SEARCHING FOR THE WITCH'S HUT: OHBA MINAKO'S REWRITING OF THE MOUNTAIN CRONE

by
Elizabeth Lee

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
graduation with Honors in Asian Studies.

Whitman College
2013

Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Elizabeth Lee has been accepted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in Asian Studies.

_____
Professor Yukiko Shigeto

Whitman College
May 8, 2013

Table of Contents

Abstract

The mountain crone, or *yamamba*, is a well-known monster in Japanese folktales. An eerie old woman living in the mountains, she chases down humans and gobbles them up. The *yamamba* has haunted the Japanese imagination and appears in both pre-modern and modern stories. Ohba Minako (1930-2007), one of Japan's most well-respected woman writers, brings back the *yamamba* as a devoted wife in her short story, "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" (1976). Previous analyses of Ohba's protagonist tend to either reduce her identity to a neat explanation or tritely comment on her complexity. My study, however, explores the ways in which Ohba rewrites the *yamamba* myth on both the narrative and narratological levels. She not only revises the characters within the tales but the entire structure and tradition of *yamamba* mythology. This thesis draws mainly from Alicia Ostriker's concept of "revisionist mythmaking" and Kathy Mezei's interpretation of feminist narratology.

INTRODUCTION

THE WITCH IS BACK: THE *YAMAMBA* IN MODERN JAPANESE SOCIETY

今はむかし
Now is the past.[1]
> TALES OF TIMES NOW PAST (ca. 1120)

むかし男がいた。
Once upon a time, there was a man.[2]
> *TALE OF ISE*

むかし女がいた。
Once upon a time, there was a woman.[3]
> OHBA MINAKO, *ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A WOMAN* (1994)

THE *YAMAMBA* IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

The *yamamba[4]*, or "mountain crone", is a familiar figure in Japanese folktales. An eerie crone living in her mountain hut, she disguises herself as a kindly old woman and takes in lost travelers – only to devour them in the dead of the night. She possesses a terrifying appetite and even gobbles up her victims" horses and clothing. Contrary to the witch in Western fairy tales that targets women and young children, the *yamamba* of Japanese mythology is known to consume men.[5]

My own introduction to the *yamamba* was through Noriko Mizuta Lippit"s English translation of Ohba Minako"s (1930-2007) modern short story "The Smile of a Mountain

---

[1] As I explain in Chapter 1, this is the famous opening line for each of the stories in *Tales of Times Now Past* (*Konjaku Monogatari* 今昔物語)*,* a classic anthology of folk tales. Exact dates are unknown, though 1120 is an accepted approximation. The compiler(s) of the work are also unknown. It is traditionally attributed, however, to Minamoto Takakuni, a devout Buddhist, which may explain some of the moralistic aspects of the stories. Each of the stories also end with the line, "So the tale"s been told, and so it"s been handed down" (*to namu kataritsutaetaru to ya* となむ語り 伝えたるとや). See Marian Ury"s *Tales of Times Now Past: Sixty-Two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection* (1979).

[2] The famous opening lines for *Tales of Ise* (*Ise Monogatari* 伊勢物語), a Heian-era (794-1185 CE) anthology of love poetry and prose.

[3] *Mukashi Onna ga Ita* むかし女がいた (1994). Though generally translated as *Once There Was a Woman,* I translate the title as *Once Upon a Time There Was a Woman.* Unless otherwise noted, all translations that appear in this thesis are my own.

[4] 山姥 can be pronounced both "yamauba" and "yamamba". This thesis uses the latter Romanization.

[5] It is important to note, however, that there are several tales in which the *yamamba* devours a woman. For example, in the story "Akutotarō", the *yamamba* devours a pregnant woman whose husband has gone out on an errand. All that remains of the woman"s body are her heels, from which a boy named Akutarō is born. When he grows up, he vengefully seeks out the *yamamba* and vanquishes her. See Kawai Hayao"s book *The Japanese Psyche: Major Motifs in the Fairy Tales of Japan* (1988).

1

Witch".[6] The short story was published in 1976 – during a period of intense radical feminism – and I read it in 2011. I read the story of a (seemingly) submissive and mind-reading *yamamba* who lives in the village as a human woman. She both loves and loathes her human husband, fantasizes about devouring him, devotes herself to pleasing others, and ultimately kills herself in order to relieve her children from the burden of taking care of her. The following year, I watched the celebrated *noh* play *Yamamba* in Kyōto and was amused to see that she was played by a rather decrepit old man wearing a grimacing *noh* mask and a tangled white headpiece. Now as I watch the so-called "yamamba girl" fashion movement spread among teenaged Japanese girls – entailing orange-tanned faces, voluminous hairstyles, and clownish white eye makeup – it looks as if the *yamamba* stubbornly lingers on in both the Japanese psyche and my own. With each entrance, the *yamamba* is constantly reread, rewritten and revised. As a result, she has become a multivalent and incoherent figure, and "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" makes no attempt to simplify her. Therefore, a study of the *yamamba* in Ohba"s short story poses various problems. Previous studies on both the *yamamba* and Ohba"s re-writing of her either simplify the figure"s multivalent identity or tritely laud her complexity. The standard interpretation of "Smile" is that the *yamamba* heroine represents the repressed natures of all women, a conclusion I believe to be both simplistic and contrary to Ohba"s fluid notions of gender.[7]

My study does not attempt to analyze how the protagonist of "Smile" is written, but how she is *rewritten*. By retelling a myth that has been told until now by men, Ohba stands alongside the post-1960s women writers whom Alicia Ostriker terms "revisionist mythmakers" (317). This thesis analyzes Ohba"s narrative and narratological revisions of *yamamba* mythology. The difference between the two types of revision is simply that the former refers to revisions in the plot, setting, and characters while the latter refers to

---

[6] This thesis uses Japanese-style name order for Japanese writers and scholars only, except for those writing or translating in English, as is the case for Noriko Mizuta Lippit (Lippit is her last name).
[7] For example, as I discuss in chapter 2, Amy Gwen Christiansen interprets the psychic ability of the *yamamba* protagonist to signify mere "women"s intuition". She also cites the protagonist"s desire to please others as commonly maternal characteristics.

revisions in narrative structure, style, and tone. As Kathy Mezei demonstrates in her essay "Who is Speaking Here? Free Indirect Discourse, Gender, and Authority in *Emma, Howard's End*, and *Mrs. Dalloway*", an analysis of narratology necessitates an analysis of the narrator (67). Mezei argues that beneath the narrative content rages a textual battle between the masterly narrator and the characters. The battle within "Smile" is particularly bloody, for the narrator carries with him/her the extremely long history of *yamamba* mythology in which the presumably male narrator subjugates the villainous *yamamba*. Though the author of "Smile" is a woman, one cannot assume that the narrator is also female and thus potentially supportive of the *yamamba* protagonist. It is, however, viable to argue that Ohba manipulates the previously omnipotent narrator of *yamamba* myth. She revises the *yamamba* myth quite extensively – not only by changing the traditional setting and plot of such tales, but also the entire power structure in which the male hero and male narrator subjugate the *yamamba*. In "Smile", the *yamamba* protagonist clearly reads the minds of all characters and even the narrator. In discussing the narrative and narratological consequences of the protagonist's psychic ability, I argue that Ohba's story revises the relationship between the *yamamba*, the narrator, and the male hero.

REVISING THE MYTHS OF "FEMALE" AND "MALE"

all the male poets write of Orpheus
as if they look back & expect
to find me walking patiently
behind them. they claim i fell into hell.
damn them, i say.
i stand in my own pain
& sing my own song.
       Alta (1975)[8]

At first glance, fairy tale figures (or villains) like the *yamamba* in Japan and Cinderella or Snow White in Western cultures clash with the notion of anti-authoritarian feminism. Indeed, from

---

[8] Alta. "euridice". *I Am Not a Practicing Angel* (1975).

3

1970 to 1972, American feminists Alison Lurie and Marcia Lieberman debated on the value of

fairy tales to feminist women writers. While Lurie advocated a reinterpretation of fairy tale

figures, Lieberman argued that such figures perpetuate the stereotypes of women as either purely

evil or passive and maternal – stereotypes that many radical Japanese feminists resisted. Indeed,

during the Japanese liberation movement that spanned the entire twentieth century, Japanese

women felt irresolvable tension between identities of "good wife and wise mother" and

interrogative feminist.[9] To some, motherhood and womanhood were seen as antonymous and

antagonistic, the former representing archaic notions of women while the latter represented

modernity and independence. The tension proved unbearable for some mothers; the early 1970's

experienced a boom in cases of infanticide (Shigematsu 23). Indeed, the repulsion of gentleness

and maternity has been around for some time, if one recalls Virginia Woolf's call in 1931 to

murder the "Angel in the House" within every woman writer (quoted in Pollock 69).[10]

On the other hand, Alicia Ostriker's study of American women poets' re-writings of

Greek mythology – which she terms "revisionist mythmaking" – suggests that fairy tales and

myths provide fertile ground for interrogative women writers. Since ancient mythology is one of

the "sanctuaries of existing language, the treasuries where our meaning for ‚male' and ‚female'

are themselves preserved", women who revise these myths consequently question both language

and gender (315). Rewriting a legendary figure inevitably positions women writers like Ohba

against the so-called "male" tradition of mythmaking and telling. Ostriker offers the preceding

passage by Alta as a manifesto for women writers attempting to reinterpret the silence of female

fairy tale figures (318). Alta steals the power of "singing" and uses it to write a multi-vocal,

multi-temporal poem that revises the myth of the gifted musician Orpheus and his wife Euridice.

Alta fuses her voice with the previously voiceless woman and together they bite back at both

[9] The Japanese term "good wife, wise mother" (*ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母) was first used in the Meiji era (1868-1912) as a state ideology. For a more detailed discussion on "good wife, wise mother", see Kathleen S. Uno's "Women and Changes in the Household Division of Labor" in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*. Ed. Gail Lee Bernstein. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

[10] Griselda Pollock refers to Woolf's 1931 essay "Professions for Women" in her own essay "Beyond Oedipus: Feminist ThoughT, Psychoanalysis, and Mythical Figurations of the Feminine" (2006).

Orpheus and the male storytellers who subject women to tragic fates. The poem's unorthodox punctuation and grammar also serve to destabilize the authoritative tradition of mythology. Further, Alta rewrites Euridice's helpless descent into hell as an angry raising of the artistic voice.

It is important to keep in mind that aggressive reversal of roles is only one of the tactics used by women writers. Ohba Minako, Virginia Woolf, Hèlène Cixous, Mary Daly, Saegusa Kazuko, Enchi Fumiko, and Tsushima Yūko are just some examples of "revisionist mythmakers" and their approaches to reinterpreting myths range from snarling aggression to subtle suggestion. Ultimately, the authority that revisionist mythmakers challenge is not just male authority, but that of language itself – two structures that are inextricably linked but by no means interchangeable. By exploring both narrative and narratological strands within "Smile", I hope to elucidate Ohba's challenging of the authority of language in both *yamamba* mythology and gender identity.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter 1 is titled "The Yamamba Motif". I introduce the legendary figure of the *yamamba* and briefly discuss how she is portrayed in three of the most well-known *yamamba* tales: the Hiroshima version of the folktale "The Wife Who Did Not Eat"*,* the *Tales of Times Now Past* story "How a Woman Who Was Bearing a Child Went to South Yamashina, Encountered an Oni, and Escaped" (ca. 1120), and the *noh* play *Yamamba* (ca. 14th century). Like all legendary figures, the *yamamba* appears in various tales in various forms so that even the term "archetype" becomes problematic. As Christine Osterfeld Li points out*,* tales are always communal projects and thus multivalent and diverse (3). Therefore, my discussion of the *yamamba* in these three stories does not intend to construct a coherent "archetype". Rather I hope to provide a glimpse of the literary tradition that Ohba's story revises.

Chapter 2 – entitled "Searching for the Witch's Hut: Ohba Minako's Rewriting of the *Yamamba*" – analyzes Ohba's revisions of the legendary figure. I begin with brief contextual details on the author's views on gender and the feminist movement contemporaneous to the

5

publication of "Smile" in 1976. Throughout the rest of the chapter, I analyze the protagonist's

"textual battle" against the narrator. I argue that the *yamamba's* psychic abilities blur the

boundaries between herself and other characters, and complicate the notion of a singular identity

or singular character. This character ambiguity challenges the narrator's attempts to maintain

order and clarity within the narrative. However, the relationship between the narrator and the

yamamba is not restricted to that of contenders in war, or of oppressor and oppressed. At the end

of the story, in particular, the narrator puzzlingly shifts focus to a different protagonist and then

returns to the *yamamba* protagonist, regarding her in an almost sympathetic voice. Ohba blurs the

boundaries between narrator/narrated, villain/victim, and male/female on various levels of her

short story.

CHAPTER I

THE *YAMAMBA* MOTIF

AI: Ah, I forgot, there is one more thing they say became *Yamamba*. What was it now? Ah yes, an old field potato.
WAKI: Why is that?
AI: Well, when it rains day and night, there is always a landslide somewhere in the mountains. At the head of one such slide, the top of an old field potato lay exposed. It was soaked by rain and dew, and its hair – you know that potatoes sprout what are called whiskers, don't you – well, its hair turned white. The potato itself became a body, and bit by bit, eyes, mouth, ears, nose, feet, and hands appeared, and soon it became *Yamamba*, born of the mountain. That must be how it was.
WAKI: Most unlikely.
                    YAMAMBA[11]

Previous scholars on the *yamamba* figure – such as Baba Akiko, Amy Gwen Christiansen, Kawai Hayao, and Meera Viswanathan – are as uncertain as to the "true" nature of the *yamamba* as the comical Ai role quoted above. Often, scholars of *yamamba* myths have no choice but to tritely conclude, as Kawai Hayao does, that portrayals of the *yamamba* are varied. He also comes to the rather sweeping conclusion that the ambivalent and enigmatic female figure represents the Japanese psyche. Christiansen splits the portrayals of the *yamamba* into four general categories – Eternal Other, Fool, Killer and Great Mother – though she acknowledges that in a single tale the *yamamba* may express elements of more than one (11). Both Kawai and Christiansen's studies analyze not just the figure of the *yamamba* and related characters but also common plot sequences in *yamamba* tales. Terrence Turner in his 1985 essay, "Symbolism, Totemism, and Structure", advocates such a double-sided approach to the study of myth. Combining Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralist approach and V. Propp's plot-sensitive approach, Turner proposes to analyze both static symbols (paradigms) and the flowing plot sequences (syntagm) in which they are embedded (53).[12] In this way, "the problem of the nature of the narrative dimension of myth is

---

[11] Taken from Monica Bethe and Karen Brazell's English translation of the *noh* play *Yamamba* in Brazell's book *Traditional Japanese Theater*. The excerpt is from the kyōgen interlude of the play, which acts as comic relief.
[12] In his study of a Kayapó myth of "The Bird-Nester and the Origin of Cooking Fire", Turner criticizes Lévi-Strauss' studies for taking mythological symbols out of their plot, treating them as "static oppositions" and totally ignoring the plot or context. Indeed Lévi-Strauss' studies tend to analyze the symbols within a myth (raw vs. cooked, high vs. low, land vs. water, peak vs. valley) while ignoring the plot and narrative structure. Propp, on the other hand, focuses on plotlines of folktales ("*morphology* of the folktale"), even creating plot formulas without considering the meaning

no longer distinct from that of the structure of myth, but is seen to be identical with it" (55). However, I would like to revise Turner"s suggestion that the narrative content is identical to the narrative structure. As I discuss in the next chapter, Kathy Mezei points out in her essay "Who is Speaking Here?" that the story"s content is not always identical to the narrative structure. Oftentimes, they challenge each other (75). For example, though the *yamamba* is portrayed in myth as a powerful figure, the narrative almost always subjugates her in the end when the terrified hero – usually by sheer dumb luck – succeeds in conquering or escaping from her. And yet, the preservation of the *yamamba* in mythology makes it impossible to kill her once and for all. Combining Turner and Mezei"s approaches, I analyze both the characters and the narrative structure of each tale, while also considering how the two reinforce and/or challenge each other.

This chapter introduces the *yamamba* motif in three tales: the Hiroshima version of the folktale "The Wife Who Did Not Eat", the *Tales of Times Now Past* story "How a Woman Who Was Bearing a Child Went to South Yamashina, Encountered an Oni, and Escaped" (ca. 1120), and the *noh* play *Yamamba* (ca. 14th century). First, I analyze the two Chinese characters that make up the word *yamamba* – "mountain" and "old woman". I then summarize each story and offer my own interpretation, incorporating brief references to other myths and folktales.

"MOUNTAINS" AND "OLD WOMAN"

Before reviewing the folktale "The Wife Who Did Not Eat", I analyze the Japanese characters that make up the word *yamamba*: 山姥. The first character「山」signifies "mountain" while the second「姥」signifies "old woman". Her name suggests that her identity depends on a specific location, age, and gender. Despite her eerie appellation of "mountain witch", *yamamba* simply means "old woman of the mountains" or "mountain crone". Both words have strong implications within Japanese culture.

---

behind the symbols embedded within the plots. Turner reviews previous approaches to the study of symbols in both mythology and social phenomena from Marx to McLennan to Munn. I thank Professor Charles McKhann for directing me to Turner"s study of myth and methodology.

In *Tales of the Mountain Witches: A Re-Evaluation of the Female Archetype*, Mizuta Noriko and Kitada Sachie emphasize the overwhelming variety of portrayals of the *yamamba*. She ranges from young, beautiful, old, frightening, maternal, fertile, vengeful, helpful, to even comical or foolish. However, Mizuta and Kitada point out that all pre-modern tales agree that the *yamamba* lives far-off in the mountains (Kitada 8). They compare the topos of the "mountains" to the "village". The mountains evoke a mysterious and misty landscape, but also anarchy and chaos that cannot be controlled or fenced in like the securely established "village" (10). The village is where men can confine women. The mountains are where women can kill men. But the *yamamba* transgresses the boundaries of both. In some tales, she kills only in the mountains and therefore must depend on luring men into her territory. In others, she comes down to the village and vengefully kills the villagers.

"Old woman" has even stronger connotations. Ancient traditions like *obasute-yama* (literally, "abandoning old woman in mountain") show that old women are considered burdensome to society, so much so that there is a mountain where you can "throw away" old mothers, grandmothers, or aunts. In a study of old women in Japanese culture, Yamaori Tetsuo shrewdly states that "[a]ging seems to be more difficult for women" than for men (29). He cites the belief that the term *yamamba* originally referred to aged priestesses and shamanesses who lived in remote shrines. These priestesses eventually came to be feared by people living in the villages (29).[13] Yamaori compares the partial portrayal of old men to old women in Japanese culture (34). In *noh* plays, for example, aged male characters are generally portrayed as wise and gentle while aged and single female characters are portrayed as uncanny and frightening. Yamaori also points out that there are two types of *noh* masks for aged male characters: the elegant and gentle *okina* mask and the fearful and solemn *jō* mask. For aged female characters, however, there is only one type of mask: the demon-like *yamauba* and the grave *uba* masks (36).

---

[13] Yanagita Kunio in his book *Life in the Mountains* includes purportedly true accounts of village women abducted by mountain gods, sent to the mountains as brides to mountain gods (or to mountain priests), women who ran away into the mountains, and women who even lived in the mountains.

The only female masks that look gentle and beautiful are the *onna* masks for young female characters. Similarly, in religious iconography, male deities are generally depicted as old and wizened while female deities are invariably young and voluptuous. Yamaori"s study demonstrates that age is widely regarded as a sign of wisdom and righteousness – except, apparently, in a woman"s case.

Unable to bear more children, *yamamba* is a crone who has outlived her usefulness to society. As in the old tradition of *obasute-yama*, society abandons her to die in the mountains. Kawai Hayao argues that the theme of a killing off a sterile old woman can be seen in a common scene of *yamamba* tales in which she dies from being made to eat stones. He points out that in Japanese "stone-woman" can refer to an infertile woman (42).[14] But the abandoned *yamamba* does not die. She returns over and over again in various tales. Society, intending to get rid of her, places her in a region where she cannot be controlled or confined. Both "mountains" and "old woman" lie far outside of society and it seems that this doubly unrestrained autonomy of the *yamamba* is what gives her the power to terrify humans.

This power is also a curse. The *yamamba* is brought back to life and killed repeatedly in mythology. Several women poets suggest that myths, by never changing as they are told throughout the ages, deny the free will of both male and female characters and entrap them into a never-ending cycle (Ostriker 316). The villainous *yamamba* is doubly subject to this repetitive cycle. In the *noh* play, the *yamamba* laments her fate to ceaselessly run around the mountain, an act termed *yama-meguri*. The *yamamba* is forced to circle the mountains forever – not just in a single legend, but every time the legend is repeated. This eternal cycle of rebirth and re-death contains both Buddhist and Promethean undertones. As I discuss in Chapter 2, the narrative style of "Smile" maintains this cyclic theme. The narrator starts the story of the *yamamba* protagonist at her death at the age of sixty-two; goes on to describe her life; then her death again; and finally her re-birth as *yamamba* at the end of the story.

---

[14] *Seki-jo* 石女.

In the following section, I discuss the reductionist notions of "false" and "true" identities in the folktale "The Wife Who Did Not Eat".

"The Wife Who Did Not Eat": *yamamba's* hidden nature

There are two versions of the folktale, but I discuss famed folklorist Keigo Seki's version from the Hiroshima prefecture.[15] In this version, a middle-aged man who refuses to get married – presumably because he is either poor or stingy – is visited by a beautiful young woman who works hard and yet does not eat a thing. The man gladly marries the mysterious woman and they live happily. However, the complacent man is urged by a skeptical friend to spy on his too-perfect wife. The man does as he is told and watches in horror as his wife uncovers a mouth atop her head and devours a huge meal of rice and mackerel. Later, the wife falls ill from a "headache" and the man's friend disguised as a healer tauntingly diagnoses her illness as the curse of rice and mackerel. The wife realizes that the man spied on her and, enraged, transforms into a terrifying *yamamba*. She devours the man's friend and carries the man on her head up the mountain. The man escapes by jumping off her head onto a tree and hides in a bush of mugwort and iris, which happen to be the *yamamba's* weakness. In the end, he kills his wife the *yamamba* by throwing the mugwort and iris at her.

Here, the *yamamba* aligns herself with Japanese stories of animal spirits who disguise themselves as beautiful women in order to marry human men. Though such paradigms epitomize the loving and selfless wife, few enjoy happy endings. Almost always, the husband peeps on the woman after she mysteriously orders him not to look in on her and either in shame or anger, she

---

[15] *Kuwazu nyōbō* 食わず女房. I use the English translation by Sachiko Reece and Kawai Hayao in his book *The Japanese Psyche* (197-199). His translation is based on the version of the tale recorded in Seki Keigo's *Compilation of Japanese Fairy Tales* (*Nihon mukashibanashi taisei* 日本昔話大成). It is listed as tale no. 244 in the "Humorous Tales" section. Another version of the tale is recorded by Sakamoto Masao in his 1979 anthology and is from the Bichū region. In this version, the man becomes suspicious of his too-perfect wife and peeps on her to discover she has a mouth on top of her head. Furious, he pronounces their divorce. But the *yamamba* tricks the man into climbing into the wooden bathtub, which she covers and takes up to the mountains in order to share her meal with her *yamamba* friends. In the end, the man escapes from the tub and hides in mugwort and iris, which are poisonous to the *yamamba's*.

leaves him.[16] In this story, the *yamamba* assumes the appearance of the hero's ideal woman: beautiful, hard-working, and low-cost. Indeed, in almost all *yamamba* tales, the *yamamba* disguises herself in whatever form is most alluring to her victim Even a man as apathetic and stingy as the hero cannot resist. The man and *yamamba* live happily together and may have continued to do so were it not for the accusations of the man's suspicious friend, who suspects she is not human. The familiar motif peeping scene of *yamamba* tales in which the hero discovers that the woman is actually a *yamamba* indicates the notion that women invariably have hidden natures.[17] In many versions of the *yamamba* tale, she disguises herself as a kind old woman who lives in the mountains and takes in lost travelers. The *yamamba*'s disguises are taken as signs of her evil nature and trickery. However, Kawai cites Baba Akiko's belief that the *yamamba*'s disguises may not indicate an evil ulterior motive, but a desperate desire for human love and acceptance (44). The *yamamba* does indeed go to great lengths to please her husband and hide her appetite for food (interestingly *not* for human flesh, though later she suddenly develops such a taste). But when the man spies on her and discovers that she is actually a *yamamba*, he dismisses her kindness and warmth and, in his fear of her, reduces her identity to a mere monster. Her initial kindness is narrowly interpreted – by both the hero and the storyteller – as an act of deception and disguise, when in actuality, it might have been a sincere desire to please him. It is only after this point that she transforms into a man-eater and attempts to devour him. She is not allowed to change by the hero or the storyteller; to them, her identity can only be that of a horrible *yamamba*.

---

[16] "The Crane Wife" is a famous example of this type of Japanese folktale. It is about a kind, poor man who nurses an injured crane back to health. Shortly afterwards, a beautiful woman asks to become his wife and he agrees. One day she weaves a beautiful bolt of cloth for him alone in her room, which they sell for a high price. Now rich, the man asks his wife to weave another bolt of cloth and she agrees as long as he does not peep into the room. Though he promises not to do so, overcome with curiosity, he peeks into the room and sees the same crane whose life he saved plucking out her own feathers and weaving it into the cloth. Saddened that he broke his promise, the woman transforms back into a crane and leaves him.

[17] "The *Yamamba* Who Was Eaten" (*Taberareta yamamba* 食べられた山姥) is about a lazy young acolyte who is sent on an errand by his teacher. He is given three magical talismans that grant him a wish in a time of danger. The acolyte gets lost in the mountains and encounters an isolated mountain hut inhabited by a kindly old woman who agrees to put him up for the night. Later that night, he catches her stirring a huge pot of boiling water to cook him in, grinning eerily from ear to ear. He uses the three talismans to run away to his teacher, who challenges the *yamamba* to a spell-chanting contest. He wins after tricking her into transforming herself into a bean and eating her.

Whatever the motive, the *yamamba's* disguises turn her into a fetishized object – a mirror that reflects her victim˶s desires, whether that is a wife who eats nothing and works hard or a trustworthy old woman to aid in childbirth as in the *Tales of Times Now Past* story. She reflects what others perceive or want to perceive, thereby revealing more about other people than about herself. Ohba˶s selfless *yamamba* is very much similar to the *yamamba* of this tale. Ohba, however, complicates the difference between "true" nature and "false" or "constructed" nature of the *yamamba*. Whereas the presumably male storytellers of "The Woman Who Did Not Eat" imply that women˶s hidden natures are the exact opposite of her constructed appearance, Ohba˶s story makes the two natures ambiguous, indistinguishable, and even questions the notion of a "true nature". Ohba also explores the mirroring aspect of the *yamamba*.

In the following section, I further discuss reductionist notions of female identity in a tale from *Tales of Times Now Past*.

"HOW A WOMAN WHO WAS BEARING A CHILD WENT TO SOUTH YAMASHINA": GOOD WOMAN, BAD WOMAN?[18]

This tale appears in the medieval collection *Tales of Times Now Past*. The collection contains thirty-one chapters of tales – both Buddhist and secular – that originate from Japan, India, and China. The tales range from historical accounts of powerful families, to moralistic tales about the power of Buddhist faith, to bawdy tales about monks copulating with various creatures and objects. The compiler of the tales is unknown, but is apparently a very pragmatic storyteller. Each tale begins with the phrase, "At a time now past…"[19], and ends with a brief comment on the moral of the story and the phrase, "So the tale˶s been told, and so it˶s been handed down."

---

[18] I use the English translation by Marian Ury in her 1979 book *Tales of Times Now Past: Sixty-Two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection*. 161-163.

[19] 今はむかし. The translation of this first line is much debated. It literally means "now is the past", which is how I translate it in the beginning of my introduction. Here, I use Marian Ury˶s translation from her 1979 book *Tales of Times Now Past*.

"How a Woman Who Was Bearing a Child Went to South Yamashina, Encountered an Oni, and Escaped" appears in Chapter Twenty-Seven, which consists of tales about supernatural creatures. In the tale, a woman working as a servant gets pregnant. She decides to give birth in secret far-off in the mountains, abandon it, and come back to work if she survives the childbirth. When she feels the first signs of labor, she runs into the mountains, but soon becomes lost. She comes across an abandoned estate inhabited by a kindly old woman who takes her in. The young woman is extremely grateful to the benevolent old woman, thinking her a godsend from Buddha. She delivers a boy whom she adores and she abandons her original plan to leave the baby. One day while taking a nap, the young woman catches the old woman staring at her newborn son and saying, "Only a mouthful, but my how delicious!" (162). Terrified, the young woman succeeds in running away while the old woman naps. The narrator reveals that the young woman did not tell this story to anyone until she herself had grown old and ends the story by declaring that only a demon could have thought a baby looked delicious (163).

Meera Viswanathan offers an interesting analysis of the dynamic between women in this and other *yamamba* tales, including the *noh* play *Yamamba* and Ohba's "Smile". In a theory she calls "mirroring", Viswanathan argues that the *yamamba* is often juxtaposed against a gentler female (245). In "How a Woman Who Was Bearing a Child", the old *yamamba* is "mirrored" by the young woman; in the *noh* play, the true *Yamamba* by the dancer Hyakuma *Yamamba*; and in Ohba's story, the *yamamba* protagonist by her selfish daughter (255). In "How a Woman Who Was Bearing a Child", the two women's roles switch at the entrance of the male child. Before the child's birth, the young woman callously plans to abandon her child and owes her life to the old woman, while the maternal old woman acts benevolently. After the birth, however, the young woman adores her child, while the old woman transforms into a cannibalistic *yamamba*. Viswanathan concludes that such opposite women reflect "tension about woman's nature and its relation to society". Such stories domesticate and victimize the *yamamba* – she is "vilified, ignored, or misunderstood" by the gentle women who mirror them (255).

14

However, Viswanathan's mirroring theory reduces the two women to simplistically "good" and "bad" women. They are merely inverse images of each other. Unfortunately, her study does not move much beyond such black and white depictions of women in *yamamba* tales. My own interpretation of the mirroring of the *yamamba* is perhaps too literal: she reflects the desires of the person she mirrors. In "The Wife Who Did Not Eat", the *yamamba* mirrors not another woman, but a man. She transforms herself into the hero's ideal woman and acts the way he desires her to, dutifully and diligently tending to his every wish. Like a mirror, when the hero desires a wife who does not eat, the *yamamba* transforms into one. But, later, when he perceives her merely as a monster, she transforms into one. This brings into question the notion of the *yamamba's* "true" identity, when her identity is always changing. This question is a central theme in the following section, in which I discuss the *noh* play *Yamamba*, the most famous revisionist tale of *yamamba* myths and quite possibly the first that positions the *yamamba* not as the villain, but as the complicated heroine. The play suggests that there is no such thing as a "true" *yamamba* or a "false" *yamamba*, for in the end "false" and "true" are the same.

YAMAMBA: WRONG AND RIGHT ARE ONE

This *noh* play is attributed to Zeami Motokiyo (1363?-1443?), arguably the most famous *noh* playwright and theorist. It was one of the most popular plays in the period before 1600 and remains popular today. The traditionally male *noh* performer who plays Yamamba wears a demonic mask – though the mask differs depending on the interpretation of the performing school of *noh* – and a snarled white wig that extends towards the elbows (Brazell 207). The play is famous for Buddhist notions of non-dualism, as seen in the famous lines: "Good and evil are not two; wrong and right are one" (Brazell 222). The play was written anywhere from the fifteenth century to the seventeenth century, and the playwright obviously incorporates scenes from previous *yamamba* tales such as the initial encounter with *yamamba* after becoming lost in the mountains and the disguise of the *yamamba* as an old woman. The move to align the *yamamba*

15

with Buddhism is an interesting one and, I believe, puts forth the message is that there is no difference between Yamamba and her imitator Hyakuma Yamamba.

In the play, Hyakuma Yamamba, a dancer famous for her song and dance depicting the *yamamba*, goes on a pilgrimage to Zenkōji Temple with her retinue. They decide to go through Agero Pass, described as the path that Buddha himself walks on. Hyakuma"s local guide declares that following the path is an "initiation into the secrets of Buddhahood" (211). It is along this path that they become lost and encounter Yamamba disguised as an old woman (211). She offers them shelter and requests Hyakuma to perform the *yamamba* dance for her and thereby guide her to Buddhist enlightenment. *Yamamba* promises to return later that night in her true form. When she returns, she dances together with Hyakuma and the two women"s performances merge together until only Yamamba is left dancing. Yamamba describes her ambivalent nature as malevolent demon and benevolent mountain goddess, but emphasizes that ultimately there is no difference between good and evil, wrong and right, herself and her impersonator Hyakuma. (222). Before she leaves to continue her *yama-meguri*, or "rounds of the mountain", she tells Hyakuma, "Return to the capital; / tell the world these tales." (223).

Previous studies have focused on the dynamic between Hyakuma and Yamamba (Viswanathan), but the non-dualistic nature of the play does not distinguish between the two *yamamba*. I argue that the *noh* play is a metaphor for the relationship between a "real" *yamamba* and imitations of her in *yamamba* mythology. Yamamba represents the "original" *yamamba* paradigm that everyone knows but cannot define. Hyakuma, who turns the *yamamba* into an art form, represents the various interpretations of the *yamamba* figure and tale. As unlikely as some interpretations may seem, each tale grows from a small seed of the "true" or "original" *yamamba*. For example, the local guide offers three comical theories of the formation of Yamamba: that her body sprouted from 1) an old gong and various objects from nature like acorns, mushrooms, vines, and pine resin, 2) a moss-covered hut, and 3) an old field potato (215). In each theory, the *Yamamba* slowly sprouts from some sort of seed or source; she is an aggregate of various parts.

16

She is both the seed and the product. Similarly, she is the "original" *yamamba* tale while also the composite of those tales. The *yamamba* changes in each rendition of the tale in an endless cycle of re-birth and re-death. When Yamamba implores Hyakuma (and by extension the audience) to tell this story to the world, she plants another seed for even more *yamamba* tales. The *noh* play itself becomes a sort of Hyakuma Yamamba – a creative interpretation and imitation of the *yamamba* that nevertheless contains a seed of truth.

As Hyakuma‶s local guide says, when one sings about *yamamba*, the real Yamamba will appear (216). Every *yamamba* tale thus summons the true spirit of the *yamamba* and adds to the all-encompassing paradigm, celebrating her ambivalence while fueling it at the same time. Her wild *yama-meguri* – soaring up peaks and sliding down valleys – reflect her ever-transforming nature (225). The play ends with the promise that, somewhere and in some way we cannot possibly predict, the *yamamba* will return again in another form, "her destination never to be known" (225).

Yamamba mythology consists of innumerable variations of the *yamamba* figure and narrative. Within the three tales, the *yamamba* first appears in her disguise, usually as an old woman, followed by a revealing of her "true nature". The tales explore the question of the *yamamba's* "true" nature. "The Wife Who Did Not Eat" and "How a Woman Who Was Bearing a Child" seem to imply that the *yamamba* hides her true nature and that the hero must uncover it; while the *noh* play rejects the notion of a singular, "true" identity.

In the next chapter, I analyze the narratology in Ohba‶s short story, "The Smile of a Mountain Witch". The protagonist rejects the notion of a singular self through her psychic interactions with the narrator and other characters. The chapter begins with a discussion of the new identity politics of the Japanese liberation movement and how such issues run through Ohba‶s "Smile". I then analyze the narrative and narratological implications of the *yamamba's* ability to read minds.

17

CHAPTER II

SEARCHING FOR THE WITCH'S HUT: OHBA MINAKO'S "SMILE OF A MOUNTAIN WITCH"

The one who thinks a woman is a totally different, unreal thing
is called a man
And the one who thinks a man is a totally different, unreal thing
is called a woman
But those who can see all things clearly
are neither woman nor man....
      OHBA MINAKO, *ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A WOMAN* (1994)[20]

the thing I came for:
the wreck and not the story of the wreck
the thing itself and not the myth
      ADRIENNE RICH, *DIVING INTO THE WRECK* (1972)

Ohba's "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" depicts a *yamamba* who carries out an ordinary life in a

village, hiding her ability to reads mind and striving to please her human friends. The story begins

in the remote hut of a presumably archetypal *yamamba*. The narrator takes on the voice of a

traditional storyteller: "Let me tell you a *yamamba* tale" (182).[21] The scene parodies the

stereotypical encounter between a *yamamba* and a lost man whom she has put up for the night.

This *yamamba*, however, makes no attempt to disguise herself and instead abruptly accuses the

man for thinking that she is a *yamamba* and continues to read his thoughts aloud. Terrified, the

man denies he thought such a thing, but she catches his lies each time. In the end, he futilely runs

for his life. However, right before the culminating moment when *yamamba* devours him, the

narrator cuts the scene short and points out: "This is the *yamamba* tale that has been told since

long ago" (Ohba 11). The skeptical narrator then wonders why *yamamba* tales never feature

young *yamamba*, as if all *yamamba* are eternally old, and wonders whether it is because young

yamamba inevitably become lonely and come down to the village in order to marry human men

(Lippit 183, 184). The narrator then shifts to our story proper about an "honest-to-god *yamamba*"

---

[20] Translated by Janice Brown in her article "Oba Minako – Telling the Untellable" (1998).
[21] The Japanese original reads: 山姥の話をしよう.

18

who lives in the village (Ohba 12).[22] Indeed, the protagonist possesses the ability to read minds

and grows up verbalizing her mother"s every thought. After entering school, however, she decides

to hide her ability in order to "make grown-ups happy" (Ohba 14). She lives according to this

manifesto, using her psychic abilities to satisfy the desires of others. However, her desire to

please others is complicated by occasional descriptions of her hatred for humans and fantasies

about living in the mountains devouring men. At the age of sixty-two, she becomes paralyzed and

lies in the hospital for days under the care of her husband and two grown children until she kills

herself to relieve her family.

Ohba arguably pioneered the brief movement in the 80s of *yamamba* rewritings. She was

the first twentieth-century Japanese woman writer to rewrite the *yamamba* myth – or at the very

least, the best-known – and in the decade following her publication of "Smile", many prominent

women writers such as Tsushima Yūko and Saegusa Kazuko published their own rewritings of

the *yamamba* myth.[23]

Amy Gwen Christiansen concludes that Ohba"s short story "deconstructs the *yamamba*

figure, vindicating her, and reformulating her into a metaphor for woman" (81). However, this

analysis reduces the *yamamba's* ambivalent identity to a mere stereotype of a woman oppressed

by society. Christiansen's interpretation of "Smile" as a denunciation of the oppression of women

in society is quite reductive and unfortunately repeated by various other scholars.[24] Though she

brings up interesting points about how Ohba revises the classic *yamamba* archetype, she fails to

consider how Ohba might also be challenging the stereotype of "women" and stereotypes in

general. Though Ohba is characterized as a quasi-feminist writer whose literary works explore the

---

[22] The original reads: *shōshin shōmei* 正真正銘の山姥. The fact that this is written in all-Chinese characters adds to the authority of the narrator"s statement. See my brief introduction to different alphabets in Japanese writing on page 11.

[23] Such examples include: Tsushima Yūko"s *Woman Running in the Mountains* (1980) and *Mother in the House of Grass* (1987); Saegusa Kazuko"s *Hibikiko's Smile* (1988); and Tsumura Setsuko"s *Village in the Mist* (1989).

[24] For example, Michiko Wilson simplifies the nature of *yamamba* to a monstrous woman who ultimately rejects the human world. Her study denounces the gender inequality between the *yamamba* and her husband. Wilson depicts the *yamamba* as a powerless victim whose self-identity is controlled and fractured by her idiotic husband. She interprets the *yamamba"s* suicide at the end of the story as an act of happily departing "this outrageous human habitat for the wilderness of a *yamamba* world". Her analysis, however, completely ignores the *yamamba"s* ambivalent love for her husband and other humans. Although Wilson recognizes the split identity of the *yamamba*, she herself reduces the *yamamba's* identity to a bitter hater of men.

depths of the female psyche, she holds fluid views of gender. Her poem quoted above questions the identity politics and epistemology of gender. She not only blurs the boundaries between male and female, but proposes a third category that is neither male nor female. Furthermore, she suggests that gender is merely a labeling of the "other" – a "man" is simply a human who estranges himself from what he calls a "woman", and vice versa. Human relationships are thus founded upon such meaningless labels. However, such labels do not apply to one who does not use them. It was this accusation that fueled radical feminists like Tanaka Mitsu and Yonezu to open experimental communes in the early 1970s that attempted to forge new human relationships (Shigematsu 118, 119).[25]

The Japanese women"s liberation movement of the 70s formed out of the hyper-chauvinistic student New Left groups. In 1970, Tanaka Mitsu passed out her handwritten pamphlet called "Liberation from the Toilet" at various leftist political events (Shigematsu 103). "Liberation from the Toilet" was to become the official manifesto of one of the most prominent feminist groups, the Fighting Women Group. In the manifesto, Tanaka laments the split identity of women as either pure mother or sexualized "toilet".

> According to the masculine consciousness which shapes our understanding of sexuality, men are unable to see a woman as an integrated whole who has both the emotional quality of gentleness and the sexuality which is the physical expression of this gentleness. As far as men are concerned, a woman is split into two images – either the expression of maternal love: a "mother", or a vessel for the management of lust: a "toilet". (Mackie 144)

The split self is something Tanaka aggressively questions throughout her involvement in the *ribu* movement. Here, she blames men for women"s split identities, but in later works, she questions her own body for internalizing such notions as "femininity" (Mackie 157). Tanaka Mitsu ultimately blamed current social structures like nuclear families for repressing women and

---

[25] Though Tanaka and Yonezu"s communes exclusively experimented with woman-woman relationships, various communes focused on other relationships. For example, the Tokyo Komu-unu was established in 1972 – amidst the boom in cases of infanticide in Japan – to revise relationships between mother and child.

proposed creating new kinds of human relations between men and women, women and women, and men and men.

The same issues of identity politics and social relationships run through the literary world of "Smile". The *yamamba* protagonist forges new relations with the narrator who has traditionally subjugated her and the male hero whom she has traditionally terrorized. The formerly strict boundaries between narrator/narrated, eating/being eaten, peeping/being peeped on are transgressed. By analyzing such revisions, I avoid simplifying the *yamamba* as either a monster or a woman as previous studies have. This chapter specifically analyzes the protagonist's ability to read minds, how that complicates her self-identity, and how this is further complicated by the omniscient narrator. Throughout, I explore how the *yamamba* and other characters challenge the narrator's authority over the tale. Though I often position the *yamamba* and the narrator against each other, the interaction is not always so simplistic and at times the narrator's voice blends with the *yamamba* or even fuels her ambiguity.

FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE IN JAPANESE FICTION: WHO IS SPEAKING HERE?

The ambivalency of the "archetypal" *yamamba* is something that Ohba clearly exaggerates in both narrative structure and content. On the structural level, the story flits back and forth between incongruous time frames, scenes, and character focalizers; on the narrative level, the mind-reading *yamamba* flits between conflicting identities, attitudes toward humans, and between her imaginings and actual interactions. Furthermore, the protagonist's mind-reading blurs the boundaries between herself and other characters. The blurred characters merge with one another in opposition to the omniscient narrator. At several points throughout the story, the authoritative narrator – who denies the characters individual names and insistently labels them as "the woman", "the man", "the daughter" – struggles against the blurred and incoherent characters. In "Who is Speaking Here? Free Indirect Discourse, Gender, and Authority in *Emma*, *Howard's End*, and *Mrs. Dalloway*", Kathy Mezei argues that passages in which it is ambiguous who is speaking – a

narrative style termed Free Indirect Discourse – represents a textual battle for narrative control. Though the various studies on Free Indirect Discourse (FID) have been restricted to Western works, it is almost ubiquitous in modern Japanese fiction. As the subject is typically omitted in Japanese sentences, the narrator of a story regularly flows in and out of his/her characters" voices.

Kathy Mezei cites that the narrator uses FID for various purposes: to invisibly manipulate the characters" thoughts and speech, to voice subversive opinions through the characters while avoiding censure, and endless more depending on the work and the author (67). No longer can we trust the narrator to provide an unbiased account of his/her characters; within the narration of the character"s thoughts or state of mind, we cannot be entirely sure which are the character"s thoughts or the narrator"s manipulative lens. As a result, within and between the text"s multiple voices rages a "textual battle" for narrative authority (67). She argues that the author, narrator, and characters often grapple with each other for control over the tale. The characters frequently challenge the authority of the narrator and even the narrative content. For example, Mezei analyzes the increasingly defiant tone of Jane Austen"s *Emma*. It is a story that seems to conform to the stereotypical marriage plot; yet, as the story progresses, Emma"s aggressive character starts to take over and transform the narrator"s tone from reproving to vehement and opinionated (74). In a story that ends predictably in marriage, Emma"s outcries represent rebellious "voice[s] of resistance to the marriage plot" (75).

The *yamamba* certainly struggles against the narrator/narrative of "Smile". Though the narrator"s voice does blend with the protagonist"s – especially towards the end – I mainly locate the "blending of voices" between the protagonist and all other characters. This blending of voices occurs when the *yamamba* reads other people"s minds and the mental – and later, physical – boundaries between characters become blurred. Often, what comes out of the *yamamba*"s mouth is exactly what the other character is thinking. For example, when she is a child, the *yamamba* verbalizes her mother"s every thought and speaks very little of her own. Later, she behaves according to what her husband and friends desire. All the while she questions the words that

come out of her mouth and yet eventually internalizes them as either the truth or even as her own thoughts. Indeed, because the protagonist's desire is to please others, it is sometimes unclear whether their thoughts and desires actually conflict with her own. Thus I argue that through the blending of voices, thoughts, intentions, and desires, the characters merge together into a single figure – the *yamamba* – and resist the narrator's attempts to distinguish/separate them. Thus the textual battle occurs between the narrator and all of the blended characters, *regardless* of gender – something Wilson and Christiansen disregard, preferring to label the *yamamba* as oppressed and her husband as oppressor.

In the following section, I analyze the opening passage of "Smile" in which the so-called "archetypal" *yamamba's* mind-reading both undermines the narrator's authority and causes her to merge with the male hero. I then discuss how the protagonist further merges with the other characters through her psychic ability and how the narrator attempts to turn the text against her.

MIND-READING: WHO IS THINKING HERE?

Ohba revises many aspects of *yamamba* mythology such as the *yamamba's* appetite, agelessness, and inhabitation of the mountains. However, her most obvious revision is to make the *yamamba* a mind-reader. Ohba changes the nature of the *yamamba* from a physical being plagued by hunger to a mental being cursed with psychic powers. Even though the protagonist of "Smile" eats as much as the archetype, Ohba revises her appetite as a consideration of others' feelings. She eats up whatever is offered to her in order not to disappoint the person (Lippit 189). When people see this, they assume she loves food and subsequently give her more, which the *yamamba* feels obliged to eat.

Amy Gwen Christiansen interprets Ohba's psychic revision in two ways. First, she argues that it is not a revision at all. Christiansen claims that the archetypal *yamamba's* ability to adopt a disguise that most effectively lures her victims indicates her intuitive and mental powers (45, 46). Second, she interprets the psychic ability of Ohba's *yamamba* as a metaphor for

common "women"s intuition" (58). Christiansen argues that "[w]omen are mind-readers. They are supposed to be nurturing and sympathetic, which requires them to understand the feelings of others" (58). However, her analysis simplifies Ohba"s revision as a mere metaphor for a stereotypically repressed and powerless wife. She also ignores the textual battle brewing between the narrator and characters. I interpret the *yamamba's* mind-reading as a means of blurring the boundaries between herself and other characters. In this way, she challenges the narrator"s futile attempts to tidily rationalize and explicate her and other characters.

Before beginning the story proper, the narrator describes what s/he calls an archetypal scene from old *yamamba* tales. However, this "archetypal" *yamamba* is actually quite different from those of old myths. First, this *yamamba* makes no attempt to disguise herself. Second, she terrorizes the young man not with her voracious appetite, but with her psychic powers. After the narrator thoroughly describes the *yamamba's* ghastly appearance, the *yamamba* suddenly speaks out.

> "You just thought „What an uncanny woman! Like an old, monster cat!" didn"t you?"
> Startled, the young man thinks to himself, "Don"t tell me she"s planning to devour me in the middle of the night?"
> Stealing a glance at her from under his brows, the man gulps down a bowl of millet porridge. Without a moment"s hesitation she tells him, "You just thought in your mind, „Don"t tell me she"s planning to devour me in the middle of the night!" didn"t you!"
> The man, turning pale, quickly replies, "I was just thinking that with this warm bowl of porridge I finally feel relaxed, and that my fatigue is catching up with me." But with his body hard as ice, he thinks to himself, "The reason she"s boiling such a big pot of water must be because she is preparing to cook me in it in the middle of the night!"
> With a sly grin, the old witch says, "You just thought to yourself, „The reason she"s boiling such a big pot of water must be because she is preparing to cook me in it in the middle of the night!" didn"t you?" (Lippit 182)

The *yamamba* continues to read his thoughts. Each time she does, the man denies he ever thought such a thing and continues to judge her frightful appearance, certain that she will devour him. Here, the man is doubly subject to having his mind read – first by the "archetypal" *yamamba* in front of him and, on another level, by the narrator revealing his true thoughts and actions to the

reader. As a result, the duplicity of the man's denials is made doubly apparent. By exposing the man's thoughts, the *yamamba* speaks out against the unfounded fears of both male characters and male storytellers of *yamamba* myths. In fact, each of the man's thoughts refers to familiar scenes in old tales – a huge pot of boiling water, the *yamamba's* secret plans to devour the man in the middle of the night, and the hero's tricking the *yamamba* in order to escape. When the mountain-dwelling *yamamba* first speaks out, "You just though this, didn't you?" she does so against the narrative's disparaging depiction of her as an "eerie hag of a woman" who devours lost travelers (Ohba 9).

On the other hand, the narrator and *yamamba's* joint mind-reading reveals a narrative battle for authority. The narrator of "Smile" has complete omniscience over both the story's events and the characters' inner thoughts. However, in the above passage, the narrator's omniscience is undermined by the mind-reading *yamamba*. The dual mind-reading comes off as redundant and repetitive: after the narrator describes the terrified man's thoughts, the *yamamba* repeats this description word for word. By verbalizing the other character's thoughts herself, the *yamamba* steals the role and the power of the omniscient narrator. Further, the *yamamba* reverses the roles of narrator and narrated. She repeats large parts of the narrative and thereby converts the narrator/narrative itself into her victim whose thoughts she verbalizes. Through mind-reading, the mountain-dwelling *yamamba* takes on all three roles of *yamamba* myths: the narrator, the "hero", and of course the *yamamba.* Contrary to previous studies that position the *yamamba* merely against male hegemony, the *yamamba* at the beginning of the story challenges the entire narrative of *yamamba* mythology itself.

At the end of the opening scene, when the *yamamba* devours the man, it is unclear whose thought it was to do so. Although the man clearly attributes such thoughts as the *yamamba's* own intentions, in actuality she merely verbalizes his fearful thoughts. She makes no active attempts to devour him and yet the man runs away from her, terrified for his life. However, by verbalizing and later physicalizing the man's thoughts, one wonders if this was what she had planned all

25

along. The boundary between the man's thoughts and the *yamamba's* becomes blurred to the point that we cannot distinguish whose thoughts are whose. When the narrator recounts that the *yamamba* devours him in the end, the *yamamba* fully takes him inside herself in the narratological sense. The two characters join together and I argue that the man himself transforms him into a sort of *yamamba*.

In a reversal of roles, the man himself performs rounds of the mountains, or *yama-meguri.* The narrator abruptly concludes the encounter between the "archetypal" *yamamba* and the man in the style of *Tales of Times Now Past*: "[T]he man runs away. The *yamamba* comes chasing after him forever and the man just keeps running for his life. This is the *yamamba* tale that has been told since long ago" (Ohba 11). Here, though the man runs away from the *yamamba*, he also runs *with* her. By running away, he essentially gives the *yamamba* something to chase. The *yamamba's* eternal *yama-meguri* is no longer a solitary activity, but one done with – and perhaps even because of – a man. The *yamamba* of the *noh* play discussed in Chapter 1 seems cursed to perform *yama-meguri* alone; however in this passage, the *yamamba* and her male victim are forced by the other to run around the mountains forever. The male hero does not subjugate the *yamamba*; instead, he is subjugated along with the *yamamba* by mythology's endless cycle of running around the mountains. In this way, the male victims who eternally run away from the *yamamba* become *yamamba* themselves and the two characters essentially become one – as seen in the man running by himself at the end of "Smile". After the protagonist kills herself at the end of the story, her spirit returns to the mountains and sees a man running behind her by himself. Even though there is no one behind him, another spirit tells the dead protagonist, "He's being chased by a *yamamba*" (Ohba 31). Through her mind-reading, the protagonist merges with other characters, seen in the following passage in which she imagines looking at her reflection in a spring.

At times the protagonist retreats into fantasies of living alone in the mountains, free to devour men and expose their thoughts (Lippit 190). In a scene evocative of the archetypal

peeping scene in which the hero discovers the *yamamba's* nature, she imagines her husband

meekly spying on her living alone in the mountains. However, the husband is not terrified by his

discovery, but disappointed and concerned that if she leaves, she can no longer "camouflage" his

unreasonable desires for him (Lippit 190).[26] He makes no attempt to run away; on the contrary, he

implies that he wants to fetch her back so that she can continue disguising his desires. Directly

afterwards, the protagonist imagines that her reflection eats a man I presume to be her willing

husband. Looking at her reflection in a spring, she sees a multitude of people, actions and

emotions within her "self".

> [S]he would see that on half her face floated a smile of an affectionate mother, while the other half seethed with demonic rage. Half of her mouth dripped with blood while devouring and ripping the man"s flesh apart. The other half of her lips were caressing the man who curled up his body in the shadow of one of her breasts, sucking it like a baby.[27] (190)

Her "self" is neither man nor woman, human nor monster, wife/mother nor daughter, but all of

those things at once. The *yamamba* embodies her mother, her husband, a monster, a wife, blood,

milk, sex, and manslaughter in an ironically neat description. The *yamamba* and her husband eat

each other in an act that combines eroticism and maternal affection. No longer does the *yamamba*

one-sidedly devour and destroy men. She merges with them. Her multi-formed reflection reflects

what Ostriker calls a denial of the validity of "I" or a singular self-identity (331). Indeed, after the

protagonist kills herself, the narrator describes the *yamamba's* lifeless face as old and young,

smiling and sobbing (Lippit 184). The characters" thoughts, actions, and even identities merge

with the *yamamba's* and defy the rational narrator"s attempts to present a coherent story.

The narrator attempts to rationalize and explain the *yamamba* and the other characters at

various points in the narrative. For example, the narrator rationalizes the *yamamba's* complicated

feelings of hate and resentment towards her mother as "the short, rebellious phase of puberty"

(Lippit 187); her enormous appetite as the result of her "pitiful characteristic of wanting to make

---

[26] The Japanese original uses the verb phrase, ごまかしてくれる (Ohba 23). This literally translates to "to deceive/lie for me".
[27] Translation by Noriko Mizuta Lippit. Slight revisions of my own.

others feel good" (189); and the husband's refusal of food offered by others as proof that "his nerves were tenacious enough not to register shame at ignoring somebody else's feelings" (189). Christiansen interprets the narrator's rationalizations as proof of the protagonist's exemplification of the common woman, but does not stop to question the narrator's intent behind such passages. I interpret them as the narrator's desperate attempts to maintain order and logic within the narrative. In addition to rationalizing the characters' complexities, the narrator attempts to clearly distinguish them from each other. As I mentioned earlier, typical Japanese sentences omit the subject. However, the narrator of "Smile" almost overemphasizes the subject of nearly every sentence, forcing generic labels onto each of the characters and thereby distinguishing their respective identities from each other. For example, as the narrator shifts to the story proper, s/he stresses to distinguish the protagonist from the mountain-dwelling *yamamba* as an honest-to-god *yamamba* and the *yamamba* of all *yamamba* (Ohba 12, 13). In the following mind-reading passage, I discuss how the protagonist's attempts to blur the boundaries between characters are countered by the narrator's attempts to textually ostracize her.

Since birth, the protagonist grows up verbalizing her mother's thoughts, even those directed at herself. Throughout childhood, the *yamamba* says what her mother does not or cannot say herself. The mother's reactions range from amusement to concern to irritation to sadness, though never fear or even uneasiness. In the following passage, the young *yamamba* essentially becomes her mother and punishes herself. However, the *yamamba* directs the scolding thought both towards herself and back towards her mother. Who is punishing whom? Who is speaking here?

> [The *yamamba*] would be so engrossed in play that she often had accidents. She would say to her mother who came running, "*Oh you naughty girl. You've got to tell Mommy on time before it's too late. Oh dear. And today we don't have any change left for you—*"
> As her mother burst out laughing, she would go on, saying, "*Really I'm no match for this child! — What can I say!*" (Lippit 184)[28]

---

[28] Italics are my own additions. They are meant to indicate the *katakana* script in the Japanese original, which I discuss shortly.

Much like the fantasy reflection passage, the *yamamba* merges with and becomes her mother. She is both the wrong-doer and the punisher; both performs the wrong and admonishes it; and both verbalizes her mother''s thought and, by saying it, possibly "thinks" it herself. The protagonist''s mind-reading erases such boundaries between her/self and her m/other. She says what her mother thinks as if it were her own thought. There is something amusing about hearing the *yamamba* strictly scolding herself and yet something ironic when the *yamamba* verbalizes her mother''s thoughts of getting tired of her daughter or people coming to dislike her daughter. However, though the *yamamba*''s thoughts seem indistinguishable from her mother''s in the English translation, the Japanese original briefly sets the *yamamba's* dialogue (like the one quoted above) in a totally different alphabet from the entire text and thereby distinguishes the two characters'' thoughts quite visibly.

Japanese writing consists of three alphabets: 1) a phonetic alphabet called *hiragana* used for forming native Japanese words and compounds, 2) Chinese characters called *kanji*, and 3) another phonetic alphabet called *katakana* used for forming foreign words. Standard Japanese fiction consists mainly of *hiragana* and *kanji* while *katakana* is used only for foreign words or as italics or onomatopoeia.[29] The writing of "Smile" certainly adheres to this norm – except for the early dialogue of the protagonist, which is the only section of the story set entirely in *katakana* script. Further, her speech is written in a childish lisp. Here, the narrator attempts to turn the text against the young *yamamba*, disfiguring her words into something visibly and audibly foreign. After entering school, however, the *yamamba's* speech conforms to the standard *hiragana* script mixed with *kanji*. At this point, she decides to hide her psychic ability. The protagonist tells her mother that she will stop reading people''s thoughts aloud and instead make them happy (Ohba 15). The *yamamba* continues to read people''s thoughts her entire life, but she does so in order to

---

[29] Foreign loan words are *always* written in *katakana* characters, including foreigners'' names. For example, the English loan word "Women''s Liberation" was shortened to *uuman ribu* (ウーマンリブ) or simply *ribu* (リブ), both written in *katakana*. On the other hand, the Japanese term for "women''s liberation" is written in Chinese characters as *josei kaihō* (女性解放).

determine their desires and fulfill them. She thus moves from verbalizing other people's thoughts to physicalizing them.

The use of *katakana* script in a *yamamba* tale is boldly revisionist in itself, but what is the narrator's intent behind the fluctuations in alphabets? There are a few possible answers. The first is one I have mentioned before; that the narrator forcefully prevents the *yamamba's* speech from blending with other characters' and thus maintains control over the narrative. But if that were the case, wouldn't the narrator continue to use *katakana* script for all of the protagonist's dialogue throughout the story? Another possible answer, then, is that it marks the shift in the way the protagonist uses her psychic powers from verbalizing others' thoughts to physicalizing them. But to briefly use *katakana* in such a way seems random and unnecessary. This brings me to yet another possible answer, which is that the seemingly random shifts in alphabet parody the unique linguistic dilemma that Japanese women writers and speakers face. I do not intend to reduce the protagonist to a metaphor for women, but at least a small part of the protagonist feels as if other people speak a foreign language (Lippit 189). Japanese colloquial language is very gendered: women and men use different pronouns to refer to themselves and to others, and even use different words at the end of sentences, questions, and contemplations. Standard Japanese writing and grammar, however, more closely resembles male colloquial speech and as a result male speech comes off as authoritative and nationalistic while female speech comes off as less credible and more conversational. In contrast to the standard Tokyo dialect of the narrator, the two *yamamba's* in "Smile" take on various voices, or dialects, when they verbalize others' thoughts – a young man's boastful way of speaking, a child's lisped speech, her mother's feminine speech, her daughter's speech, *katakana* script, and standard *hiragana* and *kanji* script. As a result, the *yamamba* blurs the gendered boundaries of language and writing by speaking like a man, a woman, and a child throughout points in the narrative.

Towards the end of the story, the protagonist becomes paralyzed after looking at her reflection in the mirror, which directly contrasts the multiplicity of her imaginary reflection in the

mountain spring. The metaphor of the mirror has been significant in *yamamba* tales in that she reflects the desires of others. However, at the sight of her own reflection, the protagonist loses control over her body and lies motionless in the hospital for days while hovering on the brink of death. I have been arguing that the *yamamba's* blurring of boundaries between herself and other characters contests the narrator's attempts to clearly distinguish the characters from each other. However, at this point, the textual battle between the narrator and the *yamamba* fades out and the end of the story leaves the battle unresolved. At the end, the *yamamba* uses her psychic powers not to merge with other characters, but to sever ties with them. After the *yamamba* reads her daughter, son, and husband's minds and realizes that they feel burdened by her, she decides to kill herself. The narrator momentarily shifts his/her focus towards the daughter while practically ignoring the protagonist. The narrative describes in great detail the daughter's anxieties about her own daughter whom she has left at home. Similar to the shift from the "archetypal" *yamamba* in the beginning to the protagonist *yamamba*, the role of "protagonist" shifts toward the *yamamba's* daughter and she even delivers the last line of the narrative. But the narrator erratically shifts back to the *yamamba's* last moments before death and first moments of re-birth before returning to the daughter.

The shifts in focus that occur at the beginning and end of "Smile" demonstrate a shift from the narrator's previous attempts to distinguish the characters from each other. In the beginning, the narrator's shifts focus from the "archetypal" *yamamba* by clearly distinguishing the protagonist as an honest-to-god *yamamba* (Ohba 12). In the ending, however, the narrator erratic shifts focus without explaining. To add to the confusion, the narrator unexpectedly states that the protagonist's mother was also an honest-to-god *yamamba* (Lippit 196). Here, instead of attempting to clearly differentiate the characters from each other, the narrator surprisingly adds to the ambiguity. At the end of the story, the narrator intentionally blurs the identities and roles of the *yamamba* and the "protagonist".

The narrator further fuels the story's ambiguity by using two different Japanese words for the same word "smile": *warai* (笑い) written in *kanji* and *hiragana* and *bishō* (微笑) written only in *kanji*. The latter is used in the story's title and in the re-birth of the *yamamba's* spirit when she smiles at her bittersweet memories of living in the village. The former is used to describe the smile that the physical corpse of the *yamamba* wears, which her relieved daughter inanely calls "a beautiful death mask" (Lippit 196). Seeing this smile, the daughter assumes that her mother was truly happy.

We can further analyze the two smiles by discussing the characters used to form them. The first character of *bishō* means "minuteness" while the second means "smile" or "laugh". Literally "minute smile", *bishō* is a faint smile and thus easily overlooked; it is often used to describe a mysterious or ambiguous smile. The "death mask" smile, *warai*, only uses the "laugh" character and thus carries a louder, more palpable connotation. The two smiles – the spiritual "rebirth" smile and the physical "death mask" smile – parallels the *yamamba's* two reflections. One is imaginary and ambiguous while the other is physical and harsh. By using *bishō* in the title and in the re-birth scene, Ohba implies that the ultimate smile of a *yamamba* is silent, eternal, and impossible to grasp.

In this story, Ohba blurs the boundaries between characters and narrators of *yamamba* mythology. She revises the *yamamba* as a mind-reader who is clearly aware of the narrative structure in which she is "trapped". She reads the minds of the characters who either fear her or are blissfully unaware, as well as the narrator who textually manipulates her. However, by the end of the narrative, the *yamamba* succeeds in merging with the other characters, including the narrator, and essentially turns them into *yamamba.* The hero who runs away from her performs *yama-meguri* and the narrator who has directed the reader's gaze upon the *yamamba* unexpectedly faces the *yamamba's* own mind-reading gaze and the narration itself transforms into an act of reading the characters' minds. This is not to say that Ohba's protagonist merely reverses the roles between herself and others. As seen in her reflection, her acts of devouring and mind-

reading are not meant to kill or destroy the "other", but to merge with them. By the end of the narrative, the narrator and characters become blurred while also blurring themselves.

CONCLUSION

DANCING WITH YAMAMBA

"You know, I'm least enlightened when it comes to my own work. I discover something new through readers' comments. They often surprise me."
OHBA MINAKO (1994)[30]

"We've talked about being natural. I've stuck by that code. If someone categorizes that way of life as feminist, it's fine with me. Other feminists might find it disconcerting. I recognize different perspectives and different ways of reading a literary text. It's totally up to the reader."
OHBA MINAKO[31]

[M]ountain after mountain, making mountain rounds,
her destination never to be known.
YAMAMBA

The hero of folktales encounters the *yamamba* only after getting lost in the mountains. She appears precisely at the moment he is most confused and uncertain. Navigating the topos of *yamamba* mythology leaves readers feeling just as perplexed. There are no clear instructions to searching for the *yamamba's* hut. An analysis of the illusive "true nature" of the *yamamba* is neither fruitful nor possible. We might as well argue that she is actually an old field potato. The only way to encounter the *yamamba* is to become lost, as I attempted to do in this thesis.

Of the three tales I discuss in Chapter I, the medieval *noh* play *Yamamba* sets the stage for further rewritings of that illusive figure that we can only imitate. However, imitation and reality move to the same beat; Yamamba dances alongside Hyakuma until we are left unsure of who is imitating whom. Similar to the play, Ohba's "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" presents multiple *yamamba*. The protagonist is a *yamamba*, but the narrator switches the role of the protagonist several times – from "archetypal" yamamba to protagonist yamamba or from protagonist to daughter – and thereby confers the role of *yamamba* to several people. Furthermore, the mind-reading protagonist transforms the male hero and the narrator into *yamamba* themselves. Thus, the roles, identities, and actions of the various characters are fluid and easily transgressed.

---

[30] Taken from Michiko Niikuni Wilson's interview with Ohba in 1994 for Wilson's book *Gender is Fair Game: (Re)Thinking the (Fe)Male in the Works of Ōba Minako.* Keep in mind, however, that this is Wilson's English translation. 167.
[31] Ibid., 187.

The *yamamba* "narrates" the narrator by repeating parts of the narrative; the *yamamba* peeps on herself when gazing at her reflection and is peeped on by her fretful husband in her fantasies of living in the mountains; she eats her husband while being eaten by him in her imaginary reflection; the male hero is chased by the *yamamba* while also running around the mountains himself; and the narrator erratically changes who the protagonist is. Ohba not only revises the *yamamba* herself, but the entire structure in which she interacts with other characters. She softens the boundaries surrounding the *yamamba* and separating her from the "hero" or "narrator" in the same way her poem quoted in the beginning of Chapter II questions the boundaries of "male" and "female". Ultimately, notions of gender are just words used to describe something as foreign and inexplicable as the *yamamba*. Ohba indeed questions the "sanctuaries of existing language": the *yamamba* speaks in different alphabets and voices, and even the narrator who represents the timeless tale speaks in modern Japanese (Ostriker 315). As the progressively perplexing narrator demonstrates, a single, "real" yamamba is something we can never quite grasp but always imitate. But as the *noh* play promises, she will always come down from the mountain to dance alongside our imitations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Japanese-language sources

Mizuta Noriko and Sachie Kitada, ed. 山姥たちの物語: 女性の原型と語りなおし[*Tales of the*

    Mountain Witches: A Re-Evaluation of the Female Archetype]. Tokyo: Gakugei Shorin

    Co., Ltd., 2002. Print.

Mizuta Noriko and Ohba Minako. 対談<山姥>のいる風景 [*Discussion: The Landscape of the*

    Yamamba]. Tokyo: Tabata Publishing Company, 1995. Print.

Ohba Minako. 「山姥の微笑」 ["The Smile of a Mountain Witch"]. 淡交 (*Tankō*). Tokyo:

    Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1979. 9-33. Print.

English-language sources

Alcoff, Linda. "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist

    Theory." *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory.* Ed. Nicholas

    Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry Ortner. 96-122. Print.

Ariga, Chieko M. "Text Versus Commentary: Struggles over the Cultural Meaning of „Woman."‴"

    The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Women's Writing. Ed. Paul G. Schalow and

    Janet A. Walker. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996. 352-381. Print.

Brazell, Karen, ed. "Yamamba." *Traditional Japanese Theater.* Trans. Monica Bethe and Karen

    Brazell. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. 207-225. Print.

Brown, Janice. "Oba Minako – Telling the Untellable." *Japan Quarterly* 45.3 (1998): 50-

    59. *ProQuest Research Library*. Web. 24 Feb. 2013.

Christiansen, Amy G. "Reclaiming an Archetypal Image: The Mountain Crone Figure in

    Contemporary Japanese Women‴s Writing." Diss. University of California, Berkeley,

    1995. Print.

Copeland, Rebecca L., ed. *Woman Critiqued: Translated Essays on Japanese Women's Writing*
    Honolulu: University of Hawai¿i Press, 2006.

Coward, Rosalind. "Are Women‟s Novels Feminist Novels?" *The New Feminist Criticism.* Ed.
    Elaine Showalter. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. 225-239. Print.

Haase, Donald. "Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship." *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches.*
    Ed. Donald Haase. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004. 1-36. Print.

Kawai, Hayao. "The Woman Who Eats Nothing." *The Japanese Psyche: Major Motifs in the*
    Fairy Tales of Japan. Trans. Kawai Hayao and Sachiko Reece.. Dallas: Spring
    Publications Inc., 1988. 27-45. Print.

Kolodny, Annette. "Map for Rereading: Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts." *The*
    New Feminist Criticism. Ed. Elaine Showalter. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. 46-62.
    Print.

Li, Christine Osterfeld. *Ambiguous Bodies: Reading the Grotesque in Japanese* Setsuwa *Tales.*
    Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. Print.

Mackie, Vera. *Feminism in Modern Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print.

Mezei, Kathy. "Who is Speaking Here? Free Indirect Discourse, Gender, and Authority in *Emma,*
    Howard's End, and *Mrs. Dalloway.*" *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology and*
    British Women Writers. Ed. Kathy Mezei. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
    Press, 1996. Print.

Ohba Minako. "The Smile of a Mountain Witch". *Japanese Women Writers*. Trans. and ed.
    Noriko Mizuta Lippit and Kyoko Iriye Selden. New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1982. 182-
    196. Print.

Ostriker, Alicia. "The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking." *The*
    New Feminist Criticism. Ed. Elaine Showalter. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. 314-
    338. Print.

Pollock, Griselda. "Beyond Oedipus: Feminist Thought, Psychoanalysis, and Mythical

    Figurations of the Feminine." *Laughing With Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist*

    Thought. Ed. Vanda Zajko and Miriam Leonard. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

    67-117. Print.

Rich, Adrienne. "Diving into the Wreck." *Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971-1972.* New York:

    W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973. 22-24. Print.

Saegusa, Kazuko. "The Narcissism of Female Representation and the Professional Writer." Trans.

    Nina Blake. *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 4 (1991): 18-21. Print.

Shigematsu, Setsu. *Scream from the Shadows: The Women's Liberation Movement in Japan.*

    Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. Print.

Turner, Terrence. "Animal Symbolism, Totemism, and the Structure of Myth." *Anima Myths and*

    Metaphors in South America. Ed. Gary Urton. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press,

    1985. 49-106. Print.

Ury, Marian. *Tales of Times Now Past: Sixty-Two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection.*

    Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.

Viswanathan, Meera. "In Pursuit of the Yamamba: The Question of Female Resistance." *The*

    Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Women's Writing. Ed. Paul G. Schalow and Janet

    A. Walker. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996. 239-61. Print.

Wilson, Michiko Niikuni. *Gender is Fair Game: (Re)Thinking the (Fe)Male in the Works of Ōba*

    Minako. New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1999. Print.

Yamaori Tetsuo . "The Image of Rōjo or Elderly Women in Japanese Legend." *Japan Review* 9

    (1997): 29-40. *JSTOR*. Web. 17 Jan. 2013.