

Male and Female Spaces in Homer and in *Heike monogatari*

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To those of us who have grown up in Japan under the continuing influence of *Heike monogatari* (*Heike* hereafter) maintained not only through school education, but also through popular culture,¹ it comes naturally to make comparisons between it and Homer's epic poetry.² They are similar not only in their status as the 'national epic' in their respective culture, but also in their themes. They both depict a major military conflict between two groups of warriors which leads to the fall of a dynasty, and perhaps more importantly they depict tragic consequences of the war for both winners and losers, for men, women and children. The core message of both appears to be that human fortunes change, the keynote with which *Heike* opens.

The pictures presented in these two worlds have a potential for various comparisons which I believe can sharpen our understanding of both. One perspective through which this sort of comparison can be carried out is the use of 'spaces', or spheres of activity, which different groups of characters occupy. I have discussed elsewhere how location (both physical and symbolical) of particular characters in those epic worlds could signal power relations among them.³ In this article I would like to consider the locations of male and female characters as signs of their social relationships and also as part of the authors' narrative strategy.⁴

In both Homer and *Heike*, the basic division of male and female spaces appears to be clear-cut: men's space is outside/public where they are engaged in war and politics and women's space is inside/private where they look after the house and raise children. Within the house itself there is also the division of men's and

¹ The most prevalent example of *Heike*'s influence on popular culture in Japan may be the use of red (the *Heike*'s colour) and white (the *Genji*'s colour) to represent two opposing sides at sporting or song competitions.

² For existing comparative studies of Homer and *Heike*, see e.g. Masaaki Kubo, *Girisha Raten Bungaku Kenkyu*, Tokyo 1992, 3-35; Noboru Miyakawa, 'Heike monogatari to seiyoukoten jojishi' (1), (2) and (3) in *Hikaku Bunka Kenkyu*(Nagoya Keizai Daigaku) 1(1980), 3-20, 3(1982), 3-30, 5(1985), 3-22; Naoko Yamagata, 'Homerosu to Heike monogatari ni okeru kami no kengen no hikaku' in *Gengo Bunka*(Meijigakuin Daigaku) 14(1997), 1-16.

³ 'Locating power: spatial signs of social ranking in Homer and the *Tale of the Heike*' in *Scholia* 12(2003), 34-44.

⁴ The use of 'gendered space' is particularly well documented in the study of Greek tragedy. Cf. D. Wiles, *Tragedy in Athens: Performance space and theatrical meaning*, Cambridge 1997, 84 and 166.

women's quarters.⁵ There are a number of exceptions to this rule, but I argue that the deviation from this 'norm' is one of the main narrative devices in both Homer and *Heike*.

Male and female spaces in Homer

A classic statement of male and female spheres can be found in the often quoted lines addressed to Andromache by Hector:

Go therefore back to our house, and take up your own work,
the loom and the distaff, and see to it that your handmaidens
ply their work also; but the men must see to the fighting,
all men who are the people of Ilion, but I beyond others. (Il. 6.490-93)⁶

To this we can add *Odyssey* 1.356-59 and 21.350-53, where Telemachus uses the same lines to send his mother Penelope back to her room from the hall, which has become a 'male space' due to its near-permanent occupation by her suitors, substituting Hector's 'fighting (πόλεμος)' with 'discussion (μῦθος)' and 'the bow (τόξον)' respectively.

These passages appear to identify the house and women's own quarters within it as female spheres and battlefield and assembly as male spheres. However, we must consider the contexts in which these lines are placed. Andromache and Penelope receive these reactions from a male member of their family precisely because they are seen to have invaded into the male space in the first place.

Hector expected to find his wife either at home (Il. 6.370) or in the company of her female relatives in their houses or of other women at a goddess's temple (Il. 6.377-80).⁷ In the event, Andromache was out at the tower, with her young son and

⁵ However, we have much to learn from the insight of archaeologists who have examined actual remains of domestic architecture from the classical period that this division may be misleading. Cf. Carla M. Antonaccio, 'Architecture and Behaviour: Building Gender into Greek Houses' in *The Classical World* 93(2000), 517-33, 528: 'Both Jameson and Nevett therefore argue that *gunaikonitis* and *andronitis* should be considered as designations of men's and women's social spheres, rather than fixed spaces with barred doors.'; Michael Jameson, 'Domestic space in the Greek city-state' in ed. S. Kent, *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space*, Cambridge 1990, 92-113; Lisa Nevett, 'Separation or seclusion? Towards an archaeological approach to investigating women in the Greek household in the fifth to third centuries BC' in eds. M. Parker Pearson & C. Richards, *Architecture and Order: Approaches to Social Space*, London & New York 1994, 98-112.

⁶ Quoted from tr. Richmond Lattimore, *The Iliad of Homer*, Chicago and London 1951.

⁷ This seems to qualify somewhat the ideological 'norm' that women's place is within their own house, as it implies that they have the freedom to go out after all to visit other women or to carry out their religious duties. This echoes Cohen's observation regarding classical Athens that

his nurse, distraught ‘like a woman gone mad’ (*Il.* 6.389) with her concern for her husband. In other words, this is not a usual situation, but an emergency. The poet emphasizes her absence from her usual space by enumerating the places where she could be expected and her extreme emotion which has driven her beyond them. The place where Hector eventually catches up with Andromache, the Scaean Gate, also signals the unusual situation. The gate is the boundary between the battlefield to which men belong and the safety of the city to which women belong.⁸ Hector is not in his own place at present either,⁹ but snatches a moment of peace with his wife and son on this symbolic spot which divides male and female spheres, before he utters the lines quoted above to send his wife and himself back to their proper places. The poignancy of the scene is created by the audience’s/reader’s heightened awareness of the location.

The same can be said about the scenes with Penelope. She is not in the habit of joining in the conversation with the suitors, but spends most of her time in her own room upstairs.¹⁰ She appears in front of them, always with a veil over her face,¹¹ only when she has urgent matters to address,¹² such as to ask the singer not to sing the songs which distress her, when she learns of the suitors’ plot to assassinate Telemachus, when a visitor has been abused in the hall or to preside over the contest of the bow by which her new husband is supposed to be chosen. In other words, it is only emergencies or crises that bring Penelope to cross the boundary between male and female spaces. This also highlights the other side of the unusual situation in which she is placed – she is mostly confined to her room not because this is where she usually belongs, but she is too distressed to come out to provide hospitality to the visitors by herself.¹³ This is another spatial sign that the matters at Odysseus’ house at this stage are not right. In fact she comes closer to her normal behaviour when she receives Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, in the hall downstairs (from

separation of men and women does not automatically mean isolation for house-bound women. Cf. David Cohen, ‘Seclusion, separation, and the status of women in classical Athens’ in *Greece & Rome* 36 (1989), 3-15.

⁸ Cf. Marilyn B. Arthur, ‘The divided world of *Iliad* VI’ in eds. H. Foley, *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, New York 1981, 31.

⁹ For the temporary dislocation of both Andromache and Hector, see Arthur, op. cit., 30-31.

¹⁰ Cf. *Od.* 1.330 and 18.206 where she comes ‘down’, by the ‘staircase’ and from her ‘upper chamber’ respectively.

¹¹ Cf. *Od.* 1.334, 16.416, 18.210, 21.65. Irene de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey*, Cambridge 2001, 35-36, observes that while other Homeric women regularly wear veils when they leave the house, Penelope wears a veil inside her own house.

¹² Cf. D. Lateiner, *Sardonic Smile: Nonverbal Behaviour in Homeric Epic*, Ann Arbor 1998, 260.

¹³ Cf. *Od.* 19.134-35. Cf. de Jong, op. cit., 35: ‘Penelope’s almost permanent retirement to her upstairs room is an indication of the disorder of Odysseus’ *oikos*.’

which the suitors have withdrawn for the night), as a friend of her husband and honoured guest (*Od.* 19.103ff., esp. 253-54).

We see further evidence that it is normal for the mistress of the house to act as the hostess even to male visitors in the scenes where Helen joins in the meal and conversation with her husband Menelaus and his visitors (*Od.* 4.121ff.) and Arete who presides over banquets along with her husband (*Od.* 7.141ff.). Both these queens are remarkably outgoing. Helen, who would rush out of doors only in an ‘emergency’ in the *Iliad*,¹⁴ dominates the discussion in the male company in her own home in the *Odyssey*, and we must not forget that she was capable of running off with Paris when he came as a visitor to her house, thereby causing the Trojan War.¹⁵ Arete is also exceptional in that she is capable of resolving disputes among men and is publicly seen and admired by her people as she walks through the town (*Od.* 7.71-74). It may be argued that as a queen of a far-off land of ‘fairy tale’, her case does not ‘count’, but we find her influence striking only because we contrast it with the perceived ‘norm’ that women’s sphere of activities is at home and in her quarters.¹⁶

We know another episode which reminds us that women are not necessarily confined to the house even when they are carrying out their household duties. Princess Nausicaa goes out along with her attendants to wash her family’s clothing with the full approval of her parents (*Od.* 6.57-80).¹⁷ This is not a custom peculiar to the fabulous land of Scheria, because we are reminded just before Hector is about to be killed by Achilles that at Troy, too, before the war began, women used to go out to springs to do washing (*Il.* 22.153-57). This is one of the most remarkable spatial signs, which contrasts war and peace¹⁸ in that the physical space which used to belong to women in peace time is now incorporated into the male space of battlefield. In communities at peace women have their own space outside, but war drives them inside the wall and inside their own house. When the suitors invade her

¹⁴ Cf. *Il.* 3.141-43, to see the duel between her former and present husbands, though she goes out ‘covered up’ (καλυψαμένη) in her garments and accompanied by two attendants, creating some barrier between her and the outside world.

¹⁵ Cf. *Il.* 3.173-75.

¹⁶ Thus Arthur op. cit. 19 goes so far as to say that ‘In the Homeric poems ... the opposition between “public” and “private” domains is arguably non-existent.’

¹⁷ This also leads to her encounter with the shipwrecked Odysseus to whom she gives food and clothing there and then whilst outdoors (*Od.* 6.191ff.). What matters here is the code of hospitality and not the location or the gender of the guest or host. This, along with her father Alcinous’ comment later that as the first to encounter the stranger in need it was her obligation to bring him to their house (*Od.* 8.299-301), also enhances the unusual situation in Penelope’s household where she appears to neglect the code of hospitality.

¹⁸ For the contrast of war and peace in this scene, cf. Nicholas Richardson, *The Iliad: A Commentary Volume VI: books 21-24*, Cambridge 1993, on 22.147-56.

house creating a 'male space' within it, Penelope has to create a barrier within her own house, by barricading herself in her quarters and covering her face with a veil. What is exceptional is not the fact that women can entertain male visitors at home or go out to do laundry, but that some crises are preventing them from doing so. It shows that the division of male and female spaces is more ideological than physical and needs to be adjusted in reaction to needs in the household or community.

So far we have concentrated on female spaces in Homer, but there are cases of men out of their space which we also need to consider. Paris is the only male character in the *Iliad* who is shown to be dallying in 'female space'. After being ignominiously rescued by his patron goddess Aphrodite from the duel with Menelaus and delivered to his bedroom (*Il.* 3.380-82), he makes love with Helen (*Il.* 3.447-48) and lingers there, idly fiddling with his armour (*Il.* 6.321-22). Helen on the other hand is busy instructing her maidservants to do their work (*Il.* 6.323-24) in that room; this shows that Paris is clearly out of place in that 'female' space when men should be out of the city wall, fighting. He deserves to receive a rebuke from both Helen (*Il.* 3.428-32, 6.350-53) and Hector (*Il.* 6.326-31). However, there is an interesting glimpse of Paris' life from the time of peace within the passage where it is said that he built his own house with the help of other craftsmen (*Il.* 6.314-17). Once again we are made aware that male and female spaces are flexible, and this particular example shows that during peace time men's sphere of activities can extend not only outside but also inside the city walls and indeed also inside their houses.

We have already seen Hector coming inside the city wall (albeit with legitimate reasons such as to take Paris back to the battlefield) and eventually finding his wife at the Scaean Gate. This meeting point is a significant choice, as the poet could easily have made Hector have a moment of intimacy with his wife and son as he does at the Gate (*Il.* 6.394-493) in his own house instead. This may be to contrast Hector who is fully aware that his place is at the front (*Il.* 6.445) and Paris who totally lacks such sense of responsibility. We see the skill of the poet in the manipulation of spatial signs in *Iliad* 6 which show Hector in a more favourable light than Paris when he meets his wife for the last time.

Male and female spaces in *Heike monogatari*

It must be acknowledged that the Japanese society in late twelfth century AD as depicted in *Heike* is in many ways a very different one from that seen in Homer's

poetry.¹⁹ Yet basic similarities in aristocratic lifestyle²⁰ and the warrior code may allow us to begin our observations with the same basic assumption that men's sphere is outside and women's inside, using it as an axis from which to chart any deviations.

That upper-class ladies led a sheltered life behind blinds and screens within their own living quarters separate from their husbands' is well documented in contemporary literature, but if any confirmation is needed within the text of *Heike* itself, we find it, as in the case of Homer, where that normality is disrupted. When the Heike clan flees the capital under the pressures from the Genji forces, the beauty of the ladies fades away in the rough life of wandering over the sea, here contrasted with their usual life back in the capital:

Instead of green curtains in elegant chambers, reed blinds hung in mud-daubed hovels; in place of smoke plumes from incense burners, reed fires smoldered in shacks. The miserable ladies could not restrain the red tears that smeared their black eyebrow paint and rendered them almost unrecognizable.

(Chapter 8, Section 4 The Flight from the Dazaifu)²¹

After the war, Shigehira, one of the few male survivors of the Heike, visits his wife for the last time before being executed (Chapter 11, Section 19 The Execution of Shigehira). Their farewell ends with a heart-breaking scene in which his wife cannot contain her grief:

¹⁹ While in Homer's world the war is fought between alliances of kings and princes, the world of *Heike* depicts a civil war between two military families, each using the authority of an imperial patron, i.e. the child emperor with the military family of his maternal grandfather (the Heike) and the retired emperor (the reigning emperor's paternal grandfather) with the Genji. It is the latter who eventually emerge as the victors, first using the retired emperor's authority to destroy the Heike and then seizing total control of the whole country, rendering the political power of the emperors (reigning or retired) ineffectual for good. We may also need to bear in mind the different religious outlook of life and death in the two worlds. While Homer has the contrast of the carefree gods and helpless mortals whose death is final, the characters in *Heike* can find some solace in the Buddhist doctrine of salvation and rebirth.

²⁰ By concentrating mostly on main characters, who are upper-class men and women, for this study, I am necessarily excluding lower class females who had considerable freedom of movement. For example, *shirabyoshi* performers were free to knock on any high ranking men's doors to seek custom (cf. Hotoke's uninvited visit to Kiyomori's house in Chapter 1, Section 6 Gio). For a comprehensive survey of the range of female occupations represented in *Heike*, see Miyuki Sasaki, 'Heike monogatari ni miru josei' in *Nihon Bungaku Noto*, 1989, 27-47.

²¹ In this article I quote from and follow the chapter and section divisions of Helen Craig McCullough's translation, *The Tale of the Heike*, Stanford 1988.

Shigehira moved to leave. “Those who exchange vows are certain of meeting in the life to come. Pray that we may be reborn on the same lotus blossom. The sun is low and the way to Nara is long; I do not want to keep the warriors waiting.”

His wife caught hold of his sleeve to stop him. “Please, please. Stay just a little longer.”

“You must try to imagine my feelings. But there is no way for me to escape death. I am sure we will meet in another life.” He took his leave. Much as he longed to return for one more glimpse of the face he would never see again in this world, he forced himself to go, determined not to succumb to weakness. The lady flung herself down by the edge of the blinds in an agony of grief. Her shrieks and screams, audible even beyond the gate, made it quite impossible for Shigehira to put spurs to his horse. Tears blinded his eyes, obscuring the way ahead. It would have been better not to see her at all, he thought; the brief visit had merely added to his woes. His wife lay prostrate with a robe pulled over her head, longing in vain to run after him.

Although the setting, the farewell of the husband and wife, faintly recalls the scene of Hector and Andromache, emotions involved here are naturally more intense and the spatial signs quite different. Despite the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation which provides hope for finding some ‘space’ beyond this life where the husband and wife can meet again,²² this does not appear to make their parting any easier. Shigehira is pulled towards the ‘male space’, albeit to be executed therein, showing his reluctance to keep his guards waiting. His wife, who should normally be sheltered indoors, rolls out of the blinds (*misu*) to catch another glimpse of her husband. She is not only visible outside the house, but audible even further away from the house. The author uses her crossing of the boundary between inside and outside to illustrate most eloquently the extremity of her grief and her situation which contrasts most starkly with the ‘norm’.

There is a slightly milder variation on the same theme when Koremori, the grandson of the Heike’s patriarch Kiyomori, flees the capital with the rest of the clan (Chapter 7, Section 14 Koremori’s Flight from the Capital). As he leaves his wife and children behind, his wife ‘prostrated herself in a passion of weeping’ and his little son and daughter and the ladies-in-waiting ‘threw themselves to the floor inside

²² Cf. Satsuki Hirano, ‘Aibetsuriku o koete – *Heike monogatari* ni okeru josei to bukkyo’ in *Kokubungaku Kaishaku to Kansho* 56.5 (1991), 70-74.

and outside the blinds, shrieking and screaming without caring who heard them.’ The wife controls herself better in this episode, but the children and the attendants cannot help breaking out of the indoor space to which they belong.

As this incidentally shows, children belong to female space in the world of *Heike*.²³ The episode which depicts the birth of the future emperor Antoku, son of Emperor Takakura and Kiyomori’s daughter Tokuko is another good example. Tokuko, according to the custom of the day, goes back to her parental estate to give birth. She has a difficult labour, but is hidden behind blinds and her parents can only wait:

... the Empress continued to suffer from incessant labor pains without giving birth. Kiyomori and the Nun of Second Rank²⁴ sat stupefied with anxiety, their hands on their breasts. “What’s happened? What’s gone wrong?” they said. Whenever anyone spoke to them, they answered, “It doesn’t matter, just do what’s best.” “I would have been less fainthearted on the battlefield,” Kiyomori said later.

(Chapter 3, Section 3 The Imperial Lying-In)

This rather comical episode illustrates most clearly that childbirth properly belongs to the female sphere in which men are helpless. It is telling that warfare and childbirth are contrasted as quintessentially male and female activities.²⁵ Incidentally Homer does not explicitly contrast the two, but produces a striking image by describing the pains of Agamemnon’s spear wound with a simile of the pain of a woman in labour (*Il.* 11.269-72), leaving an ambivalent impression of Agamemnon as male warrior and leader.²⁶

Warfare should properly belong to male space and women should have nothing to do with it under normal circumstances. In *Heike*, however, this ‘rule’ is more radically broken than in Homer, due to the fact that many women of the Heike household followed their men into exile and ended up witnessing the final sea battle at Dan-no-ura at which the majority of their men perished. When the Genji warriors started boarding the Heike ships and the battle is all but lost, one of the Heike

²³ This is also the case in Homer to some extent, as we have seen in *Iliad* Book 6 when Andromache goes out with her little son and his nurse. However, her statement of fear for his orphaned son reveals a stage at which boys can also belong to the male space of banqueting (*Il.* 22.496-98).

²⁴ Kiyomori’s wife.

²⁵ This is rather like Medea’s famous comparison: that it is better to go to war three times than give birth once. Cf. Euripides, *Medea* 250-51.

²⁶ Cf. Carroll Moulton, *Similes in the Homeric Poems*, Göttingen 1977, 98-99.

warriors, Tomomori, jokes to the ladies who have asked him how the battle is going, ‘You will be getting acquainted with some remarkable eastern warriors.’ (Chapter 11, Section 9 The Drowning of the Former Emperor). It is indeed a highly unusual situation in which noble women have lost all their protection and may be captured by uncultured provincial warriors.

The proud widow of Kiyomori, however, does not allow herself to be humiliated in this way, but is determined to die as the grandmother of the emperor. This scene immediately follows the passage quoted above:

The Nun of Second Rank, who had long ago decided on a course of action, draped her two dark-gray underrobes over her head, hitched up her divided skirt of glossed silk, tucked the Bead Strand under her arm and the Sword into her belt, and took the Emperor in her arms. “Although I am only a woman, I will not fall into enemy hands. I will go where His Majesty goes. Follow swiftly, you whose hearts are loyal to him.” She walked to the side of the ship.

(Chapter 11, Section 9 The Drowning of the Former Emperor)

Her opening words clearly signal that the action that she is about to take properly belongs to the male sphere, that of war and politics. To die with one’s master is more typically a manifestation of a male warrior’s loyalty, as you see in this and the following two sections, though there are a small number of female suicides which falls into this category in *Heike*.²⁷ And had the emperor not been a minor (eight years old), we would expect him to have taken his own life to preserve his honour under the circumstances. The Nun appears to be acting as his proxy, taking with her two of the three Imperial Regalia, the Jewel and the Sword,²⁸ along with the emperor himself, symbolically keeping his sovereignty for ever. However, the scene can be read also as confirmation that as a child the emperor belonged more to the female sphere of his mother and grandmother than the male sphere of public life, never achieving true sovereignty for himself. In this sense, the double suicide of the emperor is symptomatic of one of the factors which led to the collapse of the ancient political system of Japan, the erosion of the imperial power by the influence of the ‘female sphere’, i.e. the families of empresses.

²⁷ E.g. The suicide of the nurse and a lady-in-waiting of Fukusho in Chapter 11, Section 16 The Execution of Fukusho. More typical behaviour of women in despair in *Heike* is to become nuns.

²⁸ The empress, the mother of the emperor, unsuccessfully attempts suicide shortly after this scene, taking the other of the Imperial Regalia, the Sacred Mirror.

Heike has another remarkable exception to the rule that warfare belongs to men. No audience or reader of *Heike* is likely ever to forget the female warrior Tomoe, the beautiful, loyal and invincible general of Kiso no Yoshinaka, a doomed Genji warrior. Although Yoshinaka succeeds in ousting the Heike out of the capital, he falls foul of his cousin Yoritomo, the leader of the Genji, who turns his superior forces against him. The narrator begins the chapter on the death of Yoshinaka with the description of Tomoe:

... Tomoe was especially beautiful, with white skin, long hair, and charming features. She was also a remarkably strong archer, and as swordswoman she was a warrior worth a thousand, ready to confront a demon or god, mounted or on foot. She handled unbroken horses with superb skill; she rode unscathed down perilous descents. Whenever a battle was imminent, Yoshinaka sent her out as his first captain, equipped with strong armor, an oversized sword, and a mighty bow; and she performed more deeds of valor than any of his other warriors. Thus she was now one of the seven who remained after all the others had fled or perished.

(Chapter 9, Section 4 The Death of Kiso)

Of course all heroines in stories, warriors included, have to be beautiful,²⁹ so Tomoe is given conventional feminine beauty, but the rest of her attributes are male virtues and she surpasses all men in them. The spatial signs in this episode are very telling. Characters like Tomoe could not be born and bred in the cultured sphere of the capital city, but could come only from the rough, mountainous region of Kiso, trained among wild country warriors such as Yoshinaka himself.³⁰ This distance from the 'centre' helps to construct the figure of the female warrior, the quintessential 'other', rather like the Amazons in the Greek Epic Cycle.³¹

However, this magnificent portrait of the female warrior is introduced apparently only to consolidate the norm that war belongs to men. When the seven

²⁹ It is probably legitimate to regard Tomoe as she appears in *Heike* as a literary construct, because, as Brown says, 'it is impossible to say precisely where the historical reality ends and the literary construct begins.' Cf. Steven T. Brown, 'From Women Warrior to Peripatetic Entertainer: The Multiple Histories of Tomoe' in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 58(1998), 183-199, 185.

³⁰ His rustic manners have been cruelly satirised in Chapter 8, Section 6 Nekoma.

³¹ The Amazons are mentioned at *Il.* 3.189 and 6.186, but both passages refer to past events and therefore make them doubly distanced from the actions here and now. Unlike in the *Aethiopis*, they do not appear directly in Homer's narrative. For the Amazons as 'others', cf. Lorna Hardwick, 'Ancient Amazons – Heroes, Outsiders or Women?' in *Greece & Rome* 37(1990), 174-176.

remaining warriors have come down to five, among whom still remains Tomoe, Yoshinaka tells her to go:

“Quickly now,” Lord Kiso said to Tomoe. “You are a woman, so be off with you; go wherever you please. I intend to die in battle, or to kill myself if I am wounded. It would be unseemly to let people say, ‘Lord Kiso kept a woman with him during his last battle.’”

(Chapter 9, Section 4 The Death of Kiso)

The reason for Yoshinaka’s sudden dismissal of Tomoe which appears to devalue her presence as warrior has been a subject of much debate.³² Some speculate that this is out of his genuine desire not to let her die or desire to let her pray for him, and others argue that it is so that she can tell the tale of his end to others. Whatever the case may be, there is no doubt that this emphatic rejection of a female is part of the design to show Yoshinaka in the best possible light in his last hour. This section is his *aristeia*, complete with an elaborate description of his armour, and he must fight and die in male space. Despite Tomoe’s valour which surpasses that of all men, she has to be dismissed from his space. She performs one last feat of valour, wrenching the head off a worthy opponent, and rides away. The portrayal of Yoshinaka here will be more clearly appreciated if compared with his behaviour in the previous section (Chapter 9, Section 3 The Battle at the Riverbed). In that section, he cannot tear himself away from his lover to go to battle and has to be brought to his senses by his exasperated attendant’s suicide. This is exactly how not to be seen in his last hour, just like Paris with Helen, lingering in female space while his men are fighting elsewhere.

***Homophrosune* – when men and women come together**

However, it goes without saying that home is where men and women come together and raise children, ensuring the continuation of the family and our species. There is nothing intrinsically wrong about a couple’s desire to be together and to spend time in intimacy. Although war and conflict, which keep the sexes apart, feature in the bulk of Homer and *Heike* texts, there are a few peaceful scenes where man and woman are united in one space and in one mind.

Such is an episode from a peaceful period of the life of Tadamori, Kiyomori’s father, which records how he and his mistress were a perfect match:

³² Cf. Brown, op. cit., 187-191.

In those days, Retired Emperor Toba once said to Tadamori, who had just come up from Bizen Province, “Tell me about Akashi Beach.” Tadamori replied with a poem:

ariake no tsuki mo akashi no urakaze ni
nami bakari koso yoru to mieshika

(Where the morning moon
shone bright in the ocean breeze
at Akashi Beach,
naught but incoming breakers
recalled the darkness of night.)³³

The Retired Emperor was much impressed. That poem was included in the *Collection of Golden Leaves*.

Tadamori used to visit one of the Retired Emperor’s attendants, a lady whom he loved with all his heart. On a certain occasion, he inadvertently left her room without his fan, which bore on its edge a picture of a rising moon. “Where has that moonlight come from? There is something odd about its source,” the other ladies laughed. Tadamori’s mistress replied in verse:

kumoi yori tada morikitaru tsuki nareba
oboroke nite wa iwaji to zo omou

(Since it is no more
than a moon venturing forth
from behind the clouds,
its origins, are, I fear,
too obscure for me to say.)³⁴

³³ Cf. tr. McCullough, op. cit., 26, for the puns on *Akashi* (‘bright’ / place name) and *yoru* (‘come in’, ‘approach’ / ‘night’)

³⁴ Cf. tr. McCullough, op cit., 26, for the pun (the original of ‘venturing forth from behind the clouds’ can also mean ‘Tadamori came from the palace.’).

Tadamori's affection deepened after he heard about the incident. It was that lady who became the mother of the Satsuma Governor Tadanori. "Like seeks like," as the saying goes. Tadamori had elegant tastes, and the lady-in-waiting was a woman of refinement.

(Chapter 1, Section 3 The Sea Bass)

Although this episode ends happily, its main theme is a 'crisis management' by Tadamori's mistress. It is a drama afforded by the restriction of male access to female space (only by night and not to be seen by others). By leaving his fan behind in his mistress' quarters, Tadamori is virtually 'caught in the act' in the female space which, though the act itself is perfectly acceptable, is a potential source of embarrassment in polite society. However, his mistress diffuses the crisis by producing a witty poem which confesses to her affair with Tadamori without sacrificing his or her decorum. This, immediately following the episode which shows Tadamori's 'refinement', emphasises the unity of the couple moving in the same social sphere.

Such is also the 'happy ending' of Odysseus' journey, when he finally wins back his wife Penelope. Odysseus has had to outwit the suitors and defeat them in a battle in his own house. Penelope, too, has had to outwit the suitors, and then finally, to make sure that this beggar in rags in front of her is indeed Odysseus, she has to outwit him, too. It is indeed fitting that the secret sign (*Od.* 23.110) that Penelope expects from her husband is the secret of their immovable marriage bed which Odysseus himself built around an olive tree. By provoking him with a suggestion that the immovable bed has somehow been moved, she extracts the sure sign of his identity that she wanted (*Od.* 23.177-204). Here is another like-minded couple, who have each fought through many obstacles with their intelligence, prudence and endurance and are now finally reunited. The poet describes their happy embrace with the simile of shipwrecked sailors finally reaching home, which merges the images of the two, male and female, into one:

He wept as he held his lovely wife, whose thoughts were virtuous.
And as when the land appears welcome to men who are swimming,
after Poseidon has smashed their strong-built ship on the open
water, pounding it with the weight of wind and the heavy
seas, and only a few escape the gray water landward
by swimming, with a thick scurf of salt coated upon them,

and gladly they set foot on the shore, escaping the evil;
so welcome was her husband to her as she looked upon him,
and she could not let him go from the embrace of her white arms.
(*Od.* 23.232-40)³⁵

In this simile Penelope becomes the shipwrecked sailor and the obstacles that she has overcome to arrive in Odysseus' arms are compared to the sea that Odysseus has travelled to reach her. Though physically miles apart, the pair is shown to have journeyed through the same passage all this time to reach their common destination, their home and their very own bed where they become one again. Here is the perfect harmony of minds (ὁμοφροσύνη) of a man and his wife which Odysseus said to Nausicaa was the best of all things (*Od.* 6.181).³⁶ In this the division between male and female spaces disappears, and their home becomes one place.

Conclusion

The basic division of male and female spaces appears to exist in both Homer and *Heike*. Men's space is outside/public where they are engaged in war and politics and women's space is inside/private where they look after the house and raise children. Within the house itself there is also the division of men's and women's quarters. Although there are a number of exceptions to this 'norm', the ideological concept of separate male and female spaces seems to underlie the characters' location in both Homer and *Heike*, especially when the 'norm' is not adhered to.

In Homer the division between male and female spaces becomes more pronounced and female space in particular becomes more confined when military or social conflicts occur. There is no comparable change in the 'norm' in *Heike*, but the circumstances force many characters to break out of their usual space, heightening the sense of tragedy.

In both Homer and *Heike* the breach of the gendered division of space is used to underline crises, and, to this extent, the 'norm' which contrasts outside/public as male and inside/private as female space seems valid, against which spatial signs can be read. In both Homer and *Heike* the deviation from the 'normal' division of male

³⁵ Quoted from tr. Richmond Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Homer*, New York 1967.

³⁶ Cf. Moulton, op. cit., 129-30: '... the poet has arranged the simile's details to emphasize Odysseus' joy at survival, as well as Penelope's joy after her long ordeal of waiting on / Ithaca. At the moment of their reconciliation, the reward for the endurance of each, the image telescopes their elation in each other.' For Odysseus and Penelope's unity, see also Helene P. Foley, "Reverse Similes" and Sex Roles in the *Odyssey* in *Arethusa* 11(1978), 7-26.

and female space is a central narrative device. In time of peace, on the other hand, the spatial division of male and female space can disappear and man and woman can be united in one place, their home.³⁷

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³⁷ An early version of this article was presented in Japanese at Nagoya University and Tokyo University in 2006. I would like to thank the members of audience on both occasions for their feedback and discussion, especially Professor Hiroaki Yamashita and Professor Fusae Kawazoe for their detailed comments and advice from which this revised version has greatly benefited. It goes without saying that the author alone is responsible for any remaining errors.