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## Nonomiya · THE WILDWOOD SHRINE

*The Wildwood Shrine* is based far more explicitly than *Pining Wind* on *Genji monogatari* ('The Tale of Genji', 11th c.), and, as many writers have pointed out, is similar in structure to *The Well-Cradle*. In the past, those who doubted that Zeami wrote it have still hesitated to make a positive attribution, but a case has recently been made (by Itō Masayoshi) for Komparu Zenchiku. The style is Zenchiku's, and so fine a play can only have been composed by an expert. Moreover, Zenchiku is known in other instances to have written new plays based on the general mood, theme, and structure of earlier works by Zeami.

The word used for the play's original title, *Nonomiya*, probably means 'The Shrine in the Country', referring to a shrine intentionally placed well outside the capital. It may also be taken to mean 'The Shrine on [Saga] Moor'. Either way, 'The Wildwood Shrine' is rather an over-translation. However, the shrine really was in a sacred grove, and this expression fairly conveys the spirit of the play.

In the time of *Genji monogatari*, the Wildwood Shrine was temporary, being rebuilt on a slightly different site (chosen by divination) each time the need arose. A new high priestess of Ise underwent purification there before going on to take up her duties at the Ise Shrine. Since she was a young imperial princess, she is called in English the Vestal of Ise. (By the fifteenth century, the custom of appointing a Vestal had long since lapsed.)

The lady of *The Wildwood Shrine* is a Vestal's mother: Rokujō, who, in *Genji monogatari*, is perhaps Genji's most intriguing love. She had been, before her affair with Genji began, the wife of the crown prince. That is why she is called 'the Consort' (Miyasudokoro) in the play. Then the crown prince died, and Rokujō, who should have been empress, found herself alone – but for her daughter – with the past.

*Genji monogatari* does not say how her affair with Genji began. A woman of extraordinary depth, elegance, and pride, she was clearly older than Genji, and of such rank that Genji should have treated her very carefully indeed. However, he was too young to understand fully

what he was doing, and, as he pursued his other amours, he drifted away from her. She was hurt, and the consequences were a disaster. Even before she appears in the novel, one of Genji's loves is killed in the dead of night by a phantom woman, and one gathers in time that this phantom was the 'living ghost' of the jealous Rokujō.

Then followed the incident evoked in part two of *The Wildwood Shrine*. It was the time of the annual Kamo Festival, and the great nobles, especially Genji, were to ride in parade through the capital. Not even Rokujō, who shunned such events, could stay away. Ladies then travelled in curtained carriages and watched an event from inside them, through the curtains. One could not tell who the lady was, and Rokujō's excessively discreet carriage made her look like a nobody – at least, a nobody compared to Genji's formal wife, Aoi. Aoi arrived too late to join the front row of carriages, but her attendants, who were already drunk, quickly fixed that. They hauled Rokujō's little carriage out of the way, damaging it in the process; shoved it back among the gathering crowd; and installed their mistress in its place. Rokujō no longer had a view, nor could she escape.

It was not long before Aoi, now pregnant, became very ill. She gave birth safely, but soon afterwards she was dead – killed by an angry phantom. All the evidence pointed to Rokujō. (Aoi's death at the hands of Rokujō is the subject of the nō play *Aoi no Ue*). It must be said that Rokujō herself, in the novel, had no idea what she was doing. She only felt depressed and had strange dreams. She was horrified on learning that suspicion had settled on her. When at last her daughter was named Vestal of Ise, Rokujō decided to go with her to the Wildwood Shrine, and then to take the unprecedented step of accompanying her to Ise. She had every reason to wish to go away.

It is in the 'Sakaki' chapter of *Genji monogatari* that Genji visits Rokujō at the Wildwood Shrine. The novel does not explain his reason for doing so, but according to the medieval commentaries, he feared that if he did not placate her, her 'living ghost' might possess and kill Murasaki, his future wife, as well. (When Murasaki does die, much later in the novel, there are intimations of Rokujō's presence.) This interpretation of his chief motive is not implausible, and it tightens the link between parts one and two of the play. Apart from this, *The Wildwood Shrine* both quotes from the novel and incorporates all the appropriate images listed in the medieval manuals on how to work the novel into linked verse. However, the playwright also displayed his own poetic virtuosity and consistently heightened the melancholy of his theme.

In the past, Saga Moor (Saga-no) lay beyond the western boundary of Kyoto, although now most of it is covered by houses. One still finds there a Nonomiya Jinja, the age of which is unclear. It is in a bamboo grove, not a grove of trees, but otherwise it looks quite like the shrine described in the novel and the play.

## THE WILDWOOD SHRINE

### *Persons in order of appearance*

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| A Monk  | <i>waki</i>      |
| A Lady ( <i>Waka-onna</i> mask)                                     | <i>maeshite</i>  |
| A Villager  | <i>ai</i>        |
| The phantom of the Consort, Lady Rokujō<br>( <i>Waka-onna</i> mask) | <i>nochijite</i> |

*Remarks:* A third-category play (*kazura-mono*) current in all five schools of *nō*. According to a variant performance tradition (*kogaki*) in the Hōshō, Kongō, and Kita schools, a carriage is brought on at the beginning of part two and placed in base square. The Consort then boards it and sings while the stage assistant draws it towards the curtain, leaving it at first pine. Historical records show that the play has been performed in the past with torii only, with carriage only, with both, and with neither.

\* \* \*

*Stage assistant places a torii, with a flimsy length of fence on either side of it, at front of stage.*

*To nanori-bue music, enter Monk. He stands in base square.*

MONK (*nanori*) You have before you a monk who is looking at all the provinces. Lately I have been in Miyako, where I saw all the sights and monuments of the Capital. With autumn nearly over, I feel drawn to the moors of Saga, and I will therefore go to see them. Now, upon inquiring about this grove, I learned that this is where the Wildwood Shrine once stood. I will visit the place, since I happen to be passing by. [*Moves to centre.*]

(*sashi*) I see before me, here within this grove,  
 an unbarked log torii, a wattled fence,  
 exactly as they were long, long ago.

*Sits, presses his palms together in salutation.*

I do not understand: how can this be?  
 But never mind, for now that I have come,  
 it is a privilege to salute the Shrine.

(*sageuta*) The sacred fence of Ise does not part  
 Gods from Buddhas, and the way runs straight  
 for the teaching of the holy Law.  
 Monk that I am, in this sacred presence,  
 I find the evening calm, my heart at peace  
 I find the evening calm, my heart at peace.<sup>1</sup>

*Rising, he goes to sit at witness position.*

*To shidai music, enter Lady, with a fan in her right hand and a leafy sakaki  
 branch<sup>2</sup> in her left. She stands in base square, her back to the audience.*

LADY (*shidai*) O Wildwood Shrine, where once flowers bloomed  
 O Wildwood Shrine, where once flowers bloomed,  
 what awaits you when autumn is gone? *Faces audience.*

(*sashi*) And that time is nigh.  
 The lonely days of fall draw to a close,  
 and my sleeves wilt in the gathering dews.  
 Night's slow descent pierces me with sorrow,  
 while all the once gay colours of the heart  
 change and fade as summer flowers die.  
 So all human life shall waste away.

(*sageuta*) Secretly, each year on this day,  
 I again seek out the long-lost past

(*ageuta*) at the Wildwood Shrine,

1. The Ise Shrine (actually, two paired shrines) honours above all the imperial lineage. In medieval Japan, Shinto was incorporated into Buddhism ('the holy Law'), but no outright fusion of the two occurred. A Buddhist monk did not lightly pray directly before the shrines at Ise, despite this one's affirmation that 'the sacred fence of Ise does not part Gods from Buddhas'. At the Wildwood Shrine itself, at least in the time of *Genji monogatari*, the slightest reference to Buddhism was taboo.

2. Sakaki is a broadleaf evergreen shrub or small tree sacred in Shinto. Its association with Genji's visit to the Wildwood Shrine becomes clear later on. As a hand prop, this sakaki recalls the *sasa* ('bamboo grass') traditionally carried by madwomen in nō. At the same time, however, it underscores the Consort's elevated refinement, and the difference between *The Wildwood Shrine* and a madwoman play like *The River Sumida*.

when late autumn gales despoil the grove  
 when late autumn gales despoil the grove,  
 sweeping away the joys of years gone by.  
 But why do I so long for those old days,  
 in the sad confusion of my mind?

That world is lost. It does not greet me here,  
 and I am bitter at this journeying  
 and I am bitter at this journeying.

MONK (*mondō*) As in the shadow of the grove I call the past to mind  
 and feel my heart settling into peace, suddenly a very beautiful lady  
 stands before me. But who are you?

LADY Who am I, you ask? I might well put you the same question.  
 This is the Wildwood Shrine, where long ago the newly appointed  
 Vestal of Ise was sent temporarily to live. Later on the practice  
 lapsed, but each year on this day, the seventh of the ninth month, I  
 come here to commemorate the past. Unknown to all, I sweep the  
 place clean and honour the divine presence here enshrined. And  
 while I am so engaged, you, an utter stranger, have come upon me.  
 Your presence here is a desecration. Please leave immediately.

MONK (*kakeai*) No, no, my presence surely does no harm. My whole  
 life is given to wandering, for I am one of those who have  
 renounced the world. What moves you, then, to come here each  
 year on this day, in memory of the past?

LADY Today, the seventh of the ninth month, is the day when Prince  
 Genji paid his visit here. He happened to be carrying a sakaki  
 branch that he had picked, and when he slipped it in through the  
 Shrine fence, the Consort swiftly gave him this reply:

No cedars stand  
 to mark, for all to see,  
 this sacred boundary:  
 what error, pray,  
 made you pick sakaki?<sup>3</sup>

This is also the day when she made that poem.

3. The Consort gives Genji this poem in the novel. It is based on one in the *Kokinshū*: 'My humble dwelling is below Miwa Mountain. Come, if you love me, to the gate where the cedars stand.' Since the *sugi* ('cedar') was the sacred tree of the Miwa Shrine, the poem was generally taken as an utterance of the Miwa deity. The Consort is demanding to know what has moved Genji to come and why he should be offering a branch of the sacred sakaki when there is no one here to respond to his advances.

MONK And a spirited poem it was, I quite agree. The sakaki branch  
you hold is just as green as his was, long ago.

LADY Just as green as his: a witty thought!  
But only the sakaki is unchanged,

MONK for autumn darkens over woodland paths

LADY and alas, the golden leaves have fallen.

MONK The sedge upon the moors

CHORUS (*ageuta*) is withered too,

the grass laid waste around a Wildwood Shrine

*Lady advances towards torii, kneels, and lays down her sakaki branch as an offering.*

the grass laid waste around a Wildwood Shrine

neglected now, although I love it still.

*Rising, she mimes looking at each sight mentioned.*

That day I honour has come round again,  
the seventh of the ninth month in the year.

How plain it is, and low, the wattled fence;

and the Virgin's lodge, how lightly built!

Even now the fire-hut dimly glows,<sup>4</sup>

its light the longing deep within my heart

*To base square*

yet plain to see without, as love must be.

The Shrine in its grove is desolate!

The Shrine in its grove is desolate!

*Sits at centre*

CHORUS (*kuri*) To speak now of this Consort in the tale:

the Kiritsubo Emperor's younger brother,

known to all as the past Crown Prince,

blossomed a while, as fragrant as a flower,

and loved her deeply, as she too loved him.

LADY (*sashi*) Yet it is true: all those who meet must part.<sup>5</sup>

CHORUS What matters is to waken from life's dream,

as he too showed, when soon he passed away.

LADY She could not weep for him for ever more.

CHORUS Prince Genji, then, in his wilful way,

came courting her, very secretly,

LADY until (though who knows why?) his ardour cooled

CHORUS and the tie between them simply lapsed.

(*kuse*) Not that he disliked her, not at all.

4. The 'fire-hut' was where guards were posted. They kept a fire burning.

5. A proverbial saying still often cited in modern Japan.

And once he sought her at the Wildwood Shrine,  
 moved deeply on the way by all he saw.  
 For all the flowers were gone from the moors  
 and insect cries, once shrill, were faint and few.  
 The very wind, sighing through the pines,  
 tinged the path for him with loneliness.  
 Autumn seemed immeasurably sad.  
 Then at last Prince Genji reached the Shrine,  
 displayed for her every mark of love,  
 and, with lively, varied eloquence  
 poured forth in her presence his whole heart.  
 Later, at the Katsura lustration,<sup>6</sup>  
 when votive offerings of sakaki,  
 decked with paper strips of sacred white,<sup>7</sup>  
 drifted down the stream, the lady, too,  
 felt herself adrift and drawn away:

O Suzuka River  
 your white-leaping spray  
 may wet my sleeves or no,  
 but who will think of me  
 in distant Ise?<sup>8</sup>

And off she went, she and her young daughter,  
 though no Vestal's mother had done so before,  
 down to the Vestal's residence at Take.  
 She made the journey with a heavy heart.

[for monk] (*rangi*) The tale you tell leaves me little doubt:  
 you are not a woman like all women.

I must ask you to tell me your name.

LADY

I have no wish to vex you with my name,  
 unworthy as I am. I am ashamed!

Yet word no doubt will leak out in the end.

I would have you know this name of mine  
 belongs to no one living. Comfort me!

6. A purification rite that took place before the Vestal's departure for Ise.

7. Sakaki branches thus prepared, are fundamental ritual objects in Shinto. These are carrying away all impurities.

8. Another poem from the novel. The Suzuka River must be crossed on the way from Kyoto to Ise. Its spray on the Consort's sleeves would be her tears: 'Whatever I may feel as I go, you will not care.'

CHORUS No one living? How strangely you speak!  
 You mean, then, that this world of ours  
 LADY is mine no more. I left it long ago,  
 CHORUS for that Consort in the tale  
 LADY was I myself!  
 CHORUS Twilight deepens as the autumn wind  
 sweeps through the wood. Aloft, among the trees,  
 an evening moon sheds its pallid light  
 on two rough, dark pillars: the torii *Rises.*  
 she approaches now, and melts away  
 into the torii, yes, she is gone. *Exit.*

\* \* \*

[The Villager comes forward, notices the Monk, and asks him who he is. The ensuing dialogue culminates in the Villager's recital of the history of the Wildwood Shrine and of Genji's visit to the Consort there. The passage is omitted because it conveys no new information of importance, and rather breaks the mood of this gently melancholy play. In the closing dialogue, the Villager urges the Monk to stay on and comfort the Consort's spirit.]

\* \* \*

MONK (*sagentā*) My sleeves I spread alone,  
 a mossy robe beneath the grove's dark trees<sup>9</sup>  
 a mossy robe beneath the grove's dark trees,  
 green on this grassy bed's own green,  
 to think upon her tale all through the night  
 and guide her troubled spirit towards peace  
 and guide her troubled spirit towards peace.

*To issei music, enter Consort, as though borne in a carriage. She stops in base square.*

CONSORT (*sagentā*) At the Wildwood Shrine  
 a carriage decked with all the flowers of fall  
 brings me round again to times gone by.

MONK (*kakeai*) How very strange! Under a dim moon,  
 I hear the faint noise of a carriage coming:

9. By convention, a monk was said to wear a 'robe of moss' (*koke-goromo*) that, among other things, indicated his humility.



a wicker carriage with its curtains drawn.<sup>10</sup>  
 This is an extraordinary sight!  
 But surely one cannot doubt who it is.  
 Your ladyship, are you then the Consort?  
 And, if you will, please explain your carriage.  
 CONSORT You would question me about my carriage?  
 Why, now I remember! Long ago,  
 my carriage, at the Kamo Festival,  
 provoked a fight, though none knew it was mine.  
 MONK The carriages were crowded side by side,  
 CONSORT rich and poor, to see the festival,  
 when Aoi, that high and mighty lady,  
 MONK drew up in hers, and her men saw fit  
 high-handedly to clear all from her path.  
 CONSORT My own was small enough, and I replied  
 I simply could not move; so there I stayed.  
 MONK Her men rushed the carriage,  
 CONSORT front and rear,

*Consort advances towards front and begins to mime and dance.*

CHORUS (*uta*) roughly seized the shafts and forced me back  
 behind the carriage of her waiting women.  
 The defeat was mine. I had no view,  
 and understood my place all too well.  
 But let it be: for actions, so it seems,  
 call forth in time their own retribution.  
 Still bitter at heart, I ride my carriage  
 round and round. How long must I go on?

*Weeps.*

*Salutes monk with palms joined in prayer.*

Help me dispel, I pray, my wrongful clinging!  
 Help me dispel, I pray, my wrongful clinging!  
 CONSORT (*ei*) Remembering those days, my blossom sleeves  
 CHORUS turn, beneath the moon, the past to now. *To base square.*

(DANCE: *jo-no-mai*)

*Consort performs a jo-no-mai dance and continues to dance and mime as text resumes.*

CONSORT (*waka*) Perhaps the moon, too, at the Wildwood Shrine  
 is overcome with thoughts of long ago.

10. This kind of carriage, made of wickerwork (*ajiro-guruma*), was for use by women.

CHORUS How mournfully the pale light gleams  
 from a dewdrop deep within the grove  
 from a dewdrop deep within the grove.

CONSORT (*noriji*) Here I lingered once, and, as of old,  
 CHORUS the precincts have an air  
 CONSORT all of their own.

CHORUS The buildings are so light,  
 CONSORT the wattled fence *Steps toward torii.*

CHORUS where, brushing dewdrops from my sleeves,  
 I came that time, and he after me.  
 And it was all a dream. The shrine survives,  
 but I – what visitor do I await?  
 Faint, plaintive cries of autumn crickets,  
 and the fall wind's sighs, all through the night  
*Gazes through torii.*

break the silence of the Wildwood Shrine.  
 O that I might be as I was then! *Steps back, weeps.*

(DANCE: *ha-no-mai*)

*As Chorus sings on, Consort performs a ha-no-mai dance.*

(*noriji*) This spot from old, awesome to tell,  
 has held in honour the great Gods of Ise,  
 both the Inner and the Outer Shrines:<sup>11</sup>  
 as in and out the torii she goes,  
 one fears those Gods may righteously reject  
 her travels on the road of birth and death.<sup>12</sup>  
 Now she steps again into her carriage.  
 May she at long last find her way  
 forever out the Burning Mansion's gate,<sup>13</sup>  
 the Burning Mansion's gate.

*In base square, Consort faces side and stamps the final beat.*

11. The paired shrines of Ise. The Inner Shrine is dedicated to Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, and the Outer to Toyouke, the male deity of increase. In medieval Japanese, deities are normally referred to by the names of their shrines; no distinction is made between the deity and the building.

12. That is, the gods may condemn her for constantly returning to the world of the living.

13. The 'Burning Mansion', a simile for the world of delusion and desire, is from a parable in the *Lotus Sutra*. The Wildwood Shrine is the Consort's Burning Mansion, and its torii is the gate.