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The Dream of the *Yamanba*—An Overview

Mizuta Noriko

Translated by Luciana Sanga

Born in 1937, Mizuta Noriko is a second-wave feminist, as illustrated by her vast scholarship on women writers from Japan and the United States. In contrast to second-wave feminism, which has drawn criticism for embracing a monolithic, universal, and "unified category of women,"[1] more recent feminist scholars have incorporated queer theory and emphasize "diversity," "ambiguity," and "hybridity."[2] In this 2002 essay, however, Mizuta underscores the hybridity that already exists in second-wave feminism. Specifically, she destabilizes the binary opposition of angel and whore used to evaluate women by introducing a third term, the yamanba*—the old crone living in the mountains, far away from the norms of village life. Mizuta repeatedly describes the* yamanba *as "ambiguous" and "polysemous." She is not the first to excavate this folk figure and notice its feminist potential. As Mizuta herself demonstrates, Japanese women writers active during the peak of the women's liberation movement had already fruitfully employed the figure of the* yamanba *in their works and the* yamanba *polysemy permeates even their texts that do not explicitly allude to* yamanba *legends.*

Mizuta characterizes the yamanba *as "an anarchic existence who lives 'the female sex' as it is, in a way that is not marked by gender culture." Although Mizuta does not reference queer theory, the term "anarchic" suggests that the* yamanba *is queer, where queer refers to "processes or forces that exceed the systems of governance or power being diagnosed and critiqued."[3] The* yamanba *therefore underscores the queer potential of second-wave feminist writers and their texts.*

In fact, I would suggest that the yamanba *can also function as a metaphor for the second-wave feminist. The association between the* yamanba *and second-wave feminism does not automatically relegate all feminists to the old and ugly. Rather, the term* yamanba *serves to acknowledge these negative stereotypes while also illustrating the disruptive power that resides in female senectitude. Mizuta thus offers a second-wave*

counterpart to the "girl" at the center of third-wave feminist culture. Mizuta's essay becomes an invitation to reconsider the feminist essence of Japanese women's literature.

(Luciana Sanga)

Yamanba. An old crone running through the mountains, her thick dry hair—gray, or yellowish straw colored—wildly fluttering in the wind. She is old, but strong, and the movements of her large body are swift. Wrapped in ragged cloth tied with hemp cord and barefoot, her eyes are sharp, her wrinkles deep, her mouth large, her demeanor frightening.

They say the *yamanba* preys on humans. They say she lures men deep into the mountains, catches them and devours them. They also say that she is after young women. The *yamanba* is a glutton, who conceals a large mouth on the top of her head. She even eats livestock and babies. To feed herself, at times the *yamanba* descends into a village to work and can also be helpful to people. She does not always eat humans. Fecund and boasting a large bosom, she is skilled at spinning thread. Legend has it that burning her dead body will enrich the land and endow a village with unusual fertility and abundant harvests. And it is also said that she can change her appearance at will into that of a young woman or an animal. Some stories tell of hard-working, beautiful wives who were in fact *yamanba*, and therefore the *yamanba* is also reminiscent of female protagonists in folktales about mixed marriages between a man and a nonhuman woman.

The *yamanba* possesses supernatural powers and, if mistreated will take revenge by bringing about natural disasters. She is a frightening being, who wields great power that cannot be contained when she suddenly becomes enraged. Rarely does she go down into the village, and villagers fear her far too much to draw close to her. Well aware of the saying "Let sleeping dogs lie," they do their best to avoid her. However, if for some reason they do not tolerate her, the *yamanba* may meet a cruel end.

Described in this manner, the *yamanba* appears mysterious and strange, yet unlike witches, demonesses, and *yōkai*, she is not totally malign. Sometimes she can be innocent and generous, or funny and endearing. She can be shabby and poor, but she always comes across as resilient. To feed herself, the *yamanba* travels from mountain to mountain; an obstinate woman determined to survive, sometimes she even descends into a village.

The *yamanba* is not singlemindedly concerned with eating or living as a fecund maternal figure; she is also playful, and it is said that she sometimes asks travelers to sing for her. She is funny. She is an old hag with a strange appearance, who occupies the ambiguous position between fertile mother and insatiable demoness, a blessing and a disaster, life and death. The only common element between these stories is that the *yamanba* lives in the mountains.

The image of the *yamanba* varies across legends and folktales, and from one location to another. She is a character whose representation is deeply related to

old myths. Some have noticed similarities with Izanami no mikoto and Kotohana sakuyahime from *An Account of Ancient Matters* (Kojiki, eighth century) and *The Chronicles of Japan* (Nihon shoki, eighth century).[4] In recent years, folklorists have researched the societal origins of this figure, the types of stories about her, their narratological features, and geographical distribution. "An old hag who lives in the mountains," the *yamanba* took hold in the Japanese imagination as a feared but popular story character, who bears similarities to ghosts, demons, mountain gods, earth goddesses, mountain people, nomads, prostitutes, and bandits. Because of her ambiguity and the multiplicity of her forms and meanings, she has become an archetype for numerous characters in literary texts.

For instance, a story in *Tales of Times Now Past* (Konjaku monogatari, twelfth century) features a *yamanba* who assists a pregnant woman lost in the mountains in the delivery of her baby. The woman and her baby manage to escape just as the *yamanba* is considering eating them. The narrator of *The Sarashina Diary* (Sarashina nikki, eleventh century) encounters in the Ashigara Mountains a woman with a beautiful voice that reminds her of a *yamanba*. This woman probably used to be a prostitute. There is also the old woman in the Noh play *The Mountain Crone* (Yamanba). She wanders across the mountains of human passion and pain resigned to her human destiny, which she treats as a sort of game. And there is the beautiful woman who lives in the mountains in Izumi Kyōka's "The Holy Man of Mount Kōya" (Kōya hijiri, 1900). She tricks men and can change herself into an animal.

But more than just a figure of the past who only lives in folk tales and didactic tales,[5] the *yamanba* is also a new figure, retold and rewritten by storytellers and writers. The *yamanba* has been updated through the imaginative power of a new age and literature. By being inscribed and rewritten in texts, she has continued to live in modern stories and may be considered an archetype that has been revived to convey the philosophy of a new lifestyle for women.

The Woman Living in the Mountains

The one common feature of the diverse representations of the *yamanba* is that she is a woman who lives in the mountains, or more precisely, a woman who does not live or cannot live in the village.[6] When women are typologized in a text, they are commonly classified on the basis of their location or territory. Of course, it is not uncommon for races or ethnic groups to be categorized according to physical location, such as ghettoes or other areas in which they reside, but this is particularly conspicuous when it comes to women and gender classification, which cut across distinctions of race or ethnicity.

Physical characteristics such as blond hair and blue eyes, or dark hair and dark eyes have also been used to symbolize essential differences among women. But rather than merely signifying ethnic differences or religious differences between Christians and pagans, this classification distinguishes between women who belong to one's

community and those who do not, and symbolizes the exclusion of female outsiders from the community and the family. The female outsider is dangerous, disreputable, and her power cannot be tamed. She cannot be evaluated according to social standards of good or bad, she transcends them.

In the case of the Japanese *yamanba,* it is even more apparent that she is classified according to territorial demarcation. The *yamanba* is not a village woman.[7] She is someone who cannot be contained within the village. The village woman settles down, the *yamanba* drifts. She lives in the mountains, but not in one location. She moves freely from place to place, appears out of nowhere, and disappears into thin air. That is because mountains are connected, they form an area that is hard to enclose and demarcate, and it is difficult to tame the people and animals who live there. One could say that the village is an area that is demarcated so as to separate it from the dangerous mountainside and turn it into a safe place. Into this safe space the text places the village woman, who symbolizes ideal femininity. In contrast, the *yamanba* represents the woman who deviates from the model of the village woman.

The village woman—a grandmother, a mother, or a daughter—is a family woman. If she is not married, she is the sister of the family head (and the aunt of his children), so she belongs to the family. Such women bear responsibility for the economic system called "the family," and at the same time depend on it. Moreover, at the periphery of this village-society is the realm of the woman who is not part of the family, but who still depends on the village-society for her livelihood. This realm is similar to the red-light districts of the past, a place that demarcates and differentiates prostitutes from village women. This realm can be called the meadow,[8] in contrast to the village. The village people go to and from the meadow. The meadow is a necessary place for the village, a periphery area that supports the smooth governing of village life. The meadow woman may enter the village on condition that she transforms into a village woman.[9] To the villagers, the meadow woman is a different species, but her difference can be hidden, washed out or disciplined. However, if her meadow characteristics remain unchanged, her cover will be blown, her essence made visible, and she will have to leave the village, like in the stories about mixed marriages.

The *yamanba* is a woman who lives even further from the village than the meadow, in a realm that has no association with it. This is enough to make the mountain a topos that reflects the essence of the woman who lives there, differentiating her from the village woman. The *yamanba* cannot live in the village. Fiercely refusing to be entrapped in fixed roles, rather than settle down in the village, she wants to freely decide where to live. Not only is she a woman who cannot be tamed by village men, but in her refusal to settle down, she is a woman who moves around, drifts, and loves freedom. Because she cannot hide her essence or put on a mask, she cannot change or be disciplined.

The mountain is more than just a different cultural realm from that of the village, it is also an area that cannot be controlled and lies beyond the jurisdiction of the village.

The woman who lives there is a sexual being doubly differentiated from the village man. Compared to the village woman, she is someone who cannot be enclosed or tamed. And even more than the marginalized woman of the meadows, she exists beyond the understanding and control of men, a woman of a different species who lives in an untouchable realm.

Village Women and the *Yamanba*

Village women have been classified by village men into good and bad, desirable and undesirable, heroines and supporting characters. This classification was also applied to stereotype women into ideal family women or women excluded from the family structure. The good woman is someone who will become a good wife and a good mother, who embodies female sexuality in the service of childbirth and motherhood. The power of women to bear and raise children was absolutely necessary for the continuity of the village-society, so this power has been adulated, respected, protected, and controlled. With the consolidation of a male-dominated society founded on the patriarchal family system, the woman who obeyed her husband and father, who was chaste, modest, unassertive, and tolerant came to be idealized and praised, becoming the prescriptive standard for the behavior of the village woman.

The bad woman, who deviated from this standard, was a woman who refused to conform and was judged and punished by the law of the village. She became unmarriageable, divorced, disliked, and ostracized. With the arrival of the modern era, the bad woman came to be defined variously as a woman with a strong self,[10] who is expressive of her desires, manipulates men with her sexual appeal, does not want to bear children, and exhibits a strong sense of independence. All these are typologies of women who do not conform to the gender roles required by a patriarchal society that functions based on family and the household as norms. But even if bad women, given that they symbolize the reverse side of the village norm, might be candidates for becoming *yamanba*, they are not *yamanba*.

Unlike the bad woman, the *yamanba* does not fit into the village scheme for classifying women. She renders it meaningless. The ambiguous, polysemous essence of the *yamanba* nullifies the standards of the village. Although she possesses all the essential feminine powers that the village men value, such as the power to bear and raise children, maternal instinct, and a fertile body, her powers are excessive and deviate from the gender norms of the village. She lacks the "feminine virtues" of the village women, such as chastity, obedience, charity, and tolerance or modesty. Instead, she is free-willed, strong and rough in temperament, clearly expresses her desires, and her feelings and demands are violent. When enraged, she attacks the people of the village, punishing them, and is destructive. Sometimes she creates mischief for no reason, but at other times, particularly in times of crisis, she helps and saves people using her god-like supernatural powers. She chooses not to live in the village, but neither does she feel

hostility toward it, and when she feels like it, at times she even comes down to the village from the mountain. But she does not desire to become part of the village, and she does not depend on the village for survival. Just as it is impossible to interpret or define the *yamanba* using village standards, it is impossible to control or discipline her, and she cannot be subdued by the village men.

The *yamanba* may have been among the mountain people who went searching for a place to live when the establishment of an agricultural society led to their gradually being pushed out and losing their territory to an expanding village community. Or, she might have been a woman exiled from village society. No matter her origins, the keyword for the *yamanba* is *yama*—mountain. As mentioned earlier, the mountain topos represents the very core identity of the *yamanba*, as the *yamanba* archetype is established based on the principle of classifying women according to territorial demarcation.

What about the term *uba*, the other character in *yamanba* (which is also read as *yamauba*)? The character *uba* means old woman, but its phonetic form is used to refer to the wet nurse who breastfeeds the newborn baby instead of her mother. Compared to the village woman, the *yamanba* from folktales is a hideous woman, the word "ugly" cannot even begin to describe her. She is a drifter, who goes beyond the limits of the areas to which village people travel. She possesses a strong sense of self and a desire that surpasses the ethical norms of family life, and her extraordinary power deviates from the gender definition of "woman." Although she cannot be understood or categorized according to the standards of the village woman, she is not necessarily an old woman. There are some young *yamanba*, too.

Yamanba as a Metaphor for Women Outside the Culture of Gender Difference

The sort of old woman that one imagines when thinking of a *yamanba* is different from the old woman associated with witchcraft in the West. In a gender system that essentializes a woman's reproductive role and her place within the family, the old woman is someone who has already exhausted her function, so she plays only a supporting role in the gender drama of the village. Having tasted the bitterness of life, she is knowledgeable and experienced, but has lost her youth and is now marginalized. The assumption, therefore, is that she must be consumed by envy, which stirs her wicked desires and devices. It is this assumption that has led to the association of old women with witchcraft. Thus, the witch symbolizes and represents the negative aspects of aging for the village woman.

The old village woman represents the useless and superfluous, she is a nuisance, a burden to be pushed aside. In contrast, the *yamanba* escapes moral judgment that ascribes wickedness to old age. According to some theories, the *yamanba* is an old woman who has been abandoned in the mountains. In folklore, even if the *yamanba* was abandoned and could no longer live in the village, she still manages to survive in the mountains. She does not just quietly die there, she possesses the strength and wisdom to make the

mountain her home and endure. The *yamanba* has been represented and incarnated in folk tales because of this toughness and vitality, which cannot be ignored. The *yamanba* is not someone who envies youth. As she grows older, she flourishes. She is not a burden that has been pushed aside, but a free being who does not care that she has been excluded from the village. She possesses the will and ability to pursue her own self, desires, and lifestyle, which fall outside the gender system of the village, and is therefore feared, or, at times quite the opposite, she becomes a force on which to depend.

The *yamanba*'s fertile body and her power to give birth reaffirm that she is a woman. Even though she is represented as someone who catches and devours men and refuses their protection and support, even if she can fight and overpower men, in narratives she is still described as a woman. She is, however, different from witches or demonesses who take revenge for their rancor or unhappiness as women, who attempt to set the score right with the village, and represent the suppressed self of the village women. Witches and demonesses are old women who emerge from the depths of the gender culture of the village. In contrast, the *yamanba* is a female figure who exists outside of that culture. One of her characteristics is that she is free from the gender norms that bind the village women's understanding of themselves.

The *yamanba* symbolizes the vitality of an old woman who has survived abandonment in the mountains, but she also represents the vitality of the mountain people. According to the legends about Kintarō that can be found all over Japan, a man banished from his village encounters a mountain woman, who bears him a son unmatched in strength by any other villager. Here, this mountain woman symbolizes a primitive feminine vitality with the power to raise a child that the village woman, rendered weak and docile by the village, does not possess. Village women who have lost this primitive power are women who cannot live in the mountains. The *yamanba*'s abode is not simply a place outside the village, it is also a place of primitive vitality lost to the village, an earthly paradise.

The textualization of the *yamanba* might be the product and representation of the fear, interest, fascination, and awe with what lies outside the gender culture of the village. These feelings also stem from the depths of the gender culture of the village. The culture of the gender system includes in its territory women who are part of the family and everything surrounding them, classifying and representing typologies of them in texts. Sexual beings who are excluded are grouped together without being classified into smaller categories and relegated to the outside realm of the mountain. In this realm, to which the logic and imagination of gender culture does not extend, the *yamanba*-like woman has taken shape as someone who lies outside the desires and rancor pent up within gender culture, outside the target of human emotions. That is why the *yamanba* always appears represented as someone who enjoys humor and play. With her strange appearance and combination of the comical and frightening, the grotesque and the bizarre, she is a different species altogether, a supernatural figure who transcends good and evil.

The *yamanba* is the crystallization of a sexual being who exists outside the imagination and judgment of the village system and its culture, and is a metaphor for a woman outside the system of gender difference. The mountain is a topos to which the culture of gender difference does not apply.

The Women of the Meadow

If the *yamanba* is a figure for women outside the village system and outside the culture of sexual difference, then we must consider the depiction of such women in different forms in various other cultures, too. Such is the case of the women in the Ainu god songs, the Okinawa shrine maidens, the aboriginal women of Africa, and the Creole or mulatto women of the Caribbean Islands, who could not be understood or controlled by the culture of the colonizer. They were marginal figures with the potential to become outsiders. The texts of gender difference culture have portrayed not only the *yamanba* of Japan, but also potential *yamanba* in other lands. Typically, these potential *yamanba* were demarcated as women living in an area between village and mountain, so this construction of the figure of the woman who lives in the meadow—a middle ground between the village and the mountain—is of interest, as it represents one step in the process of constructing the image of the *yamanba*.

For instance, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan* (Nihon ryōiki*,* early ninth century) contains a tale about a marriage between a man and a fox. In this story, the meadow woman is an incarnation of a fox, yet upon entering the village she becomes a good wife. She possesses feminine charm, and is loved by the man. In contrast, by the time of the *Tales of Times Now Past*, a man wanders into the woods while his wife is away, and is seduced by a fox-woman. As he is about to perish in dissolution, he is saved by a relative who asks an itinerant Buddhist monk to pray for the man. In the first story, the fox can no longer live in the village after the woman's real nature is revealed, but even after her return to the meadow, she occasionally visits the village to sleep with the man, and her children grow up to become rulers of the region. In the second story, when the real nature of the woman is revealed through the power of Buddhist prayer, she is forced to separate from the man, and her children are also banished from the village.

The female fox from *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan* represents the meadow woman who exists outside the village. Her non-human nature explains her remarkable sexuality and fertility, which the village women do not possess. Her sexuality is not deemed good or bad, and there are no moral judgments passed on a fox and a human sleeping together. It is taken as self-evident that because she is a fox, she cannot live in the village, which marks her as a meadow woman. The fox belongs to the meadows surrounding the village, so she cannot become the village man's official wife, but she can offer him sexual pleasure, become his lover, and even bear his children. She is a woman outside the family, the "good prostitute" archetype.

In contrast, the fox woman in *Tales of Times Now Past* is a bad woman who uses the power of her sexuality to lure a man away from the village, away from family. Her dangerous sexuality must be suppressed and eliminated by the village and family system. The meadow where the man wanders while his wife is away clearly represents a dangerous area that villagers should not trespass. The sexual pleasure he encounters there is only an illusion, the consequence of a spell cast by a member of a different species. And as long as he does not separate from the fox, he risks losing his life in the village. This fox represents the "bad prostitute" archetype. She is a femme fatale who makes the man feel alive through sex outside quotidian life, but who also pushes him to self-destruction. Here, we catch a glimpse of the *yamanba* "psychology" that nullifies the values of the village; she is the archetype of the fantasy woman. In either case, the non-human woman is represented through the metaphor of a "beast" that lures men to another world.

The Women of the Periphery

The prostitute is a contender for the role of the outsider, who lives on the periphery of the village and sometimes intrudes upon it. In Japanese literature there are many examples of depictions of such women who live in the special area called the red-light district (pleasure quarters), which complements the gender system of the village. In these literary works, the affair with a prostitute offers an intense sexual love that cannot be experienced with a village woman, and is only possible outside the village system. From Chikamatsu's plays to literature today, many of these works are tragic love stories that end with the deaths of both lovers, or stories about a foolish man who dissipates, consumed by love for a cold-hearted and evil woman of the pleasure quarters. The premise of these works is that romantic love and sexual love are only possible outside the rules of the village and the family system.[11] The woman who lives for love cannot find peace inside the home, and she is not allowed a place within the family.

Indeed, the downfall of women who loved greatly and lived outside the family and marriage system may be described as a procession from the meadow to the mountain.[12] For instance, Ono no Komachi (c. 825–c. 900) had many love affairs and refused to entrust her life to one man. The story of her downfall in her later years has been associated with the legend of the *yamanba*.

More recently, Ōoka Shōhei's *The Shade of Blossoms* (Kaei, 1961) portrays an elite Ginza club hostess, who toys with men looking for amusement outside the home and gains financial support by giving them pleasure. As she grows older, the clubs she works for, as well as the men she depends on, drop in quality. This story is typical of a meadow woman's final stage of life. Hayashi Fumiko's "Late Chrysanthemum" (Bangiku, 1948) presents a similar story from the point of view of the woman, but in this case the aged meadow woman comes close to the image of the *yamanba*. In her youth, she was a geisha who fit the part of a woman who exists outside the family. Strong, energetic, and

sexual, she exploited men for their money but also offered them dreams and pleasure. One recognizes in this geisha the image of an independent woman. As she grows older, she comes to understand that she has lost the power to seduce and deceive men. She is therefore realistic and calculating, a woman who harbors no illusions; she does not, however, appear to be a tragic or repulsive figure. Rather, in her resilience and skill at survival, she is reminiscent of the *yamanba*.

In *Floating Clouds* (Ukigumo, 1951), Hayashi Fumiko portrays the downfall of a woman who is ultimately expelled from society as she attempts to gain independence and spiritual freedom from men through her sexual power. This is in fact a story about a sexual woman who possesses a strong sense of independence in her gradual transformation from village woman to meadow woman and then to *yamanba*.

In Western literature, too, women have been classified into village women, meadow women, and mountain women. The meadow and the mountain represent realms outside civilization, but in discourse and narratives they simultaneously function as symbols of women's bodies and sexuality. For instance, Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) was written as a kind of prequel to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. It centers on the relationship between an Englishman, a young woman born in the colonies, and her nurse (who is said to practice a local form of dark magic). The man marries the young woman for her money and takes her back to England with him. Forcibly separated from the local culture of the colony, the woman goes mad and is locked in the attic. This work clearly illustrates how women beyond the control of their husbands are labeled crazy and locked away, marginalized within their own home. This marginalization is based on the same English discourse and culture of gender difference that brands women from colonies as witches or madwomen because they cannot be understood or controlled.

The woman of the colonies (a meadow woman) can be accepted into the suzerain state (the village), as long as she can be controlled. Otherwise, she is perceived as a barbaric native woman, a heathen who uses black magic, a madwoman to be exiled. The mountain woman is impossible to control because of her ambiguous existence, which cannot be understood in light of the gender norms of the village, i.e., of the suzerain state. The *yamanba*'s ambiguity is due to her diverse lifestyles, the indeterminacy of her gender role. The *yamanba*, or *yamanba*-like women, have a subversive power that runs the risk of disrupting the village system, so it is safer if village people do not interact with such troublesome women. From the perspective of the village, the *yamanba* is only worthy of being inscribed in cultural texts as long as she is a mysterious visitor who seldom appears.[13]

The Female Archetype—The Rewriting of the *Yamanba*

The *yamanba* has been revived in the literature of contemporary women writers, who depict her as a charming and fascinating woman. She has stimulated the thoughts and imagination of contemporary women writers, and has become an archetypal figure of

the new woman, a necessary and important perspective when one considers the way femininity was articulated by modern writers who predated this period. This is because the *yamanba* is deeply and essentially connected to the various problems and concerns that women have faced when they try to open up a new path for themselves and re-evaluate what it means to be a woman across issues such as relationships between men and women, mothers and children, women and the family, sex and reproduction, youth and aging, a woman's true identity and the various masks that she wears, and the mountain and the village. The *yamanba* of folklore is a polysemous presence, but rewritten by contemporary women writers she has become the archetype of a free and sexual woman with a multi-faceted life.

In the process of modernization, women have internalized two desires: to become mothers, and to be financially independent. The desire for an identity based on childbirth and childrearing on the one hand, and independence on the other, the struggle to be women and individuals at the same time, have formed the core of modern women's interiority. These two irreconcilable longings that force women to choose one over the other have been tearing their hearts apart. Although the system of gender difference has been reorganized in modern societies, it did not free women from the fixed gender roles of the premodern patriarchal family, or from the binary gender culture.

The *yamanba* has probably become an archetype for the modern woman's search for self not because she offers a solution to the problem of the antinomy between motherhood and independence or family and work, but because she nullifies the problem itself as she presents a perspective and imaginative power that transcend it. Her freedom from fixed gender roles, her multi-faceted lifestyle, her refusal to settle down suggest to women the possibility of an existence outside the gender system, offering women liberation from gender norms and salvation from the resentment consuming village women who are part of this system. The *yamanba* is free from the deep entanglements of gender culture.

The Female Demon and the *Yamanba*—Baba Akiko's *The Study of Demons*

Baba Akiko's *The Study of Demons* (Oni no kenkyū, 1971) is the first work to clearly treat the *yamanba* as a research-worthy topic and to examine its symbolism, existential meaning, and its relation to women's concerns. As reflected in the title, this is not a study of the *yamanba*, but a study of demons. Baba clearly distinguishes between *yamanba* and demons, and recognizes in the *yamanba* of the Noh play *The Mountain Crone* a way of living and a worldview that surpass those of demons. According to Baba, the presumed author, Zeami, clearly represented and abstracted the philosophy of the *yamanba* in this play. Thus, Baba excavates what is presumably one of the sources of inspiration for contemporary women writers.

According to Baba, the female demon first became a literary figure in the Noh Hannya mask,[14] which captures the essence of the demon itself. Noh theater attempts

to portray both the passions and the salvation process of the female demon and of the *yamanba*, and in that sense their ways of being and philosophies appear closely related to and symbolic of women's lives.

Unlike other demon and ghost masks, the Hannya mask shows a woman transformed into a *shura* or a *yasha* (two types of Buddhist deities). It is a mask that expresses a woman's frightening interiority, sharply contrasting with the elegant and sensual smile of the Ko-omote (young woman's) mask. Nevertheless, Baba considers the Hannya mask and the Ko-omote mask to be two sides of the same coin. According to an old Japanese aesthetic principle, to hide is to show. The smile of the Ko-omote hides deeply repressed feelings of love, envy, and hatred that plague the female demon. Despite her demonic interiority, the Hannya achieves enlightenment and attains Buddhahood. Baba claims that the Ko-omote mask represents the Hannya who has achieved enlightenment and her smile reflects the transcendental perfection that the Hannya has reached after traversing the state of *shura*.[15]

The demon personifies the apocalyptic psychology of medieval times, and embodies the suffering of those who have been trampled over, left behind, and forced to experience the vicissitudes of life. In the Hannya mask, this suffering crystalizes as feminine passion. This feminine passion opens the path to enlightenment by showcasing the destructive desire for revenge and the demonic nature of obsessions. Dispelling these obsessions will lead to transcendental perfection. The demon represents those people who have no other choice but to live through the destruction stemming from the darkness of people's hearts; it stands for the resentment of those banished from the system. The Hannya mask represents the transformation of a woman who has lived such a life.

Baba posits that in Noh, even though the Hannya mask and the Ko-omote mask are treated as polar opposites, they form two sides of the same coin. This means that the Ko-omote mask is beautiful because it also captures the moment before transforming into a Hannya. It is beautiful because lurking in the depths of its elegance is a passion that will not die, a cry in the moment before self-destruction. Its smile can even turn into murderous intent.

But the *yamanba* is different from the Hannya. The *yamanba* is the most outstanding demon, claims Baba, because she has succeeded in overcoming attachment, even more than the Hannya. The Hannya has lingering attachments to people and the world, and she hopes to purify her spirit, escape the vulgar world, and be reborn. But unlike the resentful Hannya, the *yamanba*, whether she is called a demon or something else, does not want to live anywhere else but in the mountains. She does not need to interact with people or with the village. In the *The Mountain Crone*, she has discarded one by one all thoughts that are not necessary for survival; she is an entity who has developed a unique worldview completely distinct from that of the vulgar world.

In *The Mountain Crone*, the *yamanba* roams from one mountain to another, she lives as a female demon that is prone to metamorphosis, whose origins are unknown.

The *yamanba* who faces the mountains is not a fatalist, but detached, she is the image of self-restraint. Even a *yamanba* who has lived as part of nature cannot transcend nature, but stories of the *yamanba*, in a broad sense, nevertheless suggest the possibility of a free existence. According to Baba, *The Mountain Crone* depicts a *yamanba* who toys with the human burden of transience, in which, as the *Heart Sutra* (Hannya shingyō) describes, "form is nothing other than emptiness, emptiness is nothing other than form."[16]

Baba sees the *yamanba* not as withstanding life frozen at the moment of transformation into a Hannya, or as living through delusion as a demon. Rather, according to Baba, having gradually cast off the trappings of the vulgar world over a long period of time, the *yamanba* leads a hardscrabble existence. In this existence—and in the humanity she cannot quite entirely abandon—Baba sees a kind of tragic, hard-won salvation. According to Baba, the philosophy presented in the *The Mountain Crone* is "the philosophy of the most destitute and marginalized people" in all of medieval literature. To Baba this is not women's literature, but the expression of "the intense will of men of strong bodies and indomitable spirits," and it is a requiem for displaced people, an elegy to "the last demons" who do not die but survive in delusion. Baba points to "the transcendental, cynical gaze" of the medieval literati who recognized themselves in the *yamanba*. In the *yamanba*, Baba sees a universality that surpasses gender difference and strips the *yamanba* of gender.

To Baba, both the demon and the *yamanba* exist outside any system. She ascribes the destructive and transcendental philosophy of female passions to the demon,[17] and the masculine will to lonely resistance that leads one to resolutely abandon the world to the *yamanba*. To each figure, she adds a gendered dimension. Baba feels a deep affinity not with the *yamanba* who transcends gender, but with Lady Rokujō from the Noh play *Lady Aoi* (Aoi no ue) and with the feminine degradation and obsession of the Hannya in *Black Mound* (*Kurozuka*), who express the tremendous trauma of womanhood through an "aesthetics of resentment."

Becoming a Witch

The demon as an expression of terrible trauma has been revived as a woman who seeks revenge in a number of works such as Enchi Fumiko's *Onna men* (Masks, 1958). In modern women's literature depicting a woman's self, the demon became one of the archetypes for female characters.

The woman's transformation into a demon in Japanese literature bears many commonalities with a woman's transformation into a witch in Western women's literature. A woman's drama of resentment and desire for revenge, and the purification of these feelings, articulated the transcendental philosophy of destruction and ruin that formed the core of late romanticism, also known as "dark romanticism," and was a major theme in Gothic literature. But just as with the Hannya, becoming a witch means salvation through self-destruction, so even if one seeks catharsis in a literary text or a theater play, salvation

is not possible without a god or Buddha purifying all the passions. Moreover, such stories rely on the demon and the witch to represent women's existence, to symbolize a model of womanhood that is based on feelings of love, hatred, envy, rancor, and the burden of her sex. The world of literature and drama is built on such symbols. This does not exemplify a way of being that the woman has chosen for herself, rather, it paradoxically depends on the norms of gender that society has attached to women.

In contrast, contemporary American poets such as Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Adrienne Rich, or Diane Wakoski resist and attack the concept of woman as symbol by opening up the avenue of self-expression through the persona of a witch-narrator. Just like the Japanese legends about demons, there are also Western legends about witches that have imprinted themselves on the gender culture. The female poet's transformation into a witch is a counterattack that relies on various aspects of such legends, and a means of self-expression through voluntary transformation into the sort of woman marginalized by society because she possesses a self. The witch was revived as a means of self-expression for women who have been confined to fixed gender roles, by turning the structure of culture against itself.

Plath's witch is a phoenix that devours men. In contrast, Wakoski's witch is not vindictive and resembles more a shrine maiden, who resides in a locale where the natural and the supernatural intersect. The witch of Rich uses medicinal herbs to heal the sufferings of the body and of the soul. She is a midwife who helps with childbirth, or a doctor who uses folk remedies. The creation of the witch as a dark feminine persona is an intentional operation that opens up a means of self-expression through rewriting femininity outside the drama of women stereotyped in real life and fiction.

The *yamanba* depicted in modern and contemporary Japanese women's literature bears fundamental commonalities both with Western witches and with Baba's demons, but at the same time, she is a distinct female archetype. In the next section of the essay, I will discuss texts that rework the image of *yamanba* from folk tales and *setsuwa*, turning her into the protagonist of narratives that express contemporary women's interiority and seek new lifestyles for women. These texts are Ōba Minako's "The Smile of the *Yamanba*" (Yamanba no bishō, 1976), *Urashimasō* (1977), and *Without Shape* (Katachi mo naku, 1982);[18] and Tsushima Yūko's *Bindweed Mother* (Mugura no haha, 1974) and "The Silent Traders" (Danmari ichi, 1982).[19] The *yamanba* in each of these works presents a different aspect of the archetype and reemerges as a free woman who is liberated from the feminine norms and symbolization of the village.

Ōba Minako's *Yamanba*

Ōba Minako's stories about contemporary women most vividly revive the image of the *yamanba*. In "The Smile of the *Yamanba*" (1976), Ōba opened up the possibility of expressing the depths of the silent existence of a woman living as a modern wife and mother by superimposing the woman's interiority onto that of a *yamanba*. Ōba thus

presented a perspective that exposed and deconstructed the woman as a product of the gender system.

The protagonist of "The Smile of the *Yamanba*" has been able to read people's minds since childhood, but grows up hiding her ability because it irritates and concerns her mother. As a married woman, the protagonist understands and fulfills the feelings and desires of her husband and children, performing the role of adored wife and beloved mother. Falling ill in her old age, she senses her husband's inability to care for her, as well as her children's unease that nursing her for too long will disrupt their own lifestyles. In order to save them, she decides to take her last breath. Smiling at her family as she is about to die, the woman dreams that the self who lived in the village is just a guise, and she is now going back to being a *yamanba*, returning to the mountains to live freely.

According to the narrator, the protagonist of this story is a real *yamanba*. Most *yamanba* live their lives as beautiful, wise women of the village, but their lives are tragic, and when they grow old, losing their hair and their youthful looks, they return to the mountains. Perhaps the *yamanba* living in the mountains are old and disheveled because of their bitter experiences in the village. The essence of the *yamanba* is to pursue the ones they love until they consume them. So hiding her true self in the village and giving her all to her husband and children or attempting to devour a man in the mountains are essentially the same: a way to corner and consume the other. Neither the man nor the family can escape the *yamanba* who pursues them, they must keep running from her.

"The Smile of the *Yamanba*" has a double structure: it borrows the image of *yamanba* from folktales, using it to tell the story of a wife and mother in a modern nuclear family, and depicts the interiority of a past woman, who has lived her life devoted to serving her husband and children within a patriarchal family structure. There are two selves that structure the woman's interiority in the story: the woman's silenced self and the self that is oppressed, but cannot be eradicated, and continues to long for freedom. The story portrays the woman's actual life in the village as well as her survival strategy of roaming as a *yamanba* across the imaginary topos of the mountain. It is therefore a modern parable in which both the village woman and the *yamanba* are protagonists. From the point of view of the *yamanba*, even if the man appears to have the leading part, he actually depends on the woman and can be controlled by her. This modern *yamanba* story revives the *yamanba* as a female archetype by using it to express the female self and subjectivity, which appear oppressed but are never erased.

The story contains the desire for revenge and feelings of rancor toward men and the family system that confine a woman's self and force upon her the guise of wife and mother, obstructing her dreams even in the context of the modern nuclear family. Hidden deep below this imposed guise, the *yamanba* continues to hold on to her real, *yamanba* self.[20] She possesses the self-awareness and strength of a woman who survives by consuming the man and her children under the pretense of love and nurture.[21] The fake and true image, the guise and true nature, the misanthropic woman who dreams of

a life alone in the mountains and the woman who devotes herself to husband and family coexist in Ōba's *yamanba*. The woman lives in both of these worlds, and her heart drifts between the two. This is the image of the woman who for a very long time has been prohibited self-expression within the family system and who has had to live playing a role forced upon her by society.

At the same time, the image of the woman who has lived in the "family" of the village cannot simply be called a guise. The woman did indeed love the man and her children. But in the smile on her deathbed one can sense the cynical thought that she is not just dying to set her family free, but to also set herself free. In her smile, one can also sense pity toward her unsuspecting family. This smile also contains the expression of the woman's subjectivity. The meaning of her gentle smile can only be explained by the duality of the *yamanba*. It is the smile of the Ko-omote mask after experiencing resentment as a Hannya, which Baba discusses. It is the smile of the *yamanba*, who has to keep hiding the fact that her mouth is split, between her love for the other and an attachment to self that cannot be vanquished.

Even Ōba's works that do not conflate the *yamanba* with modern womanhood portray protagonists whose existential claim is the polysemy of womanhood, thereby appropriating the philosophy of the *yamanba*. After experiencing the Hiroshima bombing, the protagonist of *Urashimasō* (1977) withdraws into a house in the woods to gave birth and raise her children outside the family system of monogamous heterosexual marriage. This story about the aftermath of Hiroshima can be seen as a contemporary *yamanba* story that depicts a woman who separates herself from the vulgar world of modern civilization and lives in the woods.

The protagonist of *Without Shape* (1982) also does not restrain her desires and sexuality within the framework set for her by society; she strives to experience her passions, delusions, life, and death as natural phenomena. She, too, is a woman of a different species whose heart harbors a foreign realm separated from the real world. She is a *yamanba* for whom the village where she lives is just a temporary shelter. She is a *yamanba* who cannot relinquish her human desires, passions, and delusions, even when in the mountains, and who cannot forget the freedom of roaming through the mountains, even when in the village.

The border between true essence and guise, between good and bad is ambiguous. Ōba's *yamanba* roams through the mountains, at times disappearing, only to be reborn somewhere else. She accepts the permanence of sexuality and life, and the persistence of human passions. This conception of a *yamanba*, who has avoided the gender system that defines women and attempts to trap them into fixed roles, and wanders between attachment and enlightenment as a bold presence, free and multi-faceted, may be interpreted as a model of feminine aging that inspires admiration. The *yamanba* is a core presence in Ōba's literature, and this admiration for the *yamanba* who lives in the philosophical realm of Lao Tzu and Zhuangzi forms the basis of Ōba's world. Through female sexuality and

sensibility, Ōba's *yamanba* gives us a glimpse of a human existence that has reached a state of acceptance in which the cycle of life and death transcends that of the individual.

Mothers and Daughters in Tsushima Yūko's Works

The *yamanba* in Tsushima Yūko's works closely relates to motherhood. In *Bindweed Mother* (1974), a daughter runs away from home and falls pregnant by the man she moves in with. As her due date approaches, she decides to return to her mother's house together with the man, and give birth there. The house, still standing among tall modern buildings, has been overgrown with weeds. It is a realm completely different from its surroundings, like a swamp in the middle of a forest. The mother has stubbornly preserved the house as it used to be before her husband deserted her, and continues to perform the role of a mother protecting her home in the father's absence. For the mother, this allows her to assert her subjectivity without resentment toward the husband who left her, and toward her children who caused her pain. The mother has the lead role in this house that is located in a forest-like environment and separated from the ordinary world; both the late husband and the daughter were swallowed up in the fantasy world created by the mother's self. To escape her mother, the daughter left the house as soon as she graduated from high school, but neither life alone, nor life with a man, nor even pregnancy have enabled her escape from her mother; in fact, all these attempts have only pulled her back toward her.

Before allowing the man to meet her mother, the daughter thinks she must first recount to him the bedtime story that her mother used to tell her. It is about a man who wanders into a *yamanba*'s house while she is away, eats her food, and falls asleep; upon her return, he is nearly eaten by her. The man escapes after stabbing her in the eyes with a dried fish, but the *yamanba* continues to pursue him, blood dripping from her eyes, screaming, *Wait! Wait!* The image of the *yamanba* following the man with blood dripping from both her eyes, overlaps in the daughter's mind with the image of her own mother. She fears the *yamanba's* relentless pursuit of the man, but she also feels pity for the mother, who runs with blood dripping from her eyes.

Having fallen pregnant by a man who has randomly moved in with her, the daughter thinks that maybe she herself is a *yamanba* who has trapped the man in order to have a child. To her, any man would do, and there are times when all men remind her of her older brother, who died at the age of nine. While she is still hesitant about returning to her mother's house, the man pays a visit to the mother, who traps him in the house. After that, the daughter and her mother discuss the man as if appraising a catch. The daughter cannot tell whether she was not supposed to have brought a stranger into the house, or whether she has in fact conspired to catch him with her mother. She is not sure whether her mother is mad or happy that she has brought a man and a child to replace her dead brother. It is not even clear to her whether she is giving birth for her mother's sake or for own, in order to break free from her mother. Her mother is a *yamanba*, who swallows up both her and the man.

The mother in this story is a *yamanba* who distances herself from the world and shuts herself up in a house in the depths of the forest so that she can immerse herself in her misfortunes. But the mother, who used to be unhappy as a village woman, is a *yamanba* who exiled herself from the village to the mountains, created her own realm deep in a mountain forest, and asserted herself freely, through the self that lives there. The daughter, a victim of a mother who stubbornly asserts herself, dislikes her mother, but retraces her steps to become identical to her, a second-generation *yamanba*. The daughter will receive help in childbirth from her mother, but afterwards the mother might eat her and her baby, too. Nevertheless, the daughter wants to give birth beside the *yamanba*, who has experienced misfortune as a wife and mother, was betrayed by her man, and then left behind by her child.

The daughter's life is not a blank slate from which her mother's life has been erased. In order for the daughter to survive and become independent, the life of the *yamanba* must be her starting point. Nevertheless, a second-generation *yamanba* is different from a first-generation *yamanba*, who asserts herself by creating an identity out of her rancor and misfortunes. The daughter looks to the future and chooses to give birth and become a mother. In order to live as an independent woman who does not rely on men, she bears a child and becomes a mother. This means turning her back on what the village deems common sense, that bearing a child requires a father and a household; it means becoming a mother, as a *yamanba*. The figure of the *yamanba* shows how women can obtain subjectivity through motherhood.

In "The Silent Traders" (1982), the protagonist is already a mother of two, but the children's father is married to someone else. The protagonist and her children often go for walks in the nearby park, Rikugien, and play with a stray cat that lives there. This reminds the protagonist of a dog she used to love which her own mother had abandoned in the Rikugien forest, and it makes her think about making a tacit exchange with the animals living there, like the exchanges of the past between village people and mountain people. This exchange consists of imagining the stray cat to be the children's father; every evening the children would put food on the veranda for the cat-father who would come to see them in place of their real father. The protagonist releases many things into the realm of the forest. The forest secretly looks back on her, and the things she has released there multiply.

The mother in *Bindweed Mother* is a *yamanba* who, attached to her own misfortune, withdraws into her house in order to live as the subject of her own misfortune. According to Baba's taxonomy, she is probably closer to being a demon than a *yamanba*. But in the sense that she does not exact revenge on anyone, does not depend on anyone, and prefers to live in a realm separated from the mores of the village,[22] she is a *yamanba*. The protagonist of "The Silent Traders" establishes a silent trade between the forest and the ordinary world and makes various exchanges with the forest; although she does not live in the forest and instead lives on the edge of the village, she lets her heart wander

into the forest. A woman of a different species, she bears children who have a cat as their father. Into the forest, she relinquishes gender norms, her attachments to sexuality, and her delusions. She does not live in either the forest or the village; she settles down at the border between the forest and the village, and through a silent trade, makes exchanges with both the forest and the ordinary world. She is a woman who lives in between the mountain and the village, in the meadow.

In *Bindweed Mother*, it is the daughter who perceives the mother as a *yamanba*. This is because it is the daughter who most suffers at the hands of the *yamanba*, who might eat her at any time. It is also, however, the daughter who saves the *yamanba*. The *yamanba* can be saved from her delusions only by the daughter, whose gaze has the power to confer acceptance. In Noh, it is a *yamabushi* or a monk who saves the demon or the *yamanba* by reciting the *Heart Sutra*. Here, it is the heart of the daughter who witnesses her mother's delusions, that saves the *yamanba*. The *yamanba* may reveal herself as one who will ruin herself by continuing to live out her life in delusion, but it is the daughter who causes her to do so, and who will save her mother by outliving her. This also makes the daughter a new type of *yamanba*. The daughter opens up an avenue for a new life by giving birth to herself as a *yamanba*.

The daughter is a witness and an accomplice to her mother; at the same time, she is a *yamanba*-mother, a new type of *yamanba* that survives her mother and her delusions. Her determination to survive and her self-restraint bring her closer to the *yamanba*, rather than to Baba's demon. It is the woman of a different species who lives in the border area between village and mountain, and establishes an invisible, imaginary silent trade between these two topoi that is the contemporary *yamanba* that Tsushima Yūko had been searching for.

The daughter matures through experiencing the trauma of marriage and family; she then becomes an adult woman through a rite of passage that escapes marriage and family. In order to complete her life, the daughter must fulfill her female destiny by loving a man and giving birth outside the Oedipal family of mother,[23] father, and child. The story of the *yamanba* is updated when a woman independently chooses to exit the family system, staking her survival on self-expression through loving, reproducing, and rearing children outside of that system. Contemporary women have inherited a fascination with the *yamanba* and her life, which have survived through narratives that give birth to new stories.

The Freedom of the Aging Demon Woman

The *yamanba* in these texts by contemporary women writers has twice the perspicacity, will, and intellect of the average person, but does not offer a clear message of salvation. She is neither violent nor beautiful like Noh's Hannya. She has her own philosophy but is not free from attachment and delusion and has therefore not achieved enlightenment. She has the ability to read the other's mind, and enough kindness to be taken advantage

of. She is sometimes unforgiving toward her daughter, she is sometimes indifferent. She is sometimes absorbed by a zest for life, she is sometimes absent-minded. She desires to dominate the other, but she is also uninterested in the other; she is attached to and detached from herself. She does not have material desires and ambitions, so she lives separated from the vulgar world,[24] but she is nevertheless self-centered. She has a strong body and is unconcerned with her looks. The *yamanba* may seem a bit unkempt and comical, but she possesses a free, anarchic spirit, and in this she resembles the primordial humans, unashamed of their nakedness. The *yamanba* also lacks the assertiveness to claim an identity for herself.

The *yamanba* of contemporary women's literature is no longer a product of cultural apparatuses, but a woman who has attained the freedom to accept the dualities of existence and the ambiguities of value systems. She is not sexually inexperienced, innocent and somewhat coarse, or ignorant of society and culture. She is a woman who has taken off her make-up. The *yamanba*'s realm is a place outside gender culture, which she has finally reached after experiencing the suffering, conflicts, and attachment to the other in the village. That is why the *yamanba* is "an old woman."

Contemporary women, tired of the superficiality and performativity of gender, and tired of searching for release or salvation from their feelings of deep-seated animosity, find their thoughts and imagination stimulated by the freedom and solace of the *yamanba*'s ambiguous existence, which lacks a clear philosophy of salvation. The search for a (stable) self-identity, for transcendency and salvation is a masculine mode of reasoning. The aged *yamanba* has reached a place in which the meaning of life and transgression, the search for salvation are irrelevant. The *yamanba* that has been rewritten in modern texts is not a figure who surpasses women and enters the realm of men, or someone who transcends gender, but an anarchic existence that lives "the female sex" in a way that is not marked by gender culture. Thus, she opens the door to exhibit the freedom of being a woman.

The celebrated poet Nagase Kiyoko (1906-1995) composed "My Aging Demoness" (Oitaru wa ga kijo, 1987), which begins with the line "The aging Demoness dwelling in my cave":

Bathing in the light of dawn,
Alone and free, uniquely shining, sublime,
No prince troubling her heart
A law unto herself
Devours wild beasts and wears their fur
Heart darkly ripped apart, flesh torn
But laughing loudly with teeth white
Like the waves washing the northern seas.

.....

Waking up, she clears her throat
My aging Demoness.
Then she prepares a thin porridge
Appearing and disappearing behind the moss.

Nagase's demoness is "not glamorous and graceful," she is not free from egotism or indulging memories of the good old days; she is a *yamanba* rather than a demoness, as Baba defines them. She does not have the image of a stereotypical old woman that is somewhat similar to an innocent little girl. Rather, she accepts things as they are, she is "alone and free," and does not mind exposing the ugly facets of old age.

The reader can perhaps imagine the freedom of a consciousness that returns to nature's beginnings through aging, which liberates the woman from sexuality and desire. The *yamanba* probably has so many fans (beginning with Matsutani Miyoko)[25] because they see her as a fascinating figure who is finally freed from womanhood as a cultural product in her old age.

The *yamanba* has been revived as a definitive female archetype through retellings by contemporary female writers, who present an archetype of a woman freely determining her own life and existing outside gender norms. In contrast, the *yamanba* of folktales does not represent a female archetype. Rather, *yamanba* is an umbrella term for all women who deviate from the standards of the village women. The *yamanba* was only established as a textual archetype in contemporary women's narratives.

Through retellings by contemporary authors, the *yamanba* has taken on various forms. The polysemy of the *yamanba*'s female sexuality and its ambiguity in terms of morality or meaning, have made it an archetype that is imaginatively employed by each contemporary author in a different way, as a way to create a woman who lives outside of the gender system. "Polysemy" and "ambiguity" are traits that emerge through comparison to the village woman and are used as effective strategies to escape these norms. But the *yamanba*'s ambiguity, even in these retellings, is not intrinsic. It is political. In it, one can see a clear reversal of norms: a declaration that the *yamanba* is a woman who cannot live in the village, and the village woman is one who cannot live in the mountains.

Translator's Notes

This essay was originally published as Mizuta Noriko, "Yamanba no yume—joron toshite" (The Dream of the *Yamanba*—An Overview), in *Yamanba tachi no monogatari: josei no genkei to katarinaoshi*, eds. Mizuta Noriko and Kitada Sachie (Tokyo: Gakugei Shorin, 2002), 7-37.

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1.
R. Claire Snyder, "What is Third-wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 34, no. 1 (2008): 187.
2.
Ibid., 180, 187, 186.

3.
Kadji Amin, "Haunted by the 1990s: Queer Theory's Affective Histories," *Women's Studies Quarterly* (2016): 184.
4.
Izanami no mikoto is a female goddess, associated with both birth and death.The name Kotohana Sakuyahime can be translated Princess of the Blooming Cherry Tree. She is the daughter of a mountain god.
5.
didactic tales (*setsuwa*)
6.
village (*sato*)
7.
village woman (*sato no onna*)
8.
meadow (*no*)
9.
meadow woman (*no no onna*)
10.
self (*jiga*)
11.
family system (*ie seido*)
12.
procession (*michiyuki*)
13.
mysterious visitor (*marebito*)
14.
The Hannya mask represents a female demon tormented by jealousy and grudge.
15.
transcendental perfection (*higan*)
16.
William R. LaFleur, *Buddhism* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1988), 82-83. Cited in Noriko T. Reider, "Yamauba: Representation of the Japanese Mountain Witch in the Muromachi and Edo Periods," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2005): 243.
17.
female passions (*jōnen*)
18.
"Yamanba no bishō" was translated by Mizuta Noriko as "The Smile of a Mountain Witch," but here I use the translation "The Smile of the *Yamanba*" to echo the title of this essay and emphasize the argument that the *yamanba* is different than a witch.
19.
The first work has yet to be translated into English. The English title comes from Sharalyn Orbaugh, "Ōba Minako and the Paternity of Maternalism," in *The Father-Daughter Plot*, eds. Rebecca L. Copeland and Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen (Honololu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 276.
20.
real self (*honjō*)
21.
self awareness (*jiko ishiki*)
22.
mores (*seken*)
23.
female destiny (*onna no itonami*)
24.
vulgar world (*sezoku*)
25.
Matsutani Miyoko (1926-2015) was a children's author.