rude and unfair to your romances, haven't I. They have set down and preserved happenings from the age of the gods to our own. The Chronicles of Japan and the rest are a mere fragment of the whole truth. It is your romances that fill in the details."³⁵ Genji's defense of *monogatari*, with its unstated purpose of redirecting Tamakazura's interest in fiction into desire for him by offering to co-author a novel variant: "Suppose the two of us set down our story and give the world a really interesting one", touches upon the relationship of tales to reality, and to historical and mythical modes of narration. That the end of this rhetorical defence is seduction, and that the tales themselves are conceived of as seductive, can be seen from Genji's different attitude to what should be proper reading for his daughter.³⁶ The attitude of the author of the tale to both those "fragments of the truth", the chronicles, and to *monogatari*, especially as regards its heroines and its intended female readers, appears as equally problematic.

The young Reizei emperor also has a troubled relationship to chronicles. Upon receiving the revelation from Fujitsubo's spiritual adviser, that he is the son of Genji and not the emperor, he begins to look for precedents:

"He found great numbers of such irregularities in Chinese history, some of which had come to the public notice and some of which had not. He could find none at all in Japanese history - but perhaps they had been secrets as well guarded as this one. He found numerous examples of royal princes who had been reduced to common status and given the name of Genji and who, having become councillors and ministers, had been returned to royal status and indeed named as successors to the throne. Might not Genji's universally recognized abili-

ties be sufficient reason for relinquishing the throne to him? The emperor turned the matter over and over in his mind, endlessly."³⁷

Reizei's search for precedents concerning irregular succession has a bearing not only in relation to himself, but to Genji's status as a demoted prince, a formerly royal commoner. One of the major preoccupations of the chronicle narratives being that of succession, its trials and struggles, it should not be surprising that when they are alluded to in the tale it is in the context of secrecy and possible misrepresentation, of the details that were left out. The narrative instances mentioned earlier, in the episodes involving Genji's assault on Fujitsubo, his relationship with Oborozukiyo and even the approach to the fences surrounding the Ise Priestess at Sagano, follow the scheme of challenge and attempted usurpation, while discussions of Genji's almost supernatural qualities seem to point to some form of legitimate claim to royal power, as does his father's preference. Genji appears as displaced; ambiguously rightful heir or usurping prince. The political solution comes in the form of demotion to commoner status, while the mythistorical markers of usurpation are rewritten in the narrative mold of the amorous hero. His irresolvably ambivalent status is made apparent at the moment of his marriage to the Third Princess, the daughter of Retired Emperor Suzaku, his half-brother: "Certain limitations were imposed upon a commoner, and she was after all neither going to court nor receiving a prince as a bridegroom; and all in all it was a most unusual affair."³⁸ If we examine the issue of suitability for rule in terms of the image of the jewel, *tama*, as it is applied to Genji and to Reizei, we find that it ultimately depended on the status of the mother. Although Genji is said to be a "jewel beyond compare",³⁹ he is the son of a lady "not of the first rank". It is Reizei, son of a lady of the highest birth who is the "unflawed jewel".⁴⁰

The ancestor of all romances

Chronicles are not the only precedents *The Tale of Genji* looks back to. The *Eawase*, 'Picture Contest' chapter singles out for praise a number of *monogatari*, placing at the head of all of them, the tale of the moon princess, Kaguya-hime.⁴¹ *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter* does contain a very important precedent, and in it the fence plays a prominent role.

After finding a little girl inside a shining bamboo stalk in the mountains, an old bamboo cutter takes her home and gives her to his wife for rearing.

The child grows rapidly and becomes a very beautiful young woman. After her coming of age ceremonies, she is not allowed out of her curtained chamber. Soon her fame spreads and suitors throng the old bamboo cutter's house.

"But it was not easy, even for those who stationed themselves on the fence around the house or at the gate, to catch a glimpse of her. Unable to sleep peacefully at night, they would go out into the darkness to poke holes in the fence, hoping in their folly to peep at her."⁴²

The fence around the house (そのあたりの垣に sono atari no kaki ni) is where the men wait hoping to have a glimpse of her (このかぐや姫を得てしかな、見てしかな kono Kaguya-hime wo ete shikana, mite shikana), poking holes in the fence in order to see her (穴をくじり、垣間見、惑いあえり ana o kujiri, kaimami, matochi aheri).⁴³ This short passage at the beginning of the second section of the tale effects an analysis of the *kaimami* topos at its most literal, at both a linguistic and a narrative level. All the elements that are contained in the metaphor, 垣間見, *kaimami*, glimpsing through a gap, are spelt out sequentially: Approaching the fence, 垣 *kaki*; finding or making the gap, 間 *ma*, here the holes that the men drill in the fence, 穴 *ana*; and finally glimpsing, 垣間見 *kaimami*, anticipated in the desire to see 見てしかな *mite shikana*, with seeing and marrying virtually synonymous, that made the men poke the holes in the first place. This narrative manoeuvre of extracting the fence and placing it as a prop in the narration, making it figure as an element by itself, is amply exploited in *Genji*, where it is used to great effect.

The festivities,⁴⁴ which entail dressing in a woman's clothes, doing her hair in an adult style, receiving a new name selected by a diviner, and seclusion in the house, are recognizably typical of menarcheal ceremonies. From the perspective of anthropology, "menarche represents the earliest point in the life cycle at which bargaining over rights to a woman's fertility becomes critical."⁴⁵ Alteration of the young girl's appearance is a way of signalling that her fertile years have begun. Menarcheal ceremonies vary in degree of elaboration and cost, and they are more common in matrilineal or duolineal societies, than in patrilineal or neolineal ones.⁴⁶ This is the pattern that seems to have prevailed during the Heian period, at least among the aristocracy, as is amply reflected in the literature.⁴⁷

This public feasting and seclusion of the young girl acts as a prelude. The enclosure, the fence, makes apparent the father's exclusive claims over her

and at this stage signals to the potential suitors that there is a nubile daughter and that negotiations can begin with her father. It is both lure and deterrent, as the largest number of potential candidates are congregated before it while at the same time they are prevented from entering its precincts, something which will only occur with the father's consent after one of the suitors has concluded successfully with him. Before, in the fence built by Susano-o, we saw its part in delimiting a space for procreation and the generation of a genealogy, a recognized succession of descendants. Here, it performs a closely connected service, as instrument for selecting a suitable son-in-law. The perspective is firmly that of the father-suitor relationship, as the aim of the marriage is the establishment of a kinship relationship between men, achieved by the exchange of women under their control.⁴⁸ Another important aspect brought forth by the fence is that the exchanges taking place across it in relation to the woman include as well transactions of material wealth and social prestige. The competing suitors are expected to offer valuable gifts, and the Emperor in his attempts to bring Kaguya-hime to serve him at the palace, offers court rank to the old bamboo cutter as an inducement.⁴⁹ The complex linking the fence, fathers or foster fathers, daughters, service at court, competitive courtship, and accumulation of wealth and prestige will also be explored in *Genji Monogatari*, where one of the heroines bringing these themes together is Tamakazura. Like Kaguya-hime, she is found by an older man who presents her to the world as his daughter, and sets about putting up beckoning fences and gathering eligible suitors who will compete for her.

"I must let everyone know that I have taken her in, and we shall watch the pulses rise as Prince Hotaru and the rest come peeking through my fences. (この籬のうち好まうしたまふ心乱りにしがな, kono magaki no uti konomasiu si tamahu kokoro midari ni si gana) We have seen composed and sedate countenances all around us, and that has been because we have not had the means for creating disturbances. Now we shall improve our service and see who among them is the most unsettled."⁵⁰

And later, when Genji is leading a troop of young men before her quarters, among them her brothers who unwittingly come wooing their sister in this entertainment designed by him to while away a hot day:

"He had avoided showy plantings in this northeast quarter, but the

choicest of wild carnations caught the evening light beneath low, elegant Chinese and Japanese fences. (唐の、大和の、籬いとなつかしく結びなして、咲き乱れたる夕ばえ、いみじく見ゆ kara no, yamato no, mase ito natukasiku yuhi-nasi te, saki-midare taru yuhu-bahe, imiziku miyu) The young men seemed very eager to step down and pluck them (and the flower within as well).⁵¹

The story of Tamakazura is prefigured by *Taketori* and at the same time provides a cue to better understand the older tale. There the old bamboo cutter appears as a typical father managing his daughter's courtship and wedding, making the necessary preparations when he thinks the second suitor, Kuramochi no miko, has been successful in bringing the Jewelled Branch of the Pohai Tree: "The old man, ignoring her words, prepared the nuptial chamber. (Okina ha neya no uchi shitsurahinadosu)"⁵²

The issue of the suitors' fate is also a common thread between the two tales. It is remarkable that throughout the text, Kaguya-hime is presented as the old man's daughter, or foster daughter, much more than the old woman's. The emotional weight is placed on the father-daughter relationship, and this together with the sad and gruesome fates most of the suitors meet suggests the incest theme. One of the thematic markers in many of the narratives of father-daughter incest is precisely the violent elimination of suitors, usually through tests involving riddles, impossible requests or lethal competition between them or against the father.⁵³ Tamakazura finds herself in a similar situation, in that Genji actively solicits the wooers' attentions on her behalf while scheming at the same time to keep her for himself. The prime victim of this false situation is Kashiwagi, one of her half-brothers, who does meet a sad end as a consequence of further complications around another fence, the one enclosing Genji's young wife. Although his death is directly related to his seduction of the Third Princess it can also be seen as a displaced aftereffect of his wooing of Tamakazura. Narrative displacements in the framework of the incestuous father theme often include transfers of agency, where the requests or riddles may be set by the daughter, as does Kaguya-hime.

Lord Narihira

The same episode that gave us the evaluation of *Taketori Monogatari* also provides an appreciation of the *Tales of Ise*, where Lord Narihira's accom-

plishments are defended by the party sympathetic to Genji's interests against the claims of a rival tale.⁵⁴ *Ise* provides a very important link to the chronicle literature of power and usurpation through its deployment of the amorous hero, the *irogonomi* man of risky affairs and reckless poeticizing. The *Ise* narrative *otoko*, historically identified with Ariwara Narihira, appears as a latter day incarnation of those unhappy princes crowding the chronicles with their doomed attempts on power, rehearsing again the plots linking competition for the succession and approach to the mystically empowering royal females charged with the mythical transmission of legitimacy. The situation of the historical Narihira was close enough to that of the princely contender while operating at a time when the succession had become regulated through the power of one of the ministerial houses, the Fujiwara, to force the nomination of crown princes born of Fujiwara consorts. As the son of Prince Abo and Princess Ito, he was the grandson of emperors. The father of Prince Abo, Emperor Heizei, abdicated in favor of his brother Saga and the prince was later accused of involvement in a plot to reinstall Heizei in the old capital of Nara. Prince Abo was exiled to Tsukushi, present-day Kyushu, and his sons, including Narihira, were made commoners and given the Ariwara surname.⁵⁵ Although there is no definitive history of the genesis of the *Ise* text, it has been postulated that it may have existed in some form in Narihira's lifetime, with the composition of the text in the form it has been transmitted taking place in the entourage of Retired Emperor Uda, almost a hundred years later.⁵⁶ Most of the historical personages mentioned by name in the text can be grouped as dispossessed aristocrats, princes who failed to become emperors and ministers who could not actualize their status as fathers or brothers of imperial consorts into the offices of regent or chancellor.

This political landscape of contending princes and their allied ministers was the theme of the historical chronicles. There, in no lesser measure than in the literary tales, the narratives of the events in the successive reigns detailed the struggle for power employing paradigmatic plots, actions fixed by historical and narrative convention as highly meaningful and revealing of the individual actors' intentions.

It can also be said that *Ise* begins with the fence. Its first section, where a young man returns to the old Nara capital and catches a glimpse of two beautiful sisters through a gap in the fence, 垣間見 *kaimami*, is the referent for

numerous later allusions, and links the act of surreptitious glimpsing and poetic composition.⁵⁷ There is an alternative ordering of the sections composing the tale that begins with the episode, number sixty-nine in the usual ordering, of the hunter dispatched by the court to the Ise shrine, where the man and the princess engage in poetic exchanges suggestive of a sexual encounter.⁵⁸ The narration of this relationship, set in motion by the princess' mother and frustrated by the vigilance of the governor of the province, who is also in charge of the priestess' affairs, represents in its plot structure and its identification of the historical actors involved, the sister and mother of Prince Koretaka with whom Narihira was associated and who was passed over in the succession in favour of a Fujiwara sponsored prince, a retelling of the familiar tale of attempted conspiracy through approach to a well guarded fence. As in the chronicles, more than an issue of correspondence to fact what is significant is the consistency of the pattern, and the link to historically displaced players in the power game. *Ise* does not provide instances of the fence isolated in its materiality of real object, acting out its properties as obstacle and protecting enclosure, but these are implied in key sections of the tale, its two alternate beginnings. It is contained in the *kaimami* of the man at the beginning of his *irogonomi* career, and in the fences that as the *Engi-shiki* details so thoroughly, constitute the physical and ritual construction of the shrine at Ise. It figures as well in a poem addressed by one of the priestess' attendants to the court messenger, the imperial huntsman, in the short episode 71, echoes of which can be heard in Genji's address to the Rokujo Lady when he visits the temporary shrine in Sagano. (To see this person / From the imperial court, / I should be willing / To cross the sacred fence / Of the mighty gods. ちはやぶる神のいがきもこえぬべし大宮人の見まくほしさに Chihayaburu kaminoiagakimo koenubeshi ohomiyabito no mimakuhoshisani)⁵⁹

One of the salient episodes in the *Ise* man's record is his affair with and final abduction of a woman whose family had intended her as the consort of a crown prince, the future Emperor Seiwa. The story is told in fragments through sections 3, 4, 5, 6 and 65 of the tale, and again in section 76, where the man, now old, and the woman known as the Nijo Consort, exchange poems and gifts on the occasion of a visit to the clan shrine of the woman.⁶⁰ This story, involving a Fujiwara daughter and a displaced courtier of princely origins marginalized from the centre of power, is one of the main strands of the *Ise* tale and can be seen as providing a narrative cause for the exile to the Eastern coun-

try, the *Azuma kudari* series, which begins in section 7 and continues through sections 8 and 9.⁶¹ In perhaps the only easily recognizable appearance of the fence as such, in the Nijo Consort story, it is worth remembering that as the man visited her secretly, “he could not enter through the gate, but came and went through a broken place in the earthen wall (ついひちの崩れ *tsuihiji no kuzure*) where some children had been playing”⁶² and that this *tsuihiji* is also called 築垣・築牆 *tsuigaki* or えんじ籬 *enjimagaki*. Again, the gap in the defences.

In the examples quoted from chronicle, government regulations and early tales the fence can be conceptualized in relation to the following categories:

1. Fences and sacred space; (the palace, the interment palace, the Ise shrine)
2. Fences and competition for women; (courtship, *utagaki*, intrigues with politically significant women - widowed empresses, imperial consorts, Ise priestesses)
3. Fences and the succession; (enclosing the wedding palace - birth, continuity, genealogy, the interment palace, the Ise shrine, enthronement palace; as marker of challenge to possession, accession to power - guards, war)

About the texts

The Japanese text of *Genji Monogatari* has been obtained from the web page maintained by Professor Shibuya Eiichi 渋谷栄一, www.takachiho.ac.jp/~eshibuya which includes the original text and romanization.

The searches to locate instances of “fence” and 「垣」 and its variants have been conducted through www.genji.co.jp/kensaku.htm on the Seidensticker translation and on the Shogakkan SPNKBZ, and well as on the texts from Professor Shibuya’s web page. No attempt has been made to unify the various forms of romanization found in the quoted texts.

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Notes

¹ Philippi, 91

² Aston, vol. I pp. 12, 54, 400

³ Ebersole, p.216-217

⁴ Philippi, p.373

⁵ Aston, vol. I p. 399

⁶ Ebersole, p. 225, NKBT 68, p. 260

⁷ Philippi, p. 350

⁸ Aston, vol. I p. 399, NKBT 68, p. 8

⁹ Ebersole, p. 224, NKBT 68, p. 255

¹⁰ Blacker, p. 191, and also in the context of a discussion of religious and myth motifs in Genji, Fujii 1982, p. 130-131.

¹¹ Philippi, p. 131, NKBZ 1, p. 123

¹² Philippi, p. 117, NKBZ 1, p. 110

¹³ Shirakawa, p. 208

¹⁴ Philippi, p. 335, p. 440, NKBZ 1, p. 320

¹⁵ Ebersole, p. 159

¹⁶ Ebersole, pp. 249-253

- ¹⁷ Ebersole, pp. 109-110, pp. 114-115
- ¹⁸ Ebersole, pp. 228-231
- ¹⁹ Ebersole, p.145. Also the summary in pp. 268-269
- ²⁰ Ebersole, pp. 127-128
- ²¹ Ebersole, p. 149, with pp. 137-153 offering an extended discussion of the political maneuverings surrounding the temporary interment phase of the succession.
- ²² Blacker, p. 189-192. Cf. Ebersole, p.145, and pp. 256-264.
- ²³ Ebersole, p. 297 n. 66, citing Robert Ellwood.
- ²⁴ Fujii 2001, 161
- ²⁵ Seidensticker, p. 196
- ²⁶ Seidensticker, p. 240
- ²⁷ Seidensticker, p. 273-274
- ²⁸ Bock 1970, p. v
- ²⁹ Bock 1970, pp. 128-129
- ³⁰ Bock 1970, p. 141
- ³¹ Bock 1970, pp. 172-173, p. 183 and p. 166
- ³² Bock 1970, p. 21
- ³³ Bock 1990, p. 314, and pp. 320-321. There is a plan of the large temporary enclosure, the Daijosai, in p. 323, and an illustration of the inner compound, with all its fences, in p. 335.
- ³⁴ Bowring 1996, p. 57. Takahashi, p. 83
- ³⁵ Seidensticker, p. 437
- ³⁶ Sarra, p. 87
- ³⁷ Seidensticker, p. 343
- ³⁸ Seidensticker, p. 554
- ³⁹ Seidensticker, p. 4
- ⁴⁰ Seidensticker, p. 140
- ⁴¹ Seidensticker, p. 311
- ⁴² Keene, p. 331
- ⁴³ *Taketori Monogatari* SPNKBZ 12, p. 19
- ⁴⁴ Keene, p. 330
- ⁴⁵ Paige & Paige, p. 79
- ⁴⁶ Paige & Paige, p. 112
- ⁴⁷ Wakita, pp. 83-85
- ⁴⁸ Rubin, pp. 171-177, elaborating on Claude Levi-Strauss' theory of kinship.
- ⁴⁹ Keene, p.347
- ⁵⁰ Seidensticker, p. 404
- ⁵¹ Seidensticker, p. 443
- ⁵² Keene, p. 336, SPNKBZ: 12, p. 30
- ⁵³ Rank, pp. 312-313
- ⁵⁴ Seidensticker, pp. 312-313
- ⁵⁵ Okada, p. 140
- ⁵⁶ Bowring1992, pp. 425-426
- ⁵⁷ Bowring1992, p. 420
- ⁵⁸ Okada, pp. 146-149
- ⁵⁹ McCullough, p. 118, SPNKBZ: 12, p. 175
- ⁶⁰ McCullough, pp. 70-73, p.112, p. 120
- ⁶¹ McCullough, pp. 73-76
- ⁶² McCullough, p. 72, SPNKBZ: 12, p. 116

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