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Maternal Fantasies:
Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Retellings of the *Yamamba* Legend

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

Maternal Fantasies:
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By Kyoko Taniguchi

This dissertation is a study of maternal fantasies, both "a mother's fantasies" and "fantasies about mothers." Drawing on the psychoanalytic understandings of motherhood and the literary expressions of the maternal in the contemporary appropriation of the figure of *yamamba* (cannibalistic mountain witch) by Japanese female writers, this dissertation examines the ways in which literature and psychoanalysis articulate the intersection between the mother as subject and the mother as object. This study explores the fantasy of maternal images in Okamoto Kanoko's "Sushi" (1939), Kanai Mieko's "Yamamba" (1973), and Ōba Minako's "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" (1976) and the ways in which these women writers appropriate the folkloric mountain witch legend as the erotically charged fantasy projected onto the maternal figure.

I approach the topic of this dissertation, "that which is maternal," as the question of identification, subjectivity, and the ambiguous and ambivalent conceptualization of self and other, that ultimately originates from the archaic, undifferentiated relation to what Julia Kristeva calls "abject," that thing that threatens to engulf the subject and lures one toward the sweet union with the mother-death-other. My readings of a series of contemporary adaptations of the *yamamba* legend disagree with the dominant feminist readings that celebrate *yamamba* as the earth-goddess mother as the subject. My dissertation reads *yamamba*, a Japanese version of what Barbara Creed calls monstrous-feminine, not just as a manifestation of men's infantile fear and longing but also as the mother's own fantasy, whether it is retold as a maternal goddess, mysterious witch, sensual whore, or sweet death.

Drawing on the psychoanalytic literature on motherhood, I argue that there is no maternal subjectivity independent of her daughterly subjectivity as a daughter of her own mother, real or imagined, because mothers are not just daughters first but daughters always. In doing so, this study also problematizes the notion of separation, autonomy, and dependency. While the problem of separation may seem like the problem of fantasy versus reality—child's fantasy versus mother's reality—I see it as the problem of two fantasies, child's fantasy and mother's fantasy.

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Both East Asian Studies Department at Dickinson College where I am currently teaching and Asian Studies Department at Gettysburg College where I taught the

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INTRODUCTION

From casual magazines on parenting to academic books and journals to literary texts, it may seem as if just about everything there is to be said about motherhood has already been said. We have heard that motherhood is a myth. We have heard that mothering is the most important job. We have heard about over-idealization of motherhood as well as denigration of motherhood. We have also heard that goddesses and ogresses are both manifestations of the primitive maternal images. Yet, an attempt to define motherhood keeps renewing itself, one after another, as if to say, "that's not it" and "that's still not it," to borrow Lacanian feminist psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva's words in her remark about the impossibility of defining woman (Kristeva, "Woman" 137).

Among what has been sentenced, perhaps prematurely, as "that's not it" regarding motherhood for the past couple of decades are daughter-centric perspectives. As if the mothers were no longer daughters, the proponents of "mother-centric" perspectives demanded mothers to speak the voice of the mother, treating the "daughter-centric" perspectives as something that needs to be countered and corrected. For instance, drawing on writings about motherhood such as Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* and Marianne Hirsch's *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, Elizabeth Podnieks and Andrea O'Reilly, in their work on motherhood in contemporary women's literatures, summarize that the very aim of motherhood studies has been "to articulate and theorize 'the voice of the mother' [. . .] from the perspective and subjectivity of mothers themselves" (2-3): "Within the last four decades, as motherhood studies has emerged as a distinct and established academic discipline, this daughter-centricity has been countered and corrected in both fiction and theory" (Podnieks and

O'Reilly 2). The term "daughter-centricity" is coined by Brenda Daly and Maureen Reddy in *Narrating Mothers: Theorizing Maternal Subjectivities* to describe their finding that even when the literary and theoretical texts purport to "*begin* with the mother in her own right, from her own perspective" most of them do not maintain such maternal perspective, and "we learn less about what it is like to mother than about what it is like to be mothered, even when the author has had both experiences" (2-3).

The attempts to see the mother as the subject in her own right notwithstanding, such difficulties in maintaining the maternal perspective perhaps suggests, not "feminist avoidance of the maternal" as Daly and Reddy suppose (3), but the inseparability of maternal and daughterly subjectivities within the mother's subjectivity. The problem, then, is not so much the daughter-centric perspectives but the very assumption that there is such a thing as a maternal subjectivity independent of the mother's daughterly subjectivity as the daughter of her own mother. In other words, the mother's perspective easily turns into a daughterly mode, not because the writer is not trying hard enough but because the mother's daughterly subjectivity is an inextricable part of her maternal subjectivity. Not surprisingly, mothers are not just daughters first, but they are daughters always. Despite the feminists' well-intended call to move the mother from object to subject, the mother as subject has always already objectified her own mother, real or imaginary, with whom she also identifies herself. As soon as one moves the mother from object to subject, the mother's mother slides in to fill the object position. If one moves the mother's mother from object to subject, the mother's mother's mother fills the object position, and so *ad infinitum*. The mother as subject necessarily entails the mother as object.

With this understanding, the mother as subject, who has a child and who is also the child of her mother, may be able to answer a question that the mother as object left unanswered. In *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* by Barbara Creed, the mother is seen exclusively as the child's object. Creed analyzes the representations of women as monsters in various horror films, and she attributes such monstrous-feminine—archaic mother, monstrous womb, vampire, witch, bleeding wound, possessed body, beautiful but deadly killer, aged psychopath, animal, life-in-death, deadly femme *castratrice* and castrating mother (Creed 1)—to men's fear of women's capacity to reproduce and mother. Her analysis of the monstrous-feminine suggests that it is all about the mother and that such mother is obviously the child's (man's) construction—a creation, an illusion. Thus, I may say, everything is about the mother, except the mother, which is an illusion. But just because the monstrous mother is men's construction, it does not mean that the mother does not harbor some allegedly "monstrous" desires in actuality. The man (child) fears that the ogress mother wants to eat him up, metaphorically speaking. The mother does not say that she does, but she does not say that she does not, either. So, does she or doesn't she? The mother as object cannot voice her answer. The mother as subject can ask herself, "Do I want to eat this child?" In answering this question, the mother may ask her own mother in her mind, "Mother, did you want to eat me when I was a child?" But this mother's mother is always already the object; hence the answer that the mother imagines her mother gives is a daughter's answer.

The Japanese version of the monstrous-feminine, a folkloric figure of *yamamba* (mountain witch), further complicates the subject-object relationship of the devouring

fantasy and fear, because in a typical *yamamba* folktale, the *yamamba* reads a man's mind as he thinks that she must be planning to devour him, and she says to 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!" (Ōba, "Smile" 194). The man thinks that the devouring fantasy is in the *yamamba*'s mind, but when the *yamamba* reads and voices his mind, she is telling him that the devouring fantasy—his fear to be devoured—that *he thinks* is in *yamamba*'s mind is in his mind. It is likely that the man is projecting his own fear onto *yamamba* and thinking that she must be thinking about devouring him; it is just as likely that the *yamamba*, too, is projecting her own fantasy onto the man and thinking that he must be thinking that she must be thinking about devouring him. Is this *yamamba* an object of man's fantasy, or is she the maternal subject?

The problem that this dissertation tries to resolve is the disconnect between the mother as an internal, primitive object, often represented as the archaic mother, goddess, witch, whore, and so on, and the mother as the subject in her own right. To "begin with the mother" does not mean to extricate the maternal subjectivity separate from the mother's daughterly subjectivity as the child of her own mother. Only by exploring the interplay between the mother as subject and the mother as object can the mother as subject begin to answer the question that the mother as object left unanswered: does a mother want to eat up her child? Of course a mother does not really want to eat up her child in actuality. I am referring to expressions such as "You're so dear to me I could eat you up!" (Ōba, "Smile" 196). To "eat you up" is a metaphor; but a metaphor for what? What does this metaphor mean for the mother as object and the mother as subject? Drawing on the psychoanalytic understandings of motherhood and the literary

expressions of the maternal in the contemporary appropriation of the figure of *yamamba* by Japanese female writers, this dissertation examines the ways in which literature and psychoanalysis articulate the intersection between the mother as subject and the mother as object.

Yamamba is a Japanese folkloric figure of a cannibalistic crone living in the mountains, who is also reminiscent of the maternal goddess of fertility on the one hand and an evil female demon on the other. The contemporary pieces of fiction that I will analyze include Okamoto Kanoko's[1] "Sushi" (1939), Kanai Mieko's "Yamamba" (1973), and Ōba Minako's "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" (1976). Although there is no mention of *yamamba* in Okamoto's "Sushi," this piece is indispensable for two reasons. First, Kanai's "Yamamba" cites as an epigraph a quote from Okamoto's "Sushi," reminding the reader that her "Yamamba" is a radical interpretation of Okamoto's seemingly heartwarming story about a mother in the son's memory. The link between cannibalism, death, the bodily incorporation of food, the idealized fantasy mother, and the erotic image of the split half of the mother, that is only quietly implied in Okamoto's "Sushi" later rises to the forefront of Kanai's "Yamamba." Second, exploring what Kanai highlights—the eroticism of that which is maternal—as she reinterprets Okamoto's "Sushi" and reworks it in her "Yamamba" reveals not only that the mother in Okamoto's "Sushi" is just as erotic as Kanai's *yamamba*, but also that she, too, is a fantasy. Again, everything is about the mother, except the mother, which is an illusion.

[1] The Japanese names are written according to the Japanese order with the surname first, followed by the given name.

In their contemporary versions of the *yamamba* legend, Ōba and Kanai emphasize the seemingly paradoxical maternal image of *yamamba* as a nurturing, loving, embracing mother on the one hand and a dangerous, engulfing mother on the other. This apparent maternal paradox is further enriched by another seemingly paradoxical image of the erotic *yamamba*—the sensuous, beautiful, idealized fantasy woman who is also an ogress, fatally luring and entrapping men into sweet death by devouring. But these seemingly contradictory images of *yamamba* are in fact not contradictory at all. That is, the very desire for erotic union is ultimately the desire to lose oneself in the other in merging of identities and blurring of the boundaries between self and other, which can be traced back to the fantasy of the earliest mother-infant unity before the establishment of such boundaries. Devouring, then, is an extreme form of identification through literally incorporating the other into the self. The desire to become one with the other both in the intense erotic pleasure and in the intense mother's love, to break down the bodily boundaries, can be translated as "I want to become one with you," which really means both "I want to eat you up" and "I want to be eaten up by you." Such dangerous and luring fusion with that which is maternal is both longed for in erotic fantasy and repudiated with horror. Ōba's and Kanai's playing upon devouring and being devoured using the contemporary *yamamba* is really a playing upon the ambivalence of subjectivities, the blurring of the distinctions between self and other, and merging of identities.

I will approach the topic of this dissertation, "that which is maternal," as the question of identification, subjectivity, and the ambiguous and ambivalent conceptualization of self and other, that ultimately originates from the archaic,

undifferentiated relation to what Kristeva calls “abject,” that thing that threatens to engulf the subject and lures one toward the sweet union with the mother-death-other. My dissertation, through close readings of the literary texts mentioned above and reexamination of the psychoanalytic literature on motherhood, proposes that there is no such thing as a maternal subjectivity independent of her daughterly subjectivity as a daughter of her own mother. In doing so, this study will also problematize the notion of separation, autonomy, and dependency.

This study involves multiple layers of references for analysis. The overarching framework is psychoanalysis and literature; and within psychoanalysis, the Japanese cultural context is considered. As I seek to answer the above questions of the eroticism of that which is maternal, I hope to find the tools of translation or a common language that makes it possible for all of these layers to engage in a discourse about that which is maternal, which, in turn, may end up deconstructing the categories such as “Japanese” and “Western” psychoanalytic theories.

Using psychoanalytic theories in reading the works of fiction might still be problematic for some Japanese literary critics. A scholar of Japanese literature, Andra Alvis, insisting on the Japanese contributions to the international psychoanalytic community, prefaces her article as follows: “As a psychoanalytically oriented critic in the field of Japanese literature, I find that my work often meets with resistance from other Asianists who view psychoanalysis as a fundamentally Western theory that cannot be ‘applied’ in an Asian context” (9). It is not my intention to “apply” psychoanalytic theories to the literary texts. Rather, I am interested in psychoanalytic understandings of “the maternal” and what such understanding can tell us about the fantasy of that which is

maternal, which then deepens my understanding of the literary expression of this fantasy. I am less interested in proving or disproving Alvis's statement about the perceived "resistance" against psychoanalytic approach to Japanese literature than in showing what such an approach can offer.

One of the traps that the literary critics can easily fall into when using psychoanalytic theories to read literary texts is to merely "borrow" some psychoanalytic terms and concepts and label some of the "symptoms," personalities, behaviors, motivations, and so on, that the fictional characters exhibit that "match" these psychoanalytic terms and concepts. Such a "diagnostic" approach falls short of offering any contribution either to the field of literary studies or to psychoanalysis. It leaves an impression that one has not studied the psychoanalytic theories comprehensively but rather superficially and opportunistically "borrowed" the convenient ideas from another discipline. I conceive of my project not only as a study of literature but also as a study of psychoanalysis. The puzzle that I am looking at concerns psychoanalysis as well as literature. Hence, rather than using the psychoanalytic concepts as given, this study, both through reexamining the psychoanalytic theories themselves and through comparative investigation of the literary texts, offers different ways of understanding that which is maternal.

It is understandable that the Japanese feminist literary critics often see *yamamba* as a feminist figure of resistance against patriarchy, the earth-goddess of fecundity.[2]

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[2] For example, collected in Mizuta Noriko and Kitada Sachie, eds., *Yamambatachi no monogatari: josei no genkei to katarinaoshi* [Mountain Witches' Stories: Retelling the Archetype of Women] (Tokyo: Gakugei Shorin, 2002), are some ten essays to that effect.

Their celebration of the idealized *yamamba* is accompanied by their uncritical celebration of nature. As French psychoanalyst Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel shows, idealizations of the mother and idealizations of nature go hand in hand in a fantasy of Mother Earth. In her exploration of the representations of motherhood as goddess/witch/whore/death, Chasseguet-Smirgel attributes our cultures' tendencies to both over-idealize and thoroughly devalue women to the state of helplessness and total dependency into which all human beings are born (115). She calls the type of maternal representations in which the mother is fantasized as Mother Earth, "Marian representations (in reference to the Virgin Mary)" (116), characterized by the celebration of fecundity and sanctification of nature and the earth: "Here we find the ancient rites of fertility, the cult of the mother goddess and, on the individual level, the love of nature" (118). Chasseguet-Smirgel's statement about the fantasy of Mother Earth aptly captures the mindset with which some maternalist feminists may naively fall into the seemingly innocent celebration of nature and motherhood.

While I find Chasseguet-Smirgel's critical comments on the fantasy of Mother Earth useful, I agree with Jessica Benjamin, also a well-known feminist psychoanalyst, who argues that "the simple existence of dependency in infancy is, in itself, an insufficient explanation for man's infantile stance regarding his fantasy of the mother" ("Omnipotent" 133-34). Benjamin is indeed questioning the very assumption underlying the theory of infancy:

> The notion that the child begins in helpless dependency upon a mother from whom he must separate has guided psychoanalytic thinking ever since Freud's formulations. The implications of this image of the mother

> and the child's relation to her are far-reaching. Simply put, this notion has repeatedly led to the proposition that men have to denigrate or dominate women because men are actually dependent on and envious of the mother who can give birth and nurture the young. (Benjamin, "Omnipotent" 130)

Referring to the psychoanalytic literature on this topic such as Robert Stoller's *Perversion: The Erotic Form of Hatred* and Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*, Benjamin summarizes "the most common psychoanalytic explanations for male dominance" as follows: "Because it is necessary for men to separate from mother and give up their original identification with her, the pull to her is felt as a threat to their independent identity" ("Omnipotent" 130). While Benjamin formulates the problem of separation as the problem of fantasy versus reality—child's fantasy versus mother's reality—I see it as the problem of two fantasies, child's fantasy and mother's fantasy. I will also ask a question that Benjamin did not ask when she questioned other assumptions above: Do we really despise dependency as those conventional theories suggest? And what if, in fact, we don't? Does it change anything?

Although my reading of the contemporary versions of the *yamamba* legend disagrees with the feminist interpretations that are customary in the established studies, most notably in the works by a Japanese literary scholar, Mizuta Noriko, on this figure, I, too, recognize *yamamba* as indeed subversive in that she disturbs the notion of the "authentic," internally coherent, unified, consistent "identity" as the standard with which one assesses her subjectivity. As the *yamamba* exposes the uncertainty of self/other boundaries, she is, in Kristeva's words, an "undoer" of "identity" itself, including gender identity; but even so, feminism is not her agenda. As Kristeva concludes in her essay on

abjection, literature is "the sublime point at which the abject collapses in a burst of beauty that overwhelms us" (*Powers* 210). Everything else in civilization, according to Kristeva, is a "work of disappointment, of frustration, and hollowing" to counter the "nurturing horror" of abjection by "purifying, systematizing, and thinking" (Kristeva, *Powers* 210).

> If "something maternal" happens to bear upon the uncertainty that I call abjection, it illuminates the literary scription of the essential struggle that a writer (man or woman) has to engage in with what he calls demonic only to call attention to it as the inseparable obverse of his very being, of the other (sex) that torments and possesses him. Does one write under any other condition than being possessed by abjection, in an indefinite catharsis? Leaving aside adherents of a feminism that is jealous of conserving its power—the last of the power-seeking ideologies—none will accuse of being a usurper the artist who, even if he does not know it, is an undoer of narcissism and of all imaginary identity as well, sexual included. (Kristeva, *Powers* 208; sic)

Without "purifying, systematizing, and thinking," the *yamamba* embodies the ambivalent merging of the subject and the object, the uncertain self/other separation.

The first chapter of the main body of this dissertation (Chapter 1) addresses a question, what does it mean to say that that which is maternal is erotic? I will examine the erotic fantasy regarding the mother, looking at the mother both as the object of fantasy and the subject who is doing the fantasizing. On the one hand, looking at the mother as the object suggests that "there is no such thing as a 'real' mother; there is only our creation" (Bernstein, "There's No Such Thing as a Mother" 79). When that is the

case, the devouring monster mother, who wants to eat the child in her mad desire to become one with it in an ultimate fusion, is our creation also. On the other hand, looking at the mother as the subject affirms that she, too, *really* wants to eat the child—metaphorically speaking, of course. But then again, such desire may not be her own desire, since she may be merely reacting to the child's fantasy. Or is she? Furthermore, the mother may also be reliving her infantile fantasy as the daughter of her own mother.

In my discussion of the eroticism of the maternal, I will draw on the psychoanalytic studies on maternal erotic transference, which is defined as "all of the tender, sensual, romantic wishes existing alongside of the sadistic, aggressive and masochistic wishes that arise in the transference" (Wrye and Welle "Maternal" 674), which "has its roots in the mother and baby's earliest sensual contacts" (Wrye and Welle "Maternal" 677). This chapter will bring together two seemingly disparate theoretical notions, Lacanian feminist psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray's argument about our culture's relationship with the mother as delineated in her "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother" and Japanese psychoanalyst Doi Takeo's study of *amae*. I will argue that what Irigaray calls "desire of/for the mother" ("The Bodily" 36) and what Doi attempted to explain using the everyday Japanese word, *amae*, a wish to "depend and presume upon another's love or bask in another's indulgence" ("The Concept of *Amae*" 349), are both what is understood in the clinical psychoanalytic language as maternal erotic transference. In doing so, I am claiming that despite Doi's statement that *amae* is a "*nonsexualized* drive for close dependent affiliation" ("*Amae* and Transference" 165; emphasis added), Doi has, perhaps inadvertently, shown that *amae* is fundamentally erotic. First, I will try to show that Doi's and Irigaray's use of "the maternal" is evoked by and relies on the

bodily fantasy that is the maternal erotic transference. Second, I will complement both Doi's and Irigaray's discussions of "the maternal," which only include the child's fantasy vis-à-vis the mother but not the mother's fantasy vis-à-vis her own mother nor the mother's fantasy vis-à-vis her child. In other words, I will try to see the mother both as the subject and as the object at the early physical contact between the mother and the child. The mother as the subject, moreover, can very easily turn into a daughterly mode perceiving her own mother as the object, hence further complicating the subject-object positions of the mother. Exploring the fusion of maternal and daughterly subjectivities would also contribute to the very study of maternal desire, for the mother's fantasy is comprised both of her motherly fantasy regarding her child and of her daughterly fantasy regarding her mother. That is to say, first, everything is about the mother, except the mother, which is an illusion; and second, everything is about the mother, even for the mother—*especially* for the mother—because she also has a mother.

Chapter 2 introduces Japanese psychoanalyst Kitayama Osamu's discussion of "transience," a term commonly used in Japanese aesthetics and Japanese literary studies. I will show the ways in which its masochistic connotations can contribute to the current studies of maternal ambivalence. Kitayama's configuration of the guilt-ridden child and the transient maternal figure assumes the perspective of the child. After a brief discussion of his theory, I will complement it by taking the mother's perspective. That is, I will suggest that the child is not only the mother's transitional object (Loewald, 1982) but also the transient object. Conventionally, maternal sentimentality is often seen as a denial of hate and thus useless as far as maternal ambivalence is concerned. But I will argue that for a mother to recognize the transience of her child's childhood, perhaps

sentimentally, may be one of the ways for the mother to "hate her baby appropriately" (Winnicott, 1949) and thus render her maternal ambivalence manageable. Similarly, nostalgia is usually seen as an unproductive, backward fixation, but I will highlight a positive, creative, and generative aspect of nostalgia. By exploring the point where transience and nostalgia intersect, I will suggest the ways in which the sense of nostalgia makes the sense of transience circulate and vice versa.

Chapter 3 examines the representation of the mother in a short story, "Sushi" (1939), by Okamoto Kanoko (1889-1939). In this full-blown ode to a son's nostalgic memory of his mother, Okamoto unfolds the erotically charged fantasy projected onto the maternal figure along with her life-long theme, "violent identification process of love" (Okamoto, "Kishimo no ai" [Love of the Mother-Demon] 107). A reader of Okamoto's story may be left bewildered as to whose fantasy it is. Is it the mother who is erotic, or the child? Erotic from whose point of view? I will present Okamoto's intuitive, if eccentric, perspective on the mother-child relationship alongside psychoanalytic considerations on transience and *amae*, building on the preceding two theoretical chapters to show how Okamoto brilliantly and aptly brings to light the erotic and masochistic implications of *amae* as the wish to merge with the other.

Using Doi's concept of *amae* in reading literary texts is not a new approach. In fact, Japanese literary scholars Hirakawa Sukehiro and Tsuruta Kin'ya edited a book titled exactly that, "Amae" *de bungaku o toku* [Reading Literature through the Perspectives of "*Amae*"], which came out of a conference with the same theme. But theirs is primarily and exclusively a literary study. Their thesis that *amae* is useful in

analyzing literary texts has rich implications, but they take the concept of *amae* as given. This chapter complements their study by reexamining *amae* as a psychoanalytic concept.

Chapter 4 will read Kanai Mieko's (b. 1947) short story titled "Yamamba" (1973) as a radical reinterpretation and loyal caricature of Okamoto's "Sushi." I will first draw on Kristeva's notion of abjection to show how both Kanai and Kristeva explore the ambiguous and ambivalent constitution of the subject and the object, the uncertain separation between the self and other. According to Kristeva, the abject is what the subject has to expel as filthy and disgusting. Like the corpse, it is "death infecting life," "something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (*Powers* 4). Referring to things like corpse, excrements, menstrual blood, incest, perversion, cannibalism, murder, decay, and so on, Kristeva characterizes the abject as both repulsive and yet fascinating, that which "disturbs identity, system, order," the "in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" that "does not respect borders, positions, rules" (*Powers* 4). Abjection is to expel, vomit, disavow, "to abject," turning away from such "abject" in repugnance and fascination as in the purification rite of the defilement, which is really a defense against "the temptation to return" to the archaic, undifferentiated relation to the mother (Kristeva, *Powers* 63-64). That is, "to ward off the subject's fear of his very own identity sinking irretrievably into the mother" (Kristeva, *Powers* 64). According to Kristeva, separation from the mother is the first instance of abjection, which remains ambiguous since it "preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (*Powers* 10).

After establishing Kanai's Yamamba as the site of abjection, however, I will show that there is no such thing as Yamamba in Kanai's story titled "Yamamba." If a legendary *yamamba* is a Japanese version of what Barbara Creed calls "monstrous-feminine," interpreting *yamamba* as the abject is hardly news because Creed has already articulated her "monstrous-feminine" as the abject. Kanai's "Yamamba" is a distillation of Okamoto's "Sushi," focusing on and inflating the illusory experience with the mother as both erotic and nurturing being. In magnifying the fantasy of the omnipotent and all-embracing goddess mother to the point of grotesque and thus offering disillusionment, Kanai distances herself from the narcissistic inflation of the mother.

Chapter 5 will read Ōba Minako's (1930-2007) short story, "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" ("Yamamba no bishō") (1976), and problematize the conventional reading of this story as the mother's story. I will refer to Ōba's memoir essays about her late mother as well as her other pieces of fiction that deal with mother-daughter plots and propose that her "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" reads like a fictionalized version of her memoir essay titled "Haha no shi" [My Mother's Death] (1969) written shortly after her mother died in 1969. Doing so brings to light the daughterly feelings of guilt in the story. In spite of the pervasive sense of guilt in "The Smile" on multiple levels, most of the prior commentaries on this story have overlooked the element of guilt. The protagonist is often discussed as a self-sacrificing mother and a devouring mother, but not as a guilt inducing mother. If read as the daughter's story, however, "The Smile" unmistakably spells guilt virtually on every page. Reading this text as the daughter's story enables me to draw attention to guilt as a point of reference in my analysis.

Examining the ways in which maternal narrative and daughterly narrative merge and become indistinguishable, this chapter demonstrates a literary expression of the second thesis that I propose in my first two theoretical chapters: everything is about the mother, even for the mother—*especially* for the mother—because she also has a mother. By fusing the maternal and daughterly subjectivities, Ōba's text defies the very attempt to extricate the maternal subjectivity, as if to say that there is no such thing as a mother;[3] there is only a mother and her mother, which makes the mother also a daughter. Portraying the mother-daughter dynamics in which both mother and daughter objectify each other and identify with each other, Ōba's narrative unsettles maternal subjectivity and daughterly subjectivity as constantly oscillating flux. As the *yamamba*'s part quickly alternates—now she is the mother, now she is the daughter—so does the place of "the mother": now she is the subject, now she is the object.

Rhetoric of the cult of Mother Earth in which idealization of motherhood and idealization of nature find fanatical alliance with each other can take a deceptively benign, even therapeutic, image. One of the most popular female novelists in contemporary Japan, Yoshimoto Banana (b. 1964), in her essay titled "Pink," imagines herself floating in a small enclosed pool of salt water, which is supposedly a meditation device that simulates a womb-like environment. After letting her thoughts flow freely from a beautiful sunset over a beach to a baby's transparent pink color skin to a journey on a

[3] This is a pun on the well-known statement by Donald Woods Winnicott (1896-1971), an influential British pediatrician, psychiatrist, and psychoanalyst: "There is no such thing as an infant." Winnicott explains what he meant by this statement as follows: "whenever one finds an infant one finds maternal care, and without maternal care there would be no infant" (Winnicott, "The Theory of the Parent-Infant Relationship" 587).

river boat, she exclaims, “This planet is the womb for us!” (“Pink”). One does not have to be a nature-worshipper nor belong to a particular culture to understand what she means and even share the same sentiment. We use expressions such as “mother nature” and “mother earth,” often with good intentions. Seldom do we realize that we project our own fantasy onto nature as that which is maternal.

Literary and psychoanalytic representations of motherhood examined in this dissertation show that the fantasy of the devouring mother is partly men’s fear and longing, partly daughter’s memory, and partly the mother’s desire which includes her daughterly desire. Each of these components overlaps with each other, and the distinctions blur and disintegrate. Rather than attempting to extricate maternal subjectivity, I focus on the very intersection between the child’s fantasy and mother’s fantasy. Even if we cannot really free *yamamba* from our projection, at least we can recognize that the image of *yamamba* as the omnipotent earth goddess is a projection of our own fantasy. And maybe we may realize that there is no such thing as an omnipotent Earth Mother *yamamba*.

CHAPTER 1

Sensuality and Motherhood

Introduction

The alleged de-sexualization and de-eroticization of the mother in our culture notwithstanding, manifestations of erotically charged fantasies projected onto the maternal figure abound. So who says mothers are not erotic? At least in psychoanalysis, mothers are erotic—that is common sense. In literature, too, mothers are erotic: a highly eroticized longing for a mother is hardly a surprising motif in Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's novels, for example. Also in art, among the masterpieces are numerous paintings of a naked mother-baby couple, often in the image of Venus and her baby Cupid. Examples of the paintings of nude Venus and baby Cupid include Nicolas Poussin's (1594-1665) *The Sleeping Venus and Cupid* (1630), Tiziano Vecellio's (Titian) (1490-1576) *Venus and Cupid with an Organist* (1548), and Lorenzo Lotto's (1480–1556) *Venus and Cupid* (late 1520s), to list just a few. In our daily lives, a mother's bathing her baby may appear sensual, or at least bodily, as we imagine the warm water, the mother's hand stroking and caressing the baby's skin, and the baby's hand also touching herself and the mother without distinguishing which is which. And, of course, there is a breastfeeding mother. Our social norms may insist that breastfeeding is only "natural" and that there is nothing erotic there. But, lest we forget, "nature" is erotic. Besides, breastfeeding certainly involves bodily pleasure and satisfaction both for the baby and the mother. It may not be "sexual," if, by the term "sexual," we mean adult genital sexuality only. But it surely is a bodily and sensual experience. And like bathing, breastfeeding is also soothing.

Or, are the above examples merely bodily, and not erotic? Is there a clear distinction between what is "merely bodily" and what is erotic? A scholar of women's studies and literature, Lynda Marin, titles her memoir essay "Mother and Child: The Erotic Bond" in an edited book of collected works on mothering by feminist writers. As she describes her feelings for her four-year-old son and the ways of adorable "commingling" with him and mutual endearment, she criticizes our culture's forgetting "what eroticism actually is":

> The real secret, though, is how "ardorously" culture struggles to forget what eroticism actually is, where it comes from, and why it is absolutely everywhere all the time, especially and necessarily in a mother's love for her child. When we successfully forget that fact, as we require ourselves to do in the name of becoming adults, we severely limit the ways we can experience the connection/pleasure which originally nurtured us into life and which sustains our desire for life forever after. (20)

As much as I hold her delightful essay dear to heart, my chapters on literary texts will show that our culture has not, in fact, forgotten what eroticism actually is. And in this chapter, I will also suggest that psychoanalysis has not forgotten what eroticism actually is, either.

But what does it mean to say that that which is maternal is erotic? Is it the mother who is erotic, or the baby? Or, is it the mother-baby relationship that is erotic? Erotic from whose point of view? Whose fantasy is it? "Erotic" does not necessarily mean "sexual." Referring to pre-oedipal erotic experiences, psychoanalysts Harriet Wrye and Judith Welle define "erotic" as "all of the tender, sensual, romantic wishes existing

alongside of the sadistic, aggressive and masochistic wishes" ("Maternal" 674). In fact, Wrye and Welle identify all sorts of "sensual bodily fantasies" in relation to the mother "erotic," as they discuss "exploration of very primitive early preverbal longings and fears of the early mother's voluptuous and essential body" (Wrye, "Introduction" 4).

On the one hand, we may say that the erotic appeal of the mother is the Freudian child's fantasy. Whether the fantasy is tender or aggressive, it is the child, or an adult-child, who is longing or fearing the imaginary erotic mother. On the other hand, however, what about the erotic appeal of the babies—"The erotic appeal and sheer deliciousness of a baby's soft, plump flesh," as Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, an anthropologist and an author of *Mother Nature*, describes it (483)? Hrdy speculates that such an irresistible appeal of infants must have served as their survival strategy, evolutionarily speaking, along with the mother's pleasure in breastfeeding—a bodily sensation that is so rewarding that the mothers cannot but help take care of their infants (536-38). Breastfeeding brings to the mother, Hrdy argues, "pleasurable sensations, bordering on and blending into the erotic" (537). Needless to say, neither the baby's scrumptiousness nor the pleasure of breastfeeding is a secret. Nor is Hrdy the first to talk about the babies' sensual appeal. In her words, this mechanism of sensual bonding is older than any medical or scientific authorities' claims about motherhood or those of feminists, for or against them. The sensual bonding, which Hrdy even calls "enslavement," via suckling has existed for over millions of years (539).

On the other side of the pacific, in a non-academic work, a female poet made the same observations about the scrumptious babies in a different language. Itō Hiromi, a prominent contemporary Japanese poet and writer, titled the collection of her memoir

essays on child-rearing, *Tummy, Cheek, Rump* [*Onaka, hoppe, oshiri*]. In it and her other essays on child-rearing, she repeatedly comments on the "erotic appeal" of her baby daughters' chubby tummy, cheek, and buttocks; hence the title. She ponders, "As I caress my baby's indescribably adorable tummy and cheek, I also contain an aggressive urge to pinch, slap, bite and eat this soft, chubby, round creature, and imagine how pleasurable it would be"[4] (*Kodomo yori* 165). Unlike a Kleinian[5] mother-baby pair in which the *baby* wants to cut, bite, and tear up the mother (mother's breasts), in Itō's mother-baby pair it is the *mother* who harbors these aggressive impulses. Or more precisely, in Itō's poetry and essays, the aggressive fantasy is perceived to be mutual.[6] As in Hrdy's writing, possibilities of maternal aggression are recognized not as the abhorrent opposite of the maternal love, but as a part of the real account of motherhood. Itō affirms the coexistence of her sadistic fantasies against her children and intense maternal love.

To talk about the eroticism of that which is maternal, then, is to see the mother both as the object of erotic fantasy and the subject who is doing the fantasizing. Furthermore, the subject-object relationship of a mother-child fantasy is constantly oscillating at multiple levels, beyond merely "now the mother is the object, now she is

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[4] Translation mine.

[5] Melanie Klein (1882-1960) is one of the most influential British psychoanalysts and a pioneer in object-relations theory particularly in analysis of children.

[6] For example, in one of her most well-known poems, Itō writes, "Six months pass / Kanoko's teeth come in and / She bites my nipple, wants to bite my / nipple off / Always looking for the chance to bite it off / [. . .] / I want to throw Kanoko away / [. . .] / Throw away or kill Kanoko who bites my / nipple off" ("Killing Kanoko" 48; trans. by Nakayasu Sawako).

the subject." This is because when a mother finds the mother-child bond erotic, her object of fantasy may very well be her own mother, just as much as it can be her present child. Inherent within the "mother's" fantasy is the "child's" fantasy because the mother is also the child of her own mother, hence identifying with her present child as well as her mother. This can also be autoerotic because while the object of the mother's erotic fantasy can be her own mother, she is also identifying herself with her mother, all at the same time as she is also identifying herself with her child. An attempt to disband the "maternal" and "daughterly" in this matrix of mother-child fantasy and extricate the solely "maternal" subjectivity remains futile because a mother is always already a daughter.

This chapter draws on psychoanalytic studies on maternal erotic transference in examining the fantasy regarding the mother, and brings together two seemingly disparate theoretical notions: Lacanian feminist psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray's argument about our culture's relationship with the mother as delineated in her "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother" and Japanese psychoanalyst Doi Takeo's study of *amae*. I will argue that what Irigaray calls "desire of/for the mother" ("The Bodily" 36) and what Doi attempted to explain using the everyday Japanese word, *amae*, a wish to "depend and presume upon another's love or bask in another's indulgence" ("The Concept of *Amae*" 349), are both what is understood in the clinical psychoanalytic language as maternal erotic transference. In doing so, I am claiming that despite Doi's statement that *amae* is a "*nonsexualized* drive for close dependent affiliation" ("*Amae* and Transference" 165; emphasis added), Doi has, perhaps inadvertently, shown that *amae* is fundamentally erotic. First, I will try to show that Doi's and Irigaray's use of "the maternal" is evoked by and relies on the

bodily fantasy that is the maternal erotic transference. Second, I will complement both Doi's and Irigaray's discussions of "the maternal," which only include the child's fantasy vis-à-vis the mother but not the mother's fantasy vis-à-vis her own mother nor the mother's fantasy vis-à-vis her child. In other words, I will try to see the mother both as the subject and as the object at the early physical contact between the mother and the child, although, as will be further elaborated, the mother can very easily turn into a daughterly mode. Exploring the fusion of maternal and daughterly subjectivities would also contribute to the very study of maternal desire, for the mother's fantasy is comprised both of her motherly fantasy regarding her child and of her daughterly fantasy regarding her mother. In short, that is to say, first, everything is about the mother, except the mother, which is an illusion—a product of the child's fantasy; and second, everything is about the mother, even for the mother—*especially* for the mother—because she also has a mother.

The Forbidden Body of the Mother: According to Irigaray

Like the aforementioned feminist mother Lynda Marin, Irigaray argues in her "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother" that our culture forces us to forget our desire for the mother. Irigaray claims that our culture is founded, not on patricide as Freud conceived, but on matricide. Referring to the Greek myth of Clytemnestra, who is killed by her son Orestes, Irigaray begins her argument by calling our attention to, in her words, "a more archaic murder" than the murder of the father that Freud theorized in his *Totem and Taboo* as the foundation of western culture: the murder of the mother ("Bodily" 36-37). By matricide, Irigaray means that "the social order, our culture, psychoanalysis itself" insist that "the mother must remain forbidden, excluded" ("Bodily" 39). She uses

such images as the umbilical cord and the womb and says that once before birth we were whole, in the "primal womb," and the father—whatever "the father" represents—cuts the umbilical cord, and we are now fragments, our bodies torn to pieces ("Bodily" 38-39). Of course she is not advocating not cutting the umbilical cord in actuality nor remaining in the womb eternally. She is criticizing the social order that forbids remembering the "archaic relationship with the body of the mother," the social order that marks such a bond with the mother as taboo ("Bodily" 38-39). Our culture tells us, according to Irigaray, that "If the father did not sever this over-intimate bond with the primal womb, there might be the danger of fusion, of death, of the sleep of death" ("Bodily" 39). That is what Irigaray means, metaphorically, when she says, "The father forbids the bodily encounter with the mother" ("Bodily" 39).

Along the same line, Irigaray states, "in practice the psychoanalyst usually sits behind the analysand, like the mother he should not look back at. He should make progress, advance, go outside and forget her" ("Bodily" 39). While Irigaray is criticizing such an assumption and is suggesting that we should look back at the mother and remember her, the aforementioned psychoanalysts who have written on maternal erotic transference, Harriet Wrye and Judith Welle, among others, would quickly respond that not only we should, but also we do, in fact, look back at the mother and remember her. According to Wrye and Welle, "patients' acceptance of and immersion in the maternal erotic transference in its loving and sado-masochistic permutations" would "foster the making of a sense of wholeness, and connectedness to living" ("Maternal" 684). Wrye and Welle define maternal erotic transference as "all of the tender, sensual, romantic wishes existing alongside of the sadistic, aggressive and masochistic wishes that arise in

the transference" ("Maternal" 674), which "has its roots in the mother and baby's earliest sensual contacts" ("Maternal" 677). They also define transference by explaining that they "follow Freud's (1912)[7] use of the term *transference* to describe the reliving of earlier fantasies, attitudes, and impulses originally experienced in the infantile relationship with the parents and carried on and recreated in the new relationship with the therapist" ("Maternal" 673). Maternal erotic transference is, in their view, "a positive and necessary transforming phenomenon in psychoanalytic treatment" (*Narration* 36).

Both Irigaray and Wrye, like many others, seem to agree about "the origins of erotic life in the preverbal mother-infant sensual matrix" (Wrye, "Tuning" 172). For Irigaray, "the first body they have any dealings with is a woman's body, [. . .] the first love they share is mother love" ("Bodily" 44). In referring to the earliest physical contacts between the mother and the baby, Irigaray and Wrye use remarkably similar images. One of such common images is the fluid. A primal womb, in Irigaray's text, is imagined to be "our first nourishing earth, first waters, first envelopes, where the child was *whole*, the mother *whole* through the mediation of her blood [. . .] [where] [t]hey were bound together, [. . .] before any cutting, any cutting up of their bodies into fragments" ("Bodily" 38-39). The comparable text in Wrye reads, "The infant, having once been literally encapsulated in mother's womb in amniotic fluid, experiences closeness to mother postnatally through contact with skin and bodily fluids, through her caretaking in relation to milk, drool, urine, feces, mucous, spit, tears, and perspiration" ("Hello" 102-103). Wrye uses the words such as "sticky," "juicy," "gooey," and "messy" to talk about both the bodily fluids themselves and the early connections between mother and baby.

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[7] "The Dynamics of Transference."

But while Wrye recognizes various bodily fluids such as breast-milk, drool, urine, feces, mucous, spit, tears, and perspiration as "the warm sensual 'bath' of fluids" ("Tuning" 172), the image that is present continuously throughout the developmental continuum into adult life, for a man in Irigaray's text, these fluids become "secret," "sacred," "shameful," a "horrible sight" (Irigaray, "Volume" 64): "Blood, but also milk, sperm, lymph, spittle, saliva, tears, humours, gases, waves, airs, fire . . . light which threaten him with distortion, propagation, evaporation, burning up [*consumation*], flowing away, in an other difficult to grasp" (Irigaray "Volume" 64). Men fear these fluids, according to Irigaray, because they are the reminder of women's indefinable, infinite, fluid body—"Volume without Contours" as she titled an essay, which was first translated as "Volume-Fluidity."[8] Irigaray argues that "*The/A woman is never closed/shut (up) in one volume*" ("Volume" 65; italics in original), urging women not to be reduced to a solid representation, not to be confined into a controllable substance under the patriarchal system. Irigaray theorizes that men's attempt to define women's body is due to their fear of women's indefinable, open body: "the openness of the mother, the opening on to the mother, appear to be threats of contagion, contamination, engulfment in illness, madness and death" ("Bodily" 40).

Irigaray's highly abstract text, however, may not be very persuasive unless the reader already shares her assumptions. Not a Lacanian theorist herself, Wrye does not refer to Irigaray in her own work in this context. But her discussion of maternal erotic

[8] "L'Incontournable volume," *Speculum. De l'autre femme* (Paris: Minuit, 1974), trans. by Gillian C. Gill as "Volume-fluidity" in Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

transference provides a concrete textual and contextual illustration to Irigaray's theory. For example, referring to men's fear of women's body, particularly of the open womb as a devouring mouth as described above, Irigaray adds that "The corresponding affects will therefore be anxiety, phobia, disgust, a haunting fear of castration" ("Bodily" 41). Again, it is hard to be convinced about fear of castration unless it is already a part of one's theoretical vocabulary. Wrye, on the other hand, as if to spell out what Irigaray means by fear of castration, explains,

> It is my belief that the maternal erotic transference, though frightening to female patients insofar as it threatens to suck them back into the intense bodily feelings toward the early mother and is thereby a threat to separateness, less commonly approaches the degree of "erotic terror" that it does for males. The reason for this is that females' core gender is not threatened by regression (though their psychic integrity may be, just as it is for males). For those males, however, whose core gender identity is shaky, [. . .] the preoedipal maternal erotic transference threatens their very identity and does evoke terror [. . .]. ("Erotic" 249)

In short, a man fears regressing into the mother's body, because he is worried that he may become a woman! But Wrye discusses such fear as a very extreme case that happens only for "those males [. . .] whose core gender identity is shaky" ("Erotic" 249). On the other hand, Irigaray speaks *as if* all men are terrified by the devouring mouth of the monster mother.

If all men are afflicted by this "erotic terror," re-creating the early sensual contact with the mother can only be problematic, as Irigaray suggests. No wonder Irigaray sees

no therapeutic possibility in the maternal erotic transference as Wrye does. Wrye, too, recognizes the cases where the early sensual contact between mother and infant, and the mediating fluid, becomes problematic:

> If the contact is intrusive, mother and baby can remain "stuck together" in a wetly suffocating, symbiotic fusion allowing no space to come between them. This leads to experiences of drowning and psychic annihilation. If a mother regards her baby's fluid productions as hated messes, she may communicate that her baby is toxic and contaminating. ("Hello" 103)

But unlike Irigaray's distressed observations, Wrye's suggests that these problematic cases are, again, not the norm. In optimal cases, the sensual bond between mother and baby becomes the "basis of loving relations and all erotism" (*Narration* 34). And in such optimal instances, the bodily fluid is the key "medium for bonding" (*Narration* 35): "A mother's contact with and ministrations to her baby in dealings with these fluids may optimally create a slippery, sticky sensual adhesion in the relationship" (*Narration* 35).

Wrye mentions Lacan very briefly in her discussion of language, only to say that "The Lacanian construction is interesting but, in our view, greatly abstracts and to some extent disembodies the complex early interactive maternal/paternal, sensory-bodily matrix in which language develops" (*Narration* 8). But a couple of years later, she offers an insightful reference to Lacan in relation to her own work on erotic desire and longing for mother (Wrye, "Tuning" 172-73). Drawing on Winnicott's work[9] that suggests all cultural experience such as art and music is "rooted in the space between mother and

[9] "The Location of Cultural Experience." Donald Woods Winnicott (1896-1971) is an influential British pediatrician, psychiatrist, and psychoanalyst.

infant and that it is the attempt to fill the void of the aching 'space between,' to regain the 'paradise lost' of mother's gaze and voice," Wrye acknowledges that this "aching 'space between'" is what Lacanians refer to as "aching lack" (Wrye, "Tuning" 172-73). More recently in 2006, Wrye cites Irigaray on gender and language, in referring to "phallocentric assumptions about the world" ("Deconstructing" 74). So, perhaps I should not be surprised that Wrye even uses a Lacanian term "jouissance," in the same way as Irigaray does, to talk about the early bodily connection between mother and baby: "[erotic desire] has its origins in the sensual, juicy, sticky jouissance of the earliest mother/infant bodily based connections" (Wrye, "Sitting" 728). While she does not situate her work on early mother-child erotic bond in relation to Irigaray, Wrye seems to be aware of their point of intersection.

Imaginary Body of the Mother: Rethinking *Amae*

Doi Takeo's study of *amae* is arguably one of the most well-known contributions made by Japanese psychoanalysts to the international psychoanalytic community (Alvis 9). Doi defines *amae* as a wish to "depend and presume upon another's love or bask in another's indulgence" ("The Concept of *Amae*" 349), which has its prototype in "the psychology of the infant in its relationship to its mother" (*Anatomy* 74). He further elaborates that "the prototype of *amae* is the infant's desire to be close to its mother," experienced only after it has become vaguely aware of their separate existence (*Anatomy* 75). And he proposes that *amae* is, "ultimately, an attempt psychologically to deny the fact of separation from the mother" (*Anatomy* 75). Like Irigaray and Wrye, Doi, too, takes the image of the womb as the foundational fantasy of blissful wholeness: "until it starts to *amaeru* [the verb form of *amae*] the infant's mental life is an extension, as it

were, of its life in the womb, and the mother and child are still unseparated" (*Anatomy* 75). The point of intersection between *amae* and maternal erotic transference must have been apparent for Wrye. In a book review, referring to Doi's essay on *amae* and transference in which Doi situated *amae* as "the kernel of transference-love" (Doi, "*Amae* and Transference" 171) Wrye writes, "*Amae* in this sense is another way to describe early maternal erotic transferences" (Wrye, Review 192).

Partly because, in the course of his argument, Doi made a sweeping generalization claiming that "*amae* is a key concept for the understanding not only of the psychological makeup of the individual Japanese but of the structure of Japanese society as a whole" (*Anatomy* 28), and also because the term *amae* itself is an everyday Japanese word that every layperson in Japan knows and uses, much like English word "love," of which everyone has his/her own interpretations and opinions, the concept of *amae* has been susceptible of various criticisms, more as yet another version of *nihonjinron*[10]—"Japanese uniqueness" argument—than as a psychoanalytic concept. In a book-length comprehensive study of *amae*, an American academic psychiatrist, Frank Johnson, defended Doi against Peter Dale, one of the most prominent critics against *nihonjinron* which, as Johnson summarizes, is understood as "an uncritical and culturally chauvinistic description that inflates the significance of Japanese culture and ethos, and uses self-serving explanations of national identity" (Johnson 97). While the discussion whether or not to see Doi's concept of *amae* as an expression of Japanese cultural chauvinism may

[10] *Nihonjinron* literally means the theories/discussions about the Japanese. The term has also been translated as "treatises on Japaneseness" (Kelly) and "cultural nationalism" (Harumi Befu, "Nihonjinron," *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* [Tokyo: Kodansha, 1988]). Frank Johnson lists other translations of the term including "analysis of Japanese identity" and "philosophy concerning the Japanese spirit" (96).

be engaging, it adds nothing to my current work on erotic fantasy of the mother. Proving or disproving if *amae* indeed explains Japanese culture adds nothing, either, for such a proof is irrelevant—it is as hollow as trying to prove or disprove if narcissism explains such and such culture. Nothing ever explains everything. It may be a part of it, but not all of it. My discussion focuses on the psychoanalytic understandings of *amae* and psychoanalytic implications of *amae* in relation to the fantasy regarding that which is maternal, looking at *amae* as a psychoanalytic concept, not as a "Japanese uniqueness" argument.

Another noise that is irrelevant to this study is whether *amae* is good or bad. Such noise arises due to, again, the everyday use of the word *amae* in Japan, which, more often than not, refers to dependent and childish *attitude*. Doi did not invent the word *amae*. It is an everyday Japanese word. His contribution, then, is not that he "discovered" *amae* but that he identified the core fantasy underlying *amae*. Interpreting *amae* as "dependent *attitude*" can be misleading because it only refers to the everyday use of the word, not to the underlying fantasy that can be both infantile and creative, masochistic and therapeutic.

Like the fantasy of the pre-natal blissful wholeness used by Irigaray and Wrye, the fantasy of the infantile oneness with the mother, necessitated by the infant's total dependency on the mother, is nothing new, either. The aforementioned academic psychiatrist, Frank Johnson, in his discussion of the ways in which the traditional psychoanalytic theory has dealt with the concept of dependency, refers to Freud's formulation of anaclitic attachment (*Anlehungstypus* ["leaning-up-against" type]) (Johnson 41). Initially, Doi states that he "found it odd that Freud could have built his

theory without it [the concept of *amae*]" (*Anatomy* 24). But apparently, Freud does have "other concepts to take its place" (Doi, *Anatomy* 24)—anaclitic attachment, where "children learn to feel for other people who help them in their helplessness and satisfy their needs a love which is on the model of, and a continuation of, their relation as sucklings to their nursing mother" (Freud, *Three Essays* 222-23; sic). In "On Narcissism," Freud explains this anaclitic object-choice as follows:

> The sexual instincts are at the outset attached to the satisfaction of the ego-instincts; only later do they become independent of these, and even then we have an indication of that original attachment in the fact that the persons who are concerned with a child's feeding, care, and protection become his earliest sexual objects: that is to say, in the first instance his mother or a substitute for her. (87)

But Doi does not elaborate on Freud's anaclitic attachment as an equivalent to *amae*. Instead, Doi considers a possibility that Freud's concept of "identification" may correspond to *amae* (*Anatomy* 172), referring to Freud's remark that "identification is, first of all, the original form of emotional tie with an object" (Freud, "Group Psychology" 107; also cited in Doi, *Anatomy* 173).

What Doi does find closest to *amae*, among the formulations by Western psychoanalysts, is the concept of "primary love" proposed by Michael Balint. Doi states, "passive object love or primary love as defined by Michael Balint can be equated with *amae* in its pure form" ("Concept" 350). According to Balint, the "primary tendency, I shall be loved always, everywhere, in every way, my whole body, my whole being—without any criticism, without the slightest effort on my part—is the final aim of all erotic

striving" ("Critical" 50). Balint proposes this as his theory of "primary love" or a "theory of primary relationship to the environment" (*Basic Fault* 65), and argues that "the individual is born in a state of intense relatedness to his environment, both biologically and libidinally" (*Basic Fault* 67). Balint also refers to Doi and agrees that primary love and *amae* are similar concepts: "According to him [Doi], there exists in Japanese a very simple, everyday word, *amaeru*, an intransitive verb, denoting 'to wish or to expect to be loved' in a sense of primary love" (Balint, *Basic Fault* 69). Balint relates the "remnant of the archaic object-love" with the phenomenon of what he calls "new beginning" where patients regress to "a state of infantile helplessness" and the "original primitive form of love emerges again" ("New Beginning" 246-48):

> The original and everlasting aim of all object-relations is the primitive wish: *I must be loved* without any obligation on me and without any expectation of return from me. All 'adult' ways of object-relation, i.e. of loving and hating, are compromise formations between this original wish and the acceptance of an unkind, unpleasant, indifferent reality. ("New Beginning" 247; italics in original)

As he defines "primary love" as archaic, passive, and primitive object-love, Balint points out that "all European languages are [. . .] so poor that they cannot distinguish between the two kinds of object-love, active and passive" ("Critical" 69). But I find it on the contrary: what Balint calls the Western idea of love distinguishes these two kinds of love only too sharply and values one of them, the active love, as a more mature, desirable, and healthier form of adult love. For instance, Freud characterizes the infantile love as follows: "Childhood love is boundless; it demands exclusive possession, it is not content

with less than all. But it has a second characteristic: it has, in point of fact, no aim and is incapable of obtaining complete satisfaction; and principally for that reason it is doomed to end in disappointment and to give place to a hostile attitude" ("Female Sexuality" 231). When an adult has this mindset, it is often seen as infantile narcissism which is marked by "child-like search for love—in which dependency, demandingness, and gratitude are mixed" (Kernberg 323). It is considered a problematic, unhealthy love for an adult. The concept of *amae*, on the other hand, suggests a "continuous spectrum from early infancy to adulthood" (Doi, "Concept" 350). It calls into question the very distinction between the childish love and adult love.

But, as suggested earlier, what *amae* ultimately seeks, the infant's blissful wholeness with the mother, is a fantasy. As explained by Doi, an infant, as it seeks its mother, is already separated from its mother: "no one says of a newly born child that it is *amaeru*-ing. A child is not said to *amaeru* until, in the latter half of the year following its birth, it first begins to become aware of its surroundings and to seek after its mother" (Anatomy 74). In this sense, *amae*, as understood by Doi as "ultimately, an attempt psychologically to deny the fact of separation from the mother" (*Anatomy* 75), is markedly Lacanian. It is in this context that I turn to Lacan's "mirror stage," which suggests an "empty self," and its striking correspondence with Doi's concept of *amae*. While Lacan's interpretation of the mirror stage makes a case for the illusory "I," my Lacanian interpretation of *amae*, so to speak, reveals the illusory mother.

Lacan's interpretation of the mirror stage "leads us to oppose any philosophy directly issuing from the *Cogito*" ("Mirror Stage" 1) because he shows that what is at the core of one's self-identify is an illusion. What Lacan calls the "mirror stage" is the

beginning of a sense of identity—an *illusion* of an organized self—where a baby between the ages of six and eighteen months recognizes its own image in a mirror: "Unable as yet to walk, or even to stand up, and held tightly as he is by some support, human or artificial […], he nevertheless overcomes, in a flutter of jubilant activity, the obstructions of his support and, fixing his attitude in a slightly leaning-forward position, in order to hold it in his gaze, brings back an instantaneous aspect of the image" ("Mirror Stage" 1-2). The infant sees in the mirror an illusion of his ideal image—a whole body, the bodily unity of which he has the mastery. The resulting feeling of the absolute autonomy that the infant experiences in front of the mirror is an illusion, since, in actuality, the infant is still helpless, dependent on the adult's support even to stand up. But the infant is fascinated by this fictional image of his own body, in its illusory unity and totality, despite, or rather, because of his actual state of insufficiency. This fictional, single, unified, and exterior "I" is "a mirage" of maturation (Lacan, "Mirror State" 2). It looks forward to the unobtainable self with the unified identity, which will have the complete mastery and control over itself in the world. Lacan's concept of the mirror stage refutes such coherent "I" and reminds us that it is an illusion.

Both Lacan's concept of mirror stage and Doi's *amae* call into question the autonomous, independent, self-sufficient "I," but through opposite images. In the mirror stage, the rigid boundaries between self and other appear to be established, and "in making itself appear as a conscious, unified being, with a secure and separate self-image, the child at the same moment loses itself as an unconscious, undifferentiated, non-individuated being, who sees and wants everything" (Burkitt 88). In contrast, with *amae* as perceived by Doi, "sharp differentiation of self from others is regarded as unnecessary,

and even unhealthy" (Johnson 186). The aforementioned proponent of *amae*, Frank Johnson, states,

> Paralleling the psychocultural commentary of numerous commentators on Japanese subjectivity, Doi sees the self as more conspicuously defined *in its connections to others* than in Western societies. Both subjectively and in real interactions, the consciousness of self is experienced in a flow of activities and identifications in conjunction with other persons. (186; italics in original)

What is lost at the "mirror stage" in supposedly achieving the "I," in other words, remains in a moderate, communalized form in Doi's framework. The state of no boundary, or the undefined self as an undifferentiated, non-individuated being, is lost under the Lacanian framework and yet remains in Doi's model. With *amae*, the primary state to which one always longs to go back, the place of the essential experience of primal oneness, is simulated by the environment made up of the interpersonal relationships. This may partly explain the problematic notion that Japan is, in one way or another, a "maternal society" (*bosei shakai*).[11]

As mentioned earlier, Doi interprets *amae* as "the desire to deny the fact of separation that is an inevitable part of human existence, and to obliterate the pain that this separation involves" (*Anatomy* 167). Here lies one of the remarkable points of contrast between Lacan's mirror stage and Doi's *amae*. Both see the mirror, and in the mirror, both recognize an illusory, ideal me, while denying certain, different facts. With *amae* as

[11] Among the most well-known proponent of this notion in Japan is a Jungian psychologist Kawai Hayao, an author of *Bosei shakai Nihon no byōri* [The pathology of Japan as a maternal society] (1976).

a lens through which to see the mirror, the mirror reflects not the organized, coherent, independent, autonomous, self-sufficient self as held ideal by the subject according to Lacan, but a dependent, insufficient, helpless and therefore supported image, and is assured that it is good to be dependent. In such mirror is the mother supporting the baby, but this mother is no less illusory than the Lacanian "I" in the mirror. The subject according to Lacan denies the reality of dependence and helplessness and opts for the separation whereas the subject according to Doi denies the reality of separation and accepts dependence and helplessness.

Just as Doi takes the infant's state of helplessness and dependency as the foundation of *amae*, Lacan attributes the mirror stage, "a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation," to "an organic insufficiency in his natural reality" ("Mirror Stage" 4):

> In man, however, this relation to nature is altered by a certain dehiscence at the heart of the organism, a primordial Discord betrayed by the signs of uneasiness and motor unco-ordination of the neo-natal months. The objective notion of the anatomical incompleteness of the pyramidal system and likewise the presence of certain humoral residues of the maternal organism confirm the view I have formulated as the fact of a real *specific prematurity of birth* in man. ("Mirror Stage" 4; italics in original)

This early period of total dependence of the infant on the mother where "the baby lives in an undifferentiated and symbiotic relationship with the mother's body so that it never knows who is who, or who is dependent on whom" (Minsky 144) is the prototype of *amae*. It parallels Winnicott's comment on the unit of infant and the maternal care as he

refers to “the real meaning of the word dependence” (“The Theory of the Parent-Infant Relationship” 587):

> I once said: ‘There is no such thing as an infant,’ meaning, of course, that whenever one finds an infant one finds maternal care, and without maternal care there would be no infant. (Discussion at a Scientific Meeting of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, circa 1940). (Winnicott, “The Theory of the Parent-Infant Relationship” 587)

According to Lacan, such state of infantile narcissism where there is no distinction between the self and other and where the baby “imagines itself to exist in the objects (including people) in its environment” (Minsky 144) will end at the completion of the mirror stage as the baby sees himself as separate from the mother. Yet, the desire to go back to that primary state of oneness remains as an unsatisfiable longing. This is also a crucial thesis in both Michael Balint’s aforementioned idea of “primary love” and Doi’s *amae*.

Also as I mentioned, Doi suggests that Freud was, with the concept of identification, “ultimately, seeking to describe what we think of when we hear the word *amae*” (*Anatomy* 172-73). Like *amae*, “identification is, first of all, the original form of emotional tie with an object” (Freud, “Group Psychology” 107; also cited in Doi, *Anatomy* 173). Interestingly, Lacan also understands the mirror stage as an identification: “We have only to understand the mirror stage as *an identification,* in the full sense that analysis give to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image—whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of an ancient term *imago*” (“Mirror Stage” 2). At this stage,

the identification is not with the other (an object) but with its own image, where the *I* has not yet been "objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other" (Lacan, "Mirror Stage" 2).

Lacan's discussion of the social *I* at the end of the mirror stage introduces the desire for recognition by the other: "This moment in which the mirror-stage comes to an end inaugurates, by the identification with the *imago* of the counterpart and the drama of primordial jealousy, the dialectic that will henceforth link the *I* to socially elaborated situations" ("Mirror Stage" 5). For Lacan, the desire is to be the object of "the desire of the other" ("Mirror Stage" 5). That is precisely what *amae* is. With *amae*, one is saying, "I want you to want me"; "I want to become that thing that you want"; "what do you want me to be so that you will want me? Tell me what you want and I will be that," because only then is one sure to be the recipient of the other's love.

Doi's and Lacan's theories are also in agreement regarding the frustrated desire. Desire, according to Lacan, is what by definition always remains unsatisfiable. The Lacanian baby is frustrated in two senses. On the one hand, the baby seeks to "identify with what he supposes to be the object of her [the mother's] desire" (Dor 98). The mother can never completely satisfy this baby's desire. What the baby really yearns for is the total fusional undifferentiation between mother and himself, as he once had when he was a part of his mother before he was born. On the other hand, the mirror image that the baby sees is, as Lacan describes, "the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development" ("Mirror Stage" 4). This illusory identity is outside of himself where he cannot really grasp it, as it "prefigures its alienating destination" (Lacan, "Mirror Stage" 2). What unites the "I"

with the image in the mirror are “the phantoms that dominate him” (Lacan, “Mirror Stage” 2-3).

Amae also remains frustrated because its prototype, the total unity with the mother, is, again, never to be regained. One wishes, “I want my identity to merge with yours. I want to disappear into you.” Such an extreme merging of identities is possible only in fantasy. Doi’s concept of *amae* is like Lacanian desire: they are both an unattainable longing, and, they are both about “wanting it anyway.” Doi states, “*amae* is more keenly felt as a desire in frustration than in fulfillment” (“Concept” 350). The state of frustration in *amae* is also referred to as *amae* (Doi, “Concept” 350). That *Amae* is never fully satisfied is shown in Doi’s discussion of an “inverted form of *amae*” (*Anatomy* 39) as well as of “restraint,” where one often has to “hold back” his desire for *amae*. Doi argues, precisely because one wants this kind of *amae* relationship, “one holds back with the idea that one must not presume too much (*amaeru*) on the other’s good will. The fear is at work [. . .] that unless one holds back, one will be thought impertinent and disliked accordingly” (*Anatomy* 39). In other words, unless one can assume the existence of a reliable *amae* relationship, one has to restrain and hold back from assuming the other’s good will. But this restraining and holding back is already within the world of *amae* in that it entails within it the longing for that relationship where one can totally *amaeru* to the other.

Mother’s Desire and Mother’s Mother

As discussed earlier, Irigaray speaks *as if* all men are terrified by the devouring mouth of the monster mother. Irigaray attributes this fear to the child’s fantasy vis-à-vis his mother.

> The mother has become a devouring monster as an inverted effect of the blind consumption of the mother. Her belly, sometimes her breasts, are agape with the gestation, the birth and the life that were given there without any reciprocity. Except for a murder, real and cultural, to annul that debt? To forget dependency? To destroy power? (Irigaray, "Bodily" 40).

That a mother wants to devour the child, in this fantasy, is an imaginary maternal desire conceived by the child. It is not, in this sense, the mother's maternal desire. Irigaray's devouring monster says nothing about what a mother wants. But it is premature to quickly dismiss the devouring monster as a mere fantasy. It does not say that the mother wants to devour the child, but it does not say that the mother does not want to, either.

In an edited book titled *What do Mothers Want?* a collection of essays by clinical psychoanalysts, Daniel Stern, a psychoanalyst known for his seminal book, *The Motherhood Constellations,* compares a mother's falling and being in love with her baby to that of the two adults. He lists ten features of falling in love, or ten factors that the mother-baby couple in love has in common with the adult couple in love. Among the list is the familiar features in love such as over-evaluation of the other person, intensity of the gaze, baby talk and baby face, and so on, but what is significant in terms of mother's subjectivity is where Stern discusses "a sort of mental interpenetration or submersion in the other" ("Psychic Landscape" 7). He explains, "This business of plummeting into the other person and being exquisitely sensitive to what that person may be thinking, feeling, wishing, intending at any one moment is part of the lovers situation, and it makes people extremely attentive and sensitive to one another" ("Psychic Landscape" 7). Stern is

dealing with intersubjectivity here, which is, in his words, "the interpenetration of minds, so that one can say, 'I know that you know that I know,' or 'I feel that you feel that I feel . . .'" ("Psychic Landscape" 7). He also refers to other similar terms such as identification with the other, or emotional contagion, or resonance, or projective identification as other ways to talk about the same thing ("Psychic Landscape" 7). He proposes a hypothetical situation in which as "you," a mother, watch "me," the baby, and pay close attention to me, "you know what it is like to be me. You are inside my body in a virtual sense" (Stern, "Psychic Landscape" 8). He further elaborates, "You have participated in the experience of the other. You are inside the other's skin. This is what is going on between a mother and a baby and between lovers, all the time. There is a constant imagining or being inside the skin or participating in the other's experience" ("Psychic Landscape" 9). Tracing the other's thoughts so closely in such a way that "I feel that you feel that I feel," and participating in the other's experience so intimately that one is virtually "inside the other's skin" seems highly erotic to me, but of course Stern is not talking about sex. Even as he discusses another feature in love, "the desire to touch and embrace, be close and have physical contact," he makes it clear that he is "not talking about sex" ("Psychic Landscape" 10), lest the readers might think that he is?

In her chapter in the same book above about what a mother wants, Rosemary Balsam approaches the topic of mother's "sexual experience" in relation to a baby more boldly. She refers to a presentation made in 1911 by Dr. Margarete Hilferding, the first woman member of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. Hilferding announced that "there is no innate mother love" and that "it is by way of the physical involvement between mother and child that love is called forth" (Nunberg and Federn 114; cited by Balsam,

"Loving" 23). Citing from Hilferding's presentation, Balsam summarizes that "Mother love, she believed, was not innate in any biological sense but could be acquired through the experiences of nursing and physical care of the infant" (Balsam, "Loving" 23):

> In her [Hilferding] opinion, the child becomes a "natural sex object for the mother" (p. 115). "It can be said that the infant's sexual sensations must find a correlate in corresponding sensations in the mother," she stated, and "*if we assume an oedipal complex in the child, it finds its origin in sexual excitation by way of the mother*" (p. 115, italics added). (Balsam, "Loving" 23, italics by Balsam)[12]

As early as 1911, as Balsam reports, Hilferding was already aware of the erotic pleasure a mother feels as she cares for her baby: "A mother's sexual experience, for Hilferding, was evoked in mutual connection with the baby. Her pregnant body's responsive sensations to fetal movement or her pleasure and excitement at milk shooting into the breast Hilferding saw as powerful physical organizers of a mother's mental life" (Balsam, "Loving" 24).

To understand "what a mother wants" fully, however, mother's maternal desire above needs to be complemented with mother's daughterly desire. I shall now turn to the ways in which mother's subjectivity entails her daughterly subjectivity as a daughter of her own mother. As Stern describes, motherhood bring to the new mother three different yet related discourses: "the mother's discourse with her own mother, especially with her own mother-as-mother-to-her-as-a-child; her discourse with herself, especially with herself-as-mother; and her discourse with her baby" (*Motherhood* 172). Balsam refers to these multiple layers of subjectivity in her "The Mother within the Mother": "the

[12] The page numbers are given by Balsam quoting Hilferding in Nunberg and Federn.

fantasies and mental processes involved in becoming a mother lead many observers to note the repeating pattern of an adult who "gives birth" to a child, who in turn "gives birth" to an adult, ad infinitum" (482). Referring to Jung's comment that "Every mother contains her daughter in herself and every daughter her mother, and every woman extends backward into her mother and forward into her daughter" (Jung 149; cited in Balsam, "Mother" 482), Balsam explains that "This is a recognition in metaphor of a psychological system of projection, introjection, reprojection, and reintrojection of certain unconsciously incorporated and imitated elements of the 'm/other,' be they in body or mind" ("Mother" 482).

It is not surprising to find that a new mother can be preoccupied with her own mother. In his clinical psychoanalytic study of new mothers, Leon Hoffman argues that "new mothers can be very preoccupied with their own mothers and can replay the relationship with their mothers in a transferential way with professionals and nannies who can become surrogates for their own mothers" ("When Daughter" 652). On the one hand, the mother may be preoccupied with her actual mother, who may or may not be there for her. New mothers may look to their own mothers for support, confidence, and maybe some practical help and advice. As Hoffman suggests, "New mothers need affirmation from their own mothers and the mother surrogates because, in their new roles as mothers, they experience a sense of helplessness and anxiety and have difficulty tolerating aggression, ambivalence, and conflict" ("When Daughter" 652). Even if the mother may not be seeking any support or affirmation from her mother, at least she may identify with the mother. As Balsam suggests, "the biologically based elements of a woman's life, such as the facts of mature body shapes, menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and

menopause, carry with them the most conscious and yet the most unconsciously powerful markers of psychological identifications with the mother" ("Mother" 483).

On the other hand, and more interestingly, the mother's mother with whom a new mother is preoccupied is only partly her actual mother and mostly her creation. In her paper titled "There's No Such Thing as a Mother,"[13] psychoanalyst June Bernstein explains,

> we create our mothers in the image of our drives. When we feel loving, we create the good mother (or the good breast), and when we feel destructive, we create the evil persecutory mother (or the bad breast). So, we project a mother based on our internal state, and then introject her, and she remains inside us and becomes the focus of our view of the world and, much later, of our analysis. The world is capacious and varied enough that we will always be able to find situations and people that conform to the internal images we have created. *Ergo* there is no such thing as a "real" mother; there is only our creation. (79)

Now, a mother's mother is the mother's creation "doubly" because it is now a combination of the initial creation and the re-creation of the creation as the new mother, through her experience of mothering, regresses to her own infancy and re-experiences, psychically, the mother-baby relationship of her own infancy.

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[13] This statement is, of course, a pun on Winnicott's well-known statement, "There is no such thing as an infant," that I have discussed in this chapter, too. According to Bernstein, her title is a sentence that Phyllis W. Meadow "famously declared in classes" (Bernstein, "There's No Such Thing as a Mother" 79).

In her psychoanalytic work on motherhood as a developmental process, Therese Benedek finds this regression into one's own infancy that a mother experiences through her own mothering extremely beneficial:

> The mother, [. . .] having been a child and having introjected the memory traces of being fed, nursed, cared for, in her own mothering experiences relives with her infant the pleasure and pains of infancy. The empathy of the mother for her child originates in the experiences of her early infancy which are reanimated by the emotions of the current experience of her motherhood. Through the gratifying experiences of mothering, sustained by her thriving infant, the mother substantiates the confidence in her motherliness. (395)

Benedek suggests that as this regression "stirs up in the mother the preverbal memories of the oral-dependent phase of her own development," the mother can work through the primary, oral conflicts with her own mother (396). Benedek calls this resolution of those conflicts "intrapsychic 'reconciliation' with the mother" (396).

Nonverbal Understanding as Erotic Fantasy

After suggesting that maternal erotic transference and *amae* may be comparable concepts, Wrye continues, "However, I take issue with Doi when he comments that these states must remain uninterpreted, and simply silently appreciated" (Wrye, Review 192). But Doi did not exactly say that *amae* must remain uninterpreted. What he said, instead, is that "*amae* should be acknowledged only nonverbally" ("*Amae* and Transference" 171). He affirms that "the transference-love as an expression of *amae* [. . .] can and, as a matter of fact, should be" conveyed to the patient ("*Amae* and Transference 171). But, he says,

the analyst cannot give the *verbal* interpretation using the term *amae* ("*Amae* and Transference" 171). Doi emphasizes the non-verbalness of *amae* where "verbalization spoils the wish to *amaeru* and makes its true satisfaction virtually impossible" ("Concept" 350). Unlike love in the West that has to be, or so Doi suggests, expressed in concrete word and deed, *amae*-feelings are only vaguely "conveyed and appreciated only non-verbally" (Doi, "Concept" 350). In "*Amae* and Transference-Love," Doi cites a clinical example by Evelyne Schwaber reporting an instance when she detects such *amae* in her patient:

> Then I realized there was an element I had not addressed. The patient's way of relating was to recount an experience she'd had without any hint apparent to me that she was seeking a particular response and to become furious with me afterwards, when I failed to comment about the concern which she only then made explicit. I shared my observation of this sequence with her, asking her why she made her feelings clearer to me only afterwards. And she answered: 'I want you to understand me without my having to spell it out. If you really care about me, you would know; if I have to ask, it feels like begging. Even if you then understand, it is no longer the same.' (Schwaber, "Interpretation" 234)

Although Schwaber does not use the word "*amae*," she realizes that the patient wants to *amaeru* on her. Here, the wish for *amae* is fundamentally a wish to be understood without having to say it, which shows the patient's longing for care and attention. Schwaber, in turn, associates *amae* with the mode of recognition that she finds as having a profound potential in her paper on the term "interaction":

> As a patient reflecting on her treatment said to me, 'You understood the way my mind works without saying it should work another way; you found logic in my responses; that lets me experience more about how my mind works.' Again, this effort to locate the internal logic in the patient's response is not a matter of 'affirmation'—it is not to say the patient is 'right'—but simply of elucidation. It is this recognition itself—what Sander calls the 'moment of meeting' (1992), and Doi links to the Japanese concept of *amae* (1989, 1993)—that holds within it the key to the nature of therapeutic action. ("Towards" 563)

She also refers to *amae* in her discussion of "analytic listening," concluding that "To interpret is to watch, to listen and to recognise; if articulated, it can be a moment of meeting, an expression of *amae,* and perhaps—as our modern world-view tells us of our inescapable impact on whatever we observe—it may be seen as a granting of existence itself" (Schwaber, "Psychoanalyst's Mind" 280).

Wrye, too, recognizes her patient's "great relief at feeling understood," although she attributes this relief to the interpretation that she offered him ("Hello" 108). Upon closer reading, even though Wrye maintains her faith in verbal interpretation, it becomes apparent that she is imaging "words" to be much more than "words": "He [the patient] would also describe a sleepy, sensual pleasure at times in response to interpretations. It seemed to him that they felt like a warm 'word bath' in which he could be soothed, or a longed-for lullaby, as he moved slowly into a maternal erotic transference" (Wrye, "Hello" 108). It seems, then, even though Wrye expressed that she "takes issue with

Doi" about the silent appreciation of *amae*, she is really in agreement with Doi, particularly as she explains the reasons for her issue with Doi as follows:

> It seems to me that in order to [. . .] creatively engage transference love in all its primitive and later permutations, [. . .] the analyst must not completely abstain, but rather, within parameters of analytic propriety, invite these states into the analytic dialog. The analyst must be able to use his or her own countertransference bodily based resonances to the patient, making the unconscious conscious and thus engaging the transformational potential of preverbal aspects of transference love. (Wrye, Review 192)

Even the words, it seems, are part of "bodily based resonances," bringing *amae* and maternal erotic transference even closer. Both Doi and Wrye recognize that verbal communication is inadequate. While Wrye says, "Where even speech can be erotized yet nevertheless experienced as strangely inadequate, what the patient longs for is contact with the analyst's voluptuous body or with bodily products" (*Narration* 63), Doi would call such longings *amae*.

The nonverbal language of *amae* as described by Doi may suggest a different relationship with a language, a language not of reason (logos) but of the body (eros), a language that embodies the preverbal infantile relationship with the mother. Such language, one may expect, is close to what Irigaray envisioned in her essay, "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother":

> We must also find, find anew, invent the words, sentences that speak the most archaic and most contemporary relationship with the body of the mother, with our bodies, the sentences that translate the bond between her

> body, ours, and that of our daughters. We have to discover a language which does not replace the bodily encounter, as paternal language attempts to do, but which can go along with it, words which do not bar the corporeal, but which speak corporeal. (Irigaray "Bodily" 43)

Even if the nonverbal understanding through *amae* is indeed the "sentences that speak the most archaic and most contemporary relationship with the body of the mother," however, such sentences are not as empowering as Irigaray may have envisioned. First of all, the archaic mother that both Irigaray and Doi seek to keep alive is, as discussed in length, an illusion, a fantasy. The effort to keep alive that thing which has never existed in the first place remains futile. But a fantasy, at times, can be more powerful than reality. The regressive fantasy of the idealized, omnipotent, all-embracing mother fanatically exalts and constrains mothers at the same time.

Secondly, as Margherita Long, a scholar of Japanese literature, summarizes, "claims that Japanese society promotes cozy mother-child dynamics such as intimacy, indulgence, and protection are always accompanied by claims that the same dynamic makes Japanese society infantile, suffocating, and pathological" (Long 10). Long is referring to Yoda Tomiko's historicist study that critically examines the powerful cliché, the "notion that Japan is a maternal society (*bosei shakai*)" (Yoda 865). While Yoda's argument would have benefitted from understanding *amae* as a masochistic attempt at pleading one's vulnerability in order to passively manipulate the other, of which Yoda seems to be unaware, I agree with her concluding remark that "The 'Maternal Japan'' has not given us "much cause for simple celebration" (Yoda 898). Yoda argues,

> The sociality of *amae* as described by Doi, therefore, is far from being a ‘‘pre-repressive’’ utopia—a regression to the pre-Oedipal state of unrestrained dependency on the maternal indulgence. Rather, it is a complex social structure involving multiple subjects who consent to and uphold rules regulating the distribution of status, privileges, and power among its members. The sense of undifferentiated unity within this group is approximated only if everyone, including the most privileged (and indulged) member, respects and reproduces such regulations and contributes to the maintenance of the collectivity. (876-77)

Although Yoda further argues that “The theory of *amae*, therefore, exploits the image of the mother-child dyad, which is perceived to be the most primary, intimate, and unconditional of all human bonding, in order to naturalize the insularity, undifferentiated wholeness, and plenitude of affective ties attributed to Japanese group dynamics” (877), it seems to me that it is “the most privileged,” not “the theory of *amae*,” who is doing this exploitation. Moreover, it is the theory of *amae* that is being exploited by the paternalists and the maternalists alike. They give *amae* a bad name, so to speak. In any case, whether one is aware of the maternalist or paternalist[14] agendas, it can be argued that the

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[14] Yoda explains “paternalists” as follows:

> they claim that the paternal principle—law, discipline, independence, objectivity, the privileging of public virtues over personal desire and so on—has been greatly eclipsed in society at large. In place of father/paternal they perceive the harmful excess of motherhood and the maternal principle both inside and outside homes, encouraging uncontrolled egoism, narcissistic and hedonistic consumer culture, and the hysteria of entitlement and victimhood. (865-66)

nonverbal language of *amae* is also used and abused by the same privileged members for the same purpose of exploitation and maintenance of the collectivity. Hence, unfortunately, even if *amae* were indeed a language "that speak the most archaic and most contemporary relationship with the body of the mother" (Irigaray "Bodily" 43), those who speak it remain constrained by each other.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the erotic fantasy regarding the mother, looking at the mother both as the object of fantasy and the subject who is doing the fantasizing. On the one hand, looking at the mother as the object suggests that "there is no such thing as a 'real' mother; there is only our creation" (Bernstein, "There's No Such Thing as a Mother" 79). When that is the case, the devouring monster mother, who wants to eat the child in her mad desire to become one with it in an ultimate fusion, too, is our creation. On the other hand, however, looking at the mother as the subject affirms that she, too, *really* wants to eat the child—metaphorically speaking, of course. But then again, such desire may not be her own desire, since she may be merely reacting to the child's fantasy. Or is she? Furthermore, as I have explained, the mother may also be reliving her infantile fantasy as the daughter of her own mother. Drawing on Wrye's discussion of maternal erotic transference allowed me to articulate what makes the mother erotic.

While Wrye's practical contribution to clinical psychoanalysis is in her discussion of maternal erotic countertransference and the ways in which the analyst responds to the patient's maternal erotic transference, such clinical materials regarding the actual analytic sessions are beyond the scope of my current study. Nonetheless, the language that she uses offers an insight into how the act of mothering can appear erotic when fantasized

outside of the actual mothering: “The therapist’s own fantasies and dreams may include intimate physical contacts with the patient’s body: birthing, nursing, toileting, dressing and undressing—acts of parenting” (Wrye, *Narration* 82). *Amae*, Frank Jonson defines while summarizing Doi, is intrapsychically present as a “motive or ‘desire’ that becomes expressed as yearnings and expectations to be held, fed, bathed, made safe, kept warm, emotionally comforted, and given special cherishment” (Johnson 157). The corresponding motive or desire to let the other *amaeru*, then, can be translated as the desire to do exactly that to the other. In countertransference, according to Wrye, the analyst may experience the grandiose fantasy in which “one will cure a patient within one’s ‘perfect womb’ or with one’s ‘magical breast’” (*Narration* 82). Furthermore, the analyst “may also feel inclined to be maternally seductive, to invite the apprehensive patient into a ‘warm bath’ of softly beckoning words, which serve only to soothe rather than interpret and advance treatment” (Wrye, *Narration* 82-83). Obviously, bathing is Wrye’s favorite image in explaining maternal erotic transference-countertransference, as in “word bath” cited previously. And more bathing follows below:

> Involvement in preoedipal erotic experience is not about genital sexual intercourse; it is far more diffuse and relates more to fantasies about feeding, bathing, and diapering and perverse variations of these wishes than to genital intercourse. What the patient longs for is contact with the early mother’s voluptuous body (represented by the analyst’s body) or with bodily products. (Wrye, *Narration* 86)

All the caveats she lists notwithstanding, Wrye maintains that maternal erotic transference can "even be pleasurable, in the same primal way that playing in a mud puddle or a bath can be enjoyable" (*Narration* 67).

Even more erotic than the bathing metaphor is the image of being "inside the other's skin," which, according to the above mentioned psychoanalyst Daniel Stern, is "what is going on between a mother and a baby and between lovers, all the time" ("Psychic Landscape" 9). Wrye recognizes this image in analytic sessions as "Both participants may face the longing for, and terror of, being one in the same skin, but it is rarely accessible to conscious thought" (*Narration* 86). But save madness, in actuality, it is impossible to be really "one in the same skin"; cannibalism and intercourse are only poor approximations anyway. It may be actualized only virtually. In explaining intersubjectivity, Stern refers to "the interpenetration of minds, so that one can say, 'I know that you know that I know,' or 'I feel that you feel that I feel . . . ,'" as equivalent of being inside the other's body in a virtual sense ("Psychic Landscape" 7).

Whatever one calls such interpenetration of minds ("resonance," "emotional contagion," "identification," or "projective identification"), it can be, on the one hand, euphoric, a virtual actualization of the fantasy of fusion, and coercive, violation of the bodily boundary, on the other. Wrye refers to what Winnicott calls "direct communication" (Winnicott, "Playing" 54) in this context. While Winnicott views "direct communication" unfavorably by saying that "direct communication [. . .] belongs to psychopathology or to an extreme of immaturity" ("Playing" 54), Wrye goes along with psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden's understanding of "direct communication" as projective identification (Wrye, *Narration* 67). According to Ogden, "It is 'direct' in the

sense that it is communication by means of a direct induction of a feeling state in another person that is not predominantly (and often not at all) mediated by verbal symbols" (Ogden, *Matrix* 239; cited by Wrye, *Narration* 67). Ogden further elaborates on projective identification as a "direct communication" as follows:

> In projective identification, the projector by means of actual interpersonal interactions with the "recipient" unconsciously induces feeling states in the recipient that are congruent with the "ejected" feelings. In addition to serving defensive purposes, this constitutes a fundamental form of communication and object relatedness. [. . .] Projective identification is a "direct communication" (Winnicott, 1971, p. 54) in that it is unmediated by interpreting subjects; instead, it is predominantly a communication between the unconscious of one person and that of another. ("On the Dialectical Structure" 28-29)

Ogden points out that such mode of communication can be "experienced by the recipient as coercive" ("On the Dialectical Structure" 29): "There is no choice: one not only finds oneself playing a role in someone else's internal drama, one feels unable to stop doing so. The recipient feels controlled from within" ("On the Dialectical Structure" 29). But he also suggests that it can lead to psychological growth if the recipient can "contain the induced feelings without simply dumping them back into the projector" ("On the Dialectical Structure" 29). Such "processing" can then generate "a new way of experiencing the old psychological contents," not by modifying the "psychological contents" but by modifying the "intersubjective context" (Ogden, "On the Dialectical

Structure" 29). If one is to acknowledge *amae* nonverbally as Doi suggests, it is probably through this process, be it "resonance" or "emotional contagion."

I am close to suggesting that everything Doi says with *amae*, psychoanalytically, can be said without using the word *amae*. Even without the word *amae*, an infant will continue to seek its mother, and lovers will continue to try to be in one skin. Although my study does not aim at responding to those who discuss *amae* as *nihonjinron* ("Japanese uniqueness" argument), it may have called into question both over-exaltation and over-denigration of *amae*. That such over-exaltation and over-denigration can occur regarding a single word says something about a strange discourse of *nihonjinron*, but that, too, is beyond the scope of this work.

This chapter brought together the sensuous mother—with her voluptuous body—and the sensuous baby—with its scrumptiously soft flesh—who clings onto its mother's breast. The erotic mother is both the object of infantile, regressive fantasies and the subject who is doing the fantasying. Underlying the images of erotic mother is the fantasy of infant's blissful wholeness with the mother, which actually goes back to the fantasy of the pre-natal blissful wholeness. These foundational fantasies often manifest in the images of the archaic mother goddess. My discussion of *amae* may disappoint those who seek the blissful wholeness in such images of infantile so-called oneness with the mother. At first glance, *amae* may seem as if it would allow for an actualization of pre-Oedipal utopia, where "the archaic relationship with the body of the mother" is not taboo and the "father" does not forbid "the bodily encounter with the mother," to use Irigaray's words ("Bodily" 38-39). One may imagine that in such a world, the link between the preverbal mother-infant sensuality and the adult erotic relationship would be

openly acknowledged and celebrated. In such a world, people would be speaking the language that is close to what Irigaray envisioned, a language that "speak[s] corporeal" (Irigaray "Bodily" 43), a language that embodies the preverbal infantile relationship with the mother. My discussion of *amae*, however, showed that even though the nonverbal understanding through *amae* may indeed be the closest approximation to such a language, it is more suffocating, insular, and constraining than empowering.

CHAPTER 2

Motherhood and Transience: "I am mourning the end of my child's babyhood"

Introduction

Contrary to the popular myth of untarnished maternal love, scholars in both feminism and psychoanalysis suggest that maternal ambivalence—coexistence of love and hate for the child—is normal and healthy, and that recognizing and accepting maternal ambivalence, hence rendering it manageable rather than unmanageable, has a positive effect on mothering (Parker). But just because someone tells a mother to accept her ambivalent feelings or aggressive fantasies against her child, it does not mean that she would do so without shame and guilt. While mothers know that they do not have to be perfect and that they do not have to conform to the idealized image of motherhood, they still live in the culture that endorses the fantasy of the blissful mother-infant "oneness" described in the previous chapter as the prototype of the mother-child bond that is deemed sacred and omnipotent. Mother's ambivalence about her child and her aggressive fantasies are regarded as a repellent and disturbing aberration, incompatible with maternal love. I agree with the above mentioned recommendation for the mothers to recognize and accept their ambivalence, but we do not live in the society that allows them to do so safely, that is, for them to do so without feeling prosecuted by their inner shame and guilt or those that the culture imposes on them.

Another problem in recognizing and accepting maternal ambivalence is to assume that the child is the real and only object of her ambivalence or aggression just because her anger, resentment, frustration, and ambivalence may manifest as those against her child. Denying maternal ambivalence and aggression against her child when they exist is indeed

unhealthy, but singling out her child as the sole source and object of her anger and frustration, when, in reality, there are multiple and unacknowledged sources, is just as unhealthy. A mother may redirect her anger into her child when the real object of her anger is her husband who is sound asleep as their toddler has nagged her to get up on a typical Sunday morning. A mother may redirect her frustration into her child when the real reason for her frustration is her in-laws who let her child watch TV at the dinner table despite her no-TV-while-eating rule. In these cases, maybe it is helpful for her not to accept her ambivalence as targeted toward her child, but to question it.

I agree that maternal ambivalence needs to be rendered manageable rather than unmanageable, but I suggest that consciously and squarely accepting maternal ambivalence is not the only way to do so. Until the feminists' work on combating the cultural fantasy of idealized motherhood is complete, accepting maternal ambivalence is a luxury that only a few mothers can safely and intelligently achieve. Most mothers, who do not resort to child abuse, are, in effect, managing maternal ambivalence perhaps without recognizing or consciously accepting it as such. This chapter suggests that one of the ways mothers do so is through sentimentality. From an outgrown baby clothes and a child's picture taken a year ago to a love letter from her preschooler, anything that reminds the mother of the simple fact of her child's growth is also a reminder that her child will not stay a child forever. This simple fact that her child's childhood is transient makes the mother sentimental. Not so simple fact of children's vulnerability in general, manifested, for example, as shocking news of some stranger's child abuse or of childhood illnesses and deaths, also makes mothers sentimentally reaffirm their love for their children. Maternal sentimentality is often seen as a denial of hate and thus useless

as far as maternal ambivalence is concerned. But I will argue that for a mother to recognize the transience of her child's childhood, perhaps sentimentally, may be one of the ways for the mother to "hate her baby appropriately" (Winnicott, "Hate" 74) and thus render her maternal ambivalence manageable. I will draw on the concept of "transience," a term commonly used in Japanese aesthetics and Japanese literary studies as suggested by Japanese psychoanalyst Kitayama Osamu, and complement his configuration of the guilt-ridden child and the transient mother, which assumes the perspective of the child, with the mother's perspective. Building on the prior psychoanalytic studies on mothering, I will propose that the child is not only the mother's Winnicottian transitional object (Loewald) but also the transient object.

Transience and Japanese Aesthetics

Transience is a fact of life. Time passes by and nothing remains forever. Sigmund Freud, in his essay titled "On Transience," suggests that the sense of transience gives us "a foretaste of mourning" (306). Freud ponders why, for some people (his friend and a poet), transience "spoilt their enjoyment of beauty," and reasons that it must have been because of "a revolt in their minds against mourning" (306):

> The idea that all this beauty was transient was giving these two sensitive minds a *foretaste of mourning* over its decease; and, since the mind instinctively recoils from anything that is painful, they felt their enjoyment of beauty interfered with by thoughts of its transience. (306; emphasis added)

But Freud himself finds that transience is part of beauty: "Transience value is scarcity value in time. Limitation in the possibility of an enjoyment raises the value of the

enjoyment" (Freud, "On Transience" 305).[15] Freud also writes of "transience of all things" (305) and of the beauty that vanishes, and states that "their evanescence only lends them a fresh charm" (306). For Freud and probably for many of us, appreciation of short-lived-ness is part of beauty.[16] It follows, then, that those of us who enjoy the sense of transience as a part of beauty are enjoying this "foretaste of mourning," which does involve a kind of pain, but it is really a bittersweet *foretaste* of pain. As long as the transient object has yet to disappear, one only *foresees* its disappearance.

Such foreseeing of a potentially painful event and subsequent enjoyment of this foreseeing is reminiscent of Freud's well-known interpretation of the *fort-da* ['gone'-'there'] game of the one-and-a-half-year-old boy (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 14-17). After his speculation on the nature of the child's enjoyment of the object's temporary disappearance (that is, not just its reappearance), Freud adds,

> the artistic play and artistic imitation carried out by adults, which, unlike children's, are aimed at an audience, do not spare the spectators (for instance, in tragedy) the most painful experiences and can yet be felt by them as highly enjoyable. This is convincing proof that, even under the dominance of the pleasure principle, there are ways and means enough of making what is in itself unpleasurable into a subject to be recollected and worked over in the mind. (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 17)

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[15] Although Kitayama comments that "I understand why Freud did not accept the concept of emotional transience" (Kitayama, "Transience" 948), it was Freud's friend and a poet, not Freud, who "did not accept the concept of emotional transience."

[16] I appreciate the comment by Dr. Beth Seelig at Emory University about "transience" being a part of beauty: "That is why sunset is beautiful; and that is why fake-flowers are ugly."

Freud is making a direct connection between children's play and adults' cultural experience. From Freud's comments, one may understand appreciation of transience as a masochistic enjoyment of the bittersweet foretaste of mourning.

Despite Freud's essay on transience written in 1916, a Japanese psychoanalyst Kitayama Osamu states in 1998 that the concept of transience has not been a part of psychoanalytic discourse since then for the most part ("Transience" 938). Drawing on his clinical experiences in Japan and the Japanese aesthetic tradition, Kitayama proposes that the concept of transience has rich psychoanalytic implications. Although he claims that "Transience, I believe, is not only a feature of Japanese clinical phenomena but also universal to some extent" (Kitayama "Transience" 937), throughout his argument he emphasizes the Japanese cultural and historical particularity where the concept of transience is a widely acknowledged aesthetic repertoire, which defies his own claim for universality.

The basic meaning of transience, according to Kitayama, involves "not only transition but also emotions and sentiment relating to 'mutuality; transiency; evanescence; emptiness; frailty'" ("Transience" 940). In his explanation of transience, he turns to the Japanese aesthetic concept, "*mono no aware*" ['pathos of things and beings'[17]]. "*Mono no aware*" refers to "a deep, empathetic appreciation of the ephemeral beauty manifest in nature and human life, and it is therefore usually tinged with a hint of sadness; under certain circumstances it can be accompanied by admiration, awe, or even joy"[18]

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[17] This is the literal translation that Kitayama uses in his "Prohibition and Transience" 268.

[18] Edwin O. Reischauer, et al., eds. *Japan: An Illustrated Dictionary* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993) 1002, cited in Kitayama, "Transience" 947-48.

("Transience" 947-48). Although Kitayama uses the term *mono no aware* as if it were a ubiquitous sensitivity among Japanese, shared by all Japanese people at all times, its emergence and appreciation is actually limited to a certain historical period based on a certain historical context. In fact, the term "*mono no aware*" was supposedly "invented" by an influential *kokugaku* [national (Japanese) studies] scholar in the 18th century, Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), who turned to the literature of the much earlier Classical period (794-1192), as the essential characteristics that define Japanese and Japanese culture in contrast to foreign (such as Chinese) cultures (Ichiko et al. 48, 93-94).

Kitayama also turns to Japanese *ukiyo-e* ('the pictures of the floating world'), popular woodblock prints mainly produced in the Edo period (1603-1868) as illustrative of appreciation of transience. "*E*" in "*ukiyo-e*" means 'pictures,' and "*ukiyo*," composed of two characters, "*uki*" ('floating,' 'evanescent,' and 'frivolous') and "*yo*" ('world,' 'generation,' 'age,' 'era,' and 'society'),[19] is often literally translated as 'floating world,' and, as Kitayama suggests, is equivalent of 'transitory world' (Kitayama "Prohibition and Transience" 251) as well as 'everyday world' or 'worldly life.'[20] The term "*ukiyo*" can also be written with a different character for "*uki*" that means 'sorrow,' 'grief,' 'distress,' or 'melancholy.'[21] Written this way, "*ukiyo*" means both "sorrowful world" and "transitory world," connoting a Buddhist belief in the impermanence of all things.[22]

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[19] "浮" and "世," *Kanjigen* [Japanese dictionary of the characters of Chinese origin], Shohan [First edition], eds. Tōdō Akiyasu, Matsumoto Akira, and Takeda Akira (Tokyo: Gakushū Kenkyūsha, 1988).

[20] "*Ukiyo*," *Kōjien* [Japanese dictionary], 5th ed., ed. Shinmura Izuru (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1998).

[21] "憂," *Kanjigen*.

[22] "*Ukiyo*," *Kōjien*.

Kitayama emphasizes the Buddhist dimension in the concept of transience by referring to the Japanese appreciation of "*mujō*" which is "[o]riginally a Buddhist term expressing the doctrine that everything that is born must die and that nothing remains unchanged"[23] ("Transience" 940). Furthermore, he suggests that "Japanese have traditionally been keenly aware of the impermanence of things, and the sense of mujo has been a major theme in literature"[24] ("Transience" 940; sic). According to Buddhist thought, "it is the failure or refusal to acknowledge that existence is transitory through and through that gives rise to frustration" (Parkes 84). By definition, so to speak, *ukiyo-e* pictures affirm this sense of transience and the ephemeral and illusory nature of existence. Kitayama's analysis of the contents and themes in the *ukiyo-e* pictures shows "how a positive sense of transience develops into forms of popular entertainment such as flower arrangement, moon-viewing; and fireworks" (Kitayama, "Prohibition and Transience" 251), highlighting transience as both positive and necessary part of the aesthetic experience.

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[23] Kodansha International, *Japan: Profile of a Nation* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1995) 276, cited in Kitayama, "Transience" 940.

[24] Kodansha International, *Japan: Profile of a Nation* 276, cited in Kitayama, "Transience" 940. As much as I wish to avoid such a blanket statement, explanations like this one abound in Japan, even in the commonly used dictionaries and encyclopedias. Such abundance suggests, however, not the actual aesthetic preference by the "Japanese people" if there is such thing, which cannot be proven with random anecdotal episodes alone anyway, not to mention the problem as to what counts as "evidence" if one wishes to prove it, but their willingness to buy such a notion of "Japanese-ness" and their market's willingness to sell it. Commonness of such notion, whether one likes or agrees with it or not, may even reveal somewhat perverse, yet arguably human, Japanese or not, pleasure in and quest for self-definition. The discourse on the allegedly Japanese aesthetics, then, says more about the question of self-image than the question of "aesthetic sensitivity," real or imagined.

Of particular interest to the topic of my study among the *ukiyo-e* pictures on which Kitayama comments are the ones that depict mother-child relationships with transient and erotic undercurrents. Analyzing these pictures, Kitayama suggests that transience is the essence of both the mother-child relationships and the adult erotic relationships ("Prohibition and Transience" 252-253). In his early essays on transience, Kitayama mostly focused on the mother and child "viewing together" certain "transient" or "floating away" objects such as fireflies, "a swaying toy fish, a hazy moon, a face reflected on the water, soap bubbles and a snow rabbit" that will disappear soon as the recurrent motifs in the *ukiyo-e* pictures ("Transience" 939). At a later point, he more boldly asserts that "sexual intercourse and a mother-infant relationship are two distinctive themes of *Ukiyoe* pictures" ("Prohibition and Transience" 253), showing the pictures of "adult sexual intercourse superimposed on the mother-boy relationship" ("Prohibition and Transience" 235) as an example. Kitayama's insights accentuate the close link between mother-child relationship and adult erotic relationships, both tinged with the bittersweet recognition of impermanence and the pain of separation.

Although Kitayama's discussion of the masochistic appreciation of transience is insightful, I find his emphasis on the Japanese "uniqueness" problematic. Even though he states that "Transience, I believe, is not only a feature of Japanese clinical phenomena but also universal to some extent" (Kitayama "Transience" 937), his actual argument focuses exclusively on the Japanese culture in which, he claims, "the sense of transience is consensually validated" ("Transience" 948). He is trying to make a case for the concept of transience through associating transience with the context-laden Japanese terms like "*mono no aware*" and "*mujō*," and argues that transience has been a part of

Japanese aesthetics unlike in the West where the concept of transience has largely been under-acknowledged. In short, he is, on the one hand, wants to claim that he believes in the universal applicability of transience while, on the other, sticking to the Japanese historical and cultural particularity of it. This seemingly contradictory approach may render his discussion vulnerable to the "universal versus particular" debate, of which a "Japanese uniqueness" debate is one unproductive branch.[25]

One may wish to steer clear of such a sidetrack by simply clarifying that "universal" in this case means that the concept of transience is psychoanalytically translatable in the West—that is, it can be explained using the psychoanalytic terms that are familiar in the West—and that we can see examples of it in the West as well. "Particular" in this case refers to the culturally different degrees of its pervasiveness. The concept of transience may be more widely acknowledged and appreciated in one culture than another. One can say that in some cultures, such a concept has been a readily accepted, conventional part of their aesthetic repertoire, while it may not be the case in another culture. It does not mean, of course, that the individuals in the latter culture do not appreciate the same aesthetic sensitivity. In any case, in order for Kitayama to argue that transience is in fact universally applicable, he must, first, de-essentialize transience.

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[25] As explained in the previous chapter in relation to Doi Takeo's study of *amae*, "Japanese uniqueness" argument (*nihonjinron*) is understood as "an uncritical and culturally chauvinistic description that inflates the significance of Japanese culture and ethos, and uses self-serving explanations of national identity" (Johnson 97). I say it is unproductive because all too often the debate is carried out without the awareness that such a discourse on the allegedly "unique" Japanese characteristics says more about the question of self-image than the question of "Japanese-ness," whatever that means. See my footnote 24 on page 65.

Had he wanted to claim the universal applicability of transience, after resorting to such a particularistic concept as "*mono no aware*," he must un-do his particularization by showing that transience is not unique to any particular historical period at all (not even to the Japanese Classical period!), not unique to any people or culture, but rather, it is a part of beauty, experienced by anyone, at any point in time, whether or not it is consciously given a specific emphasis and acknowledgement.

Transience, Transition, and Mourning

Kitayama's discussion of transience has much to do with Winnicott's[26] well-known concept of "transitional objects and transitional phenomena." The "transitional object" is the baby's first "not-me possession." It is created (not found) by the baby at the time before the baby has fully established the concept of "self" and "other." It is somehow "not-me" but not completely "the other" since the baby has no such well differentiated concepts as of yet. A transitional object can be created out of many things such as a Teddy Bear, a blanket, a word or tune, or even the mother herself (Winnicott, "Transitional Objects" 90-91). The "transitional phenomena" refer to all the "illusory experience" that the baby has with such a transitional object in the "intermediate area between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived" (Winnicott, "Transitional Objects" 90). Kitayama defines "transience" by differentiating it from "transition":

> You may have been reminded of Winnicott's discussion of transitional objects. He wrote: 'Its fate is to be gradually allowed to be decathected, so that in the course of years it becomes not so much forgotten as

[26] As introduced in the previous chapters, Donald Woods Winnicott (1896-1971) is an influential British pediatrician, psychiatrist, and psychoanalyst.

> relegated to limbo … It is not forgotten and it is not mourned. It loses meaning . . .'[27] [. . .]. He I think, was describing feelings of transience as well as transitional movement, but Western writers including Winnicott may have difficulty in differentiating them, particularly when they use similar words. (Kitayama, "Transience" 939-40)

Although Kitayama's focus is on transience rather than transitional objects, he seems to be implying that transience is inherent in transitional objects, even though it has been unrecognized by Winnicott himself. Emphasizing that "transience is mainly an emotional state," Kitayama states that transition and transience "usually go together" ("Transience" 940):

> I think that if it is mourned, the transitional object becomes emotionally transient rather than just transitional. In my opinion, transition can be just joyful but it is often accompanied by a sense of transience or transiency that is more or less painful sentiment, sometimes even involving an artistic sense of beauty as well as senses of sadness, emptiness and depression. (Kitayama, "Transience" 940)

But rather than challenging Winnicott's comment on the transitional object that "it is not mourned" (Winnicott, "Transitional Objects" 91), Kitayama's notion of transience supplements it with a more mature phase of transitional objects, so to speak. In other words, while the painful sentiment of transience involving mourning does not apply to the infant's early experiences of the transitional objects, it is in fact very compatible with

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[27] Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena" 91, as cited in Kitayama, "Transience" 939-940.

the developmental theories advanced by Winnicott in his "The Use of an Object." My discussion thus situates the appreciation of transience in terms of developmental achievement.

In "The Use of an Object,"[28] Winnicott makes a point that in order for the baby to "place the object outside the area of [his/her] omnipotent control," the baby must destroy the object, and the object must survive the destruction (713). What is at issue here is "the subject's perception of the object as an external phenomenon, not as a projective entity, in fact recognition of it as an entity in its own right" (Winnicott, "The Use" 713). And what makes this achievement possible is the baby's destroying the object, for "the destruction plays its part in making the reality, placing the object outside the self" (Winnicott, "The Use" 714):

> It is important to note that it is not only that the subject destroys the object because the object is placed outside the area of omnipotent control. It is equally significant to state this the other way round and to say that it is the destruction of the object that places the object outside the area of the subject's omnipotent control. (Winnicott, "The Use" 713)

In short, the objects are not only destructible because they are real, but the objects become real because they are destroyed and they survive the destruction (Winnicott, "The Use" 713). The object's "capacity to survive" is crucial here, and it means "not retaliate" (Winnicott, "The Use" 714). In fact, for Winnicott, "destruction" does not mean destruction but "the object's failure to survive," without which "destruction remains potential" ("The Use" 714). Winnicott uses the word destruction "not because of the baby's impulse to destroy, but because of the object's liability not to survive" ("The Use"

[28] Originally read to the New York Psychoanalytic Society on November 12th, 1968.

714-15). He later clarifies that in the early stage of infancy, "the 'destructive' aliveness of the individual is simply a symptom of being alive" ("Comments" 239). By the term "destructive" he is really "referring to such things as eagerness" ("Comments" 240), and he has called such eagerness in the infant its "ruthless love": in the early stage of infancy, "whatever the infant does that hurts is not done in hate. I have used the word 'ruthless love' in describing this stage" ("Hate" 73).

In this context Winnicott does not talk about the baby's feeling guilty at such destruction nor about its feeling of gratitude for the object's survival. One may say that babies at this young age may not have these complicated feelings that can be called as such. But just because babies do not *recognize* their own feelings as guilt, for instance, it does not mean that they do not *feel* something that is closest to what can later at a more mature age be called guilt. As Lacan puts it, "Language has [. . .] a sort of retrospective effect in determining what is ultimately decided to be real. Once this is understood, some of the criticisms which have been brought against the legitimacy of Melanie Klein's encroachments into the pre-verbal area of the unconscious will be seen to fall to the ground" ("Some Reflections on the Ego" 11).

Melanie Klein (1882-1960), one of the most influential psychoanalysts particularly in analysis of children, theorizes the origin of the capacity for guilt-sense in children during what she calls "depressive position." She explains the concept of infantile depression position, which she first introduced in her "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States," as follows:

> I said there that the baby experiences depressive feelings which reach a climax just before, during and after weaning. This is the state of mind in

> the baby which I termed the ‘depressive position’, and I suggested that it is a melancholia in *statu nascendi*. The object which is being mourned is the mother’s breast and all that the breast and the milk have come to stand for in the infant’s mind: namely, love, goodness and security. All these are felt by the baby to be lost, and lost as a result of his own uncontrollable greedy and destructive phantasies and impulses against his mother’s breasts. (“Mourning” 345; sic)

Whether the depressive position is achieved at “roughly between four to five months of age” as Klein says (“A Contribution” 285) or “[b]y the age of six months” as Winnicott says (“Psycho-Analysis” 24), Klein and Winnicott agree that it is an important stage in normal development of the child and of its capacity for love. According to Klein,

> In the normal course of events the ego is faced at this point of its development—roughly between four to five months of age—with the necessity to acknowledge psychic reality as well as the external reality to a certain degree. It is thus made to realize that the loved object is at the same time the hated one, and in addition to this that the real objects and the imaginary figures, both external and internal, are bound up with each other. (“A Contribution” 285-86)

This is the stage, in Klein’s words, in which “the child comes to know its mother as a whole person and becomes identified with her as a whole, real and loved person” (“A Contribution” 286). The baby experiences the “‘loss of the loved object’ [. . .] over and over again when the mother’s breast is taken away from it, and this loss reaches its climax during weaning” (Klein, “A Contribution” 286).

As Klein explains, there is a close link between the infantile depressive position and normal mourning ("Mourning" 345). Some of the key features of the depressive position include anxieties for a loved object and the feelings of guilt and remorse (Klein, "A Contribution" 271), and urge to make reparation (Klein, "On the Theory" 34 and 36). In the preceding paranoid-schizoid position, the baby has imagined destroying the mother by cutting, biting, and devouring her. Now, in the depressive position, he/she feels guilty for injuring the mother and wants to make reparation. Klein defines reparation as including "the variety of processes by which the ego feels it undoes harm done in phantasy, restores, preserves and revives objects" ("The Psycho-analytic" 133). Reparation is closely related to feelings of guilt, and in several essays Klein discusses children's urge to make reparation to their mothers.[29] She argues that the conflicted feelings of love and hate and the conflicts between aggressive impulses and feelings of love lead to feelings of guilt and to wishes to make good ("Love, Guilt and Reparation" 310-311): "in our unconscious phantasy we make good the injuries which we did in phantasy, and for which we still unconsciously feel very guilty. This *making reparation* is, in my view, a fundamental element in love and in all human relationships" ("Love, Guilt and Reparation" 312-13; sic).

Actually, Winnicott, too, agrees with Klein's work on the origin of the capacity for guilt-sense, referring to her discussion of "depressive position" (Winnicott, "Psycho-Analysis" 21-25). Winnicott states that the sense of guilt is "a special form of anxiety associated with ambivalence, or coexisting love and hate" ("Psycho-Analysis" 21).

> Gradually as the infant finds out that the mother survives and accepts the restitutive gesture, so the infant becomes able to accept responsibility for

[29] For example, Klein, "Infantile Anxiety Situations" 217-18.

> the total fantasy of the full instinctual impulse that was previously ruthless. Ruthlessness gives way to ruth, unconcern to concern. [. . .]
>
> [. . .] As I have said, this involves a gradual recognition of the difference between fact and fantasy, and of the mother's capacity to survive the instinctual moment, and so to be there to receive and understand the true reparative gesture. (Winnicott, "Psycho-Analysis" 23-24)

Here, Winnicott is talking about Klein's depressive position, but his understanding of this state of mind can easily be applied to his argument about the baby's placing the object outside of its omnipotent control by destroying it and the object's surviving the destruction discussed above.

Reading Winnicott and Klein side by side, it seems that the Kleinian depressive position corresponds closely to the Winnicottian developmental milestone described above, in which the baby "place[s] the object outside the area of [his/her] omnipotent control" after he/she has destroyed the object and the object has survived this destruction ("The Use" 713). Although Winnicott does not talk about the feelings of guilt, mourning, and urge to make reparation in this context, both Klein and Winnicott are referring to the same developmental stage where the baby begins to reach toward object constancy, the stage preceded by the baby's destructiveness. They differ in their explanations of the baby's destructiveness: while Klein argues that the baby imagines cutting, biting, tearing up the mother (mother's breasts) because the baby is frustrated by its encounter with the reality—mother's temporary absence—Winnicott remarks that "In the destruction of the object to which I am referring *there is no anger*. There could be said to be joy at the

object's survival" ("The Use" 715). In fact, Winnicott argues that it is the destruction of the object that makes the reality, as discussed above: "From this moment, or arising out of this phase, the object is *in fantasy* always being destroyed. This quality of 'always being destroyed' makes the reality of the surviving object felt as such, strengthens the feeling tone, and contributes to object constancy. The object can now be used" ("The Use" 715). Recalling Kitayama's statement that "if it is mourned, the transitional object becomes emotionally transient rather than just transitional" ("Transience" 940), I also suggest that at the end of this very stage that Winnicott is describing, the transitional object *is* being mourned, and the baby is in the depressive position as discussed by Klein, and it is experiencing not just "melancholia in *statu nascendi*" (Klein, "Mourning" 345) but also transience in *statu nascendi*. Even though the term "transience" was never a part of Winnicottian nor Kleinian vocabularies describing child's developmental stages, I conclude that transience is an inherent, while unacknowledged, undercurrent in their theories.

Transience and Guilt

The sense of guilt crucial in Kleinian and Winnicottian developmental theories discussed above is further construed as "debt" in Kitayama's theorization of transience. Distinguishing the sense of guilt involved in the appreciation of transience from the sense of guilt as we normally understand, Kitayama prefers to use the term "debt" or "indebtedness" to describe the former instead of "guilt" ("Transience" 941). He is proposing the term "debt" or "indebtedness" as a psychological concept that "explains the mechanism of endless repaying accompanied by masochistic identification" ("Transience" 941). Unlike Winnicottian interpretation of guilt-feeling as healthy

development that depends on the mother's capacity to survive the baby's destructiveness "and so to be there to receive and understand the true reparative gesture" (Winnicott, "Psycho-Analysis" 24; sic), the child's guilt involved in the mother's transience implies impossibility of immediate reparation. The transient mother-figure in a Japanese folktale of "Crane Wife," one of Kitayama's favorite examples, does not survive the protagonist's destructiveness, and is not there to receive the reparation. The Japanese title of "Crane Wife," "Tsuru no ongaeshi," literally means "the crane's returning the favor." The short version of the story is as follows:

One day, a man rescues a crane caught in a trap in the mountains. She later comes down to the village as a beautiful human woman and they marry. From the title, the reader knows that the crane comes to the human world to return the favor of saving her life, but the husband does not know her true nature. The Crane Wife forbids the husband from looking into a certain room while she is in there. In the room, she weaves a beautiful cloth and tells the husband to sell it. After realizing how much wealth it brings, the husband asks her if she can make another cloth. She weaves more, but becomes weaker and weaker. One day, the husband breaks the prohibition.[30] Looking

[30] The Crane Wife's prohibition "don't look" and the husband's breaking it suggest the epistemophilic impulse described by Melanie Klein. She argues that "the early feeling of *not knowing* has manifold connections. It unites with the feeling of being incapable, impotent, which soon results from the Oedipus situation. The child also feels this frustration the more acutely because he *knows nothing* definite about sexual processes. In both sexes the castration complex is accentuated by this feeling of ignorance" ("Early Stages" 188; sic). A boy then conceals and over-compensates his frustration of not knowing by exaggerating his masculine position (Klein, "Early Stages" 191). Klein suggests a close link between sadism and the desire to know.

into the room, he discovers a crane weaving cloth out of her own feathers. The Crane Wife leaves the house and returns to the mountain.

In this folktale, the crane weaves cloth out of her own feathers, at first voluntarily as a token of gratitude for the protagonist's having rescued her, but subsequently to meet his increasing demand. The protagonist's demand has been hurting the crane, but when he realizes it, the crane flies away. The man is left with the sense of unredeemable guilt or debt, for he now has no chance to make a reparation or to "repay his debt to the wounded crane-wife [mother] who flies away in the end" (Kitayama, "Transience" 941). The story is beautiful, but it is not a happy story. It is also a story that shows that the feelings of guilt and gratitude are inherently intertwined and blended inextricably. Like a parent who passed away before the grown-up children had a chance to express their gratitude for raising them, "The bird-mother in the Japanese tale flies away in the end, leaving a sense of transience and debt or gratitude to the remaining people including its readers" (Kitayama, "Transience" 947).

Like Kitayama, Melanie Klein, too, acknowledges the close link between guilt and gratitude. But unlike Kitayama, Klein wants to distinguish between the two: "We frequently encounter expressions of gratitude which turn out to be prompted mainly by feelings of guilt and much less by the capacity for love. I think the distinction between such guilty feelings and gratitude on the deepest level is important" (*Envy* 189). But she, too, recognizes that "This does not mean that some element of guilt does not enter into the most genuine feelings of gratitude" (*Envy* 189).

In fact, a commonly used Japanese phrase, "*sumimasen*," expresses both gratitude and apology, which may sound like an odd combination to Western ears. "*Sumimasen*" is

used routinely in Japan to say both "thank you" and "I am sorry." It has a wide applicability, ranging from an equivalent of lightly and automatically uttered everyday phrase, "excuse me," to a more sincere statement of apology and gratitude. This apparently odd Japanese phrase for expressing both gratitude and apology may actually be an apt expression capturing the subtleties of the affects if one understands how feelings of guilt and gratitude are interrelated.[31] Interestingly, in English, too, the phrase "I am sorry" can be used to express two seemingly different affects: guilt (when apologizing) and sympathy (when someone is ill, for instance). In any case, when guilt and gratitude are intertwined, Kitayama's use of the term "debt" or "indebtedness" seems more precise than "guilt," for in English, too, the phrase "I owe you," which is an expression of debt or indebtedness, can be used as in "I owe you gratitude" and also in "I owe you an apology": that is, it can mean "You were kind to me and now I want to be kind to you in return" as well as "I have injured you and now I want to make it up to you."

Whether the felt affect is that of gratitude or guilt, it may come to be felt as irredeemable debt or indebtedness especially when the object is imagined to have been lost already. The transient Crane Wife in Kitayama's paper on transience ("Transience") represents not the actual mother but the imagined loss of the mother. This transient Crane Wife is already a guilt-inducing mother, but Kitayama emphasizes her guilt-inducing aspect more explicitly in his earlier paper titled "The Wounded Caretaker and Guilt." In that paper, the same Crane Wife represents a self-sacrificing mother who

[31] It may also imply, as Doi Takeo suggests, one's desire not to lose the other's good will (*The Anatomy* 32).

always puts the others' needs and wishes first and represses her own. Kitayama argues that the superficially selfless self-sacrificing behavior of the caretaker (mother) cloaks a coercive masochism, intended to force the other to feel guilty and "force the other to love the subject": "the self-sacrificing mother who tends to kill or hurt herself" forces a guilt feeling into the child ("The Wounded Caretaker" 230). The mother satisfies herself as well as "putting the other in the wrong" and generating "an unjustified sense of false accusation" with her masochistic behavior: "She cannot stop it for 'killing herself' can be amusing as well as exhausting. She is usually conscious and even proud of this self-injuring behaviour or self-devaluation and its underlying masochistic fantasy, which she may hide from those whom she takes care of" (Kitayama, "The Wounded Caretaker" 230; sic). The mother obtains great narcissistic gratification from her glorified masochism as she idealizes an exalted sacrificial image of the self. Her self-sacrifice is a demand for love. Her conscious or unconscious expectation is that when she is so "giving" that she hurts herself for the well-being of others, they will feel guilt if they do not love her or care for her in return.

The image of the transient mother in Kitayama's study suggests that the wounded mother has not, in the child's mind, survived the child's destructiveness, to use Winnicott's language. Some may blame her as an incapable, masochistic, and vulnerable mother who perpetuate the cycle of unhealthy guilt/debt. The mother-child relationship that keeps accumulating in the child the irredeemable debt toward the mother who, even if unconsciously, impels such indebtedness, however, is the logical outcome of the cultural fantasy of the altruistic mothering. The grown up children may then nostalgically sing an ode to motherhood, which may be an expression of their regret and

gratitude, in their belated attempt to redeem the irredeemable debt. Thus the exaltation of motherhood keeps reproducing itself.

Baby as Mother's Transient Transitional Object: "I am mourning the end of my child's babyhood"

In the above discourse on the transient, guilt-inducing mother, the mother's subjectivity is consistently absent. For instance in his discussion of transience, Kitayama's perspective is consistently that of the child. When the Crane Wife is seen as the transient mother, the child is imagining the mother to be gone or destroyed; the mother does not have a voice. A brief exception is Kitayama's discussion of the mother's masochistic altruism. But even there, the mother's subjectivity quickly fades as Kitayama argues how such behavior induces guilt in the child, after only a momentary focus on the mother's subjectivity. Similarly, mother's subjectivity is irrelevant in Klein's concept of depressive position. Only the baby feels guilty for injuring the mother and wants to make reparation. For Winnicott, too, the mother simply has to survive the destructiveness of the baby. In this final section of the chapter, I intend to explore the mother's subjectivity, focusing on the mother's perception of the child as transient rather than the child's perception of the mother as transient.

My discussion draws on the idea of motherhood as a developmental process that parallels the infantile developmental phase. For instance, psychoanalyst Therese Benedek (1892-1977) suggests that through mothering, the mother re-experiences and works through the primary, oral conflicts with her own mother, and that "the healthy, normal process of mothering allows for resolution of those conflicts, i.e., for intrapsychic 'reconciliation' with the mother" ("Parenthood" 396). She explains that

> Each phase of motherhood—pregnancy, lactation, and also the preparation for these during the progesterone phase of each sexual cycle—is accompanied by a regression to the oral phase of development. The female reproductive functions reactivate the object and self-representations integrated during the oral phase of her development and bring about a repetition of intrapsychic processes which originate in the mother-child relationship during her infancy. ("Parenthood" 394)

The regressive processes of the mother that allow for her parental development have already been elaborated by Melanie Klein in her discussion of maternal reparation as a working through of infantile conflicts:

> Our grievances against our parents for having frustrated us, together with the feelings of hate and revenge to which these have given rise in us, and again, the feelings of guilt and despair arising out of this hate and revenge because we have injured the parents whom at the same time we loved—all these, in phantasy, we may undo in retrospect [. . .] by playing at the same time the parts of loving parents and loving children. ("Love, Guilt, and Reparation" 312)

This can mean that "when [the mother] makes reparation to her children, it is, from a psychoanalytic point of view, her own mother who is the true recipient of her reparative impulse" (Parker 18). But since the mother is "playing at the same time the parts of loving parents and loving children" (Klein, "Love, Guilt, and Reparation" 312), the "true recipient" of reparation is not fixed either. The child may stand for the mother's own mother, but it can also stand for the mother herself, receiving reparation from the

mother's own mother, the part that is also being played by the mother herself. In fact, it is the mother's identification with her own mother as well as with her child that allows her to be both the mother and the daughter, at times simultaneously and at times alternately. Klein then argues that the mother's capacity to "[put] herself in the child's place and [look] at the situation from his point of view [. . .] with love and sympathy is closely bound up [. . .] with feelings of guilt and the drive to reparation" ("Love, Guilt, and Reparation" 318).

Building on the understanding of motherhood as both developmental and reparative process, Elizabeth Loewald, a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, proposes the idea that the baby may be considered as the mother's "transitional object" (397-401). Loewald's discussion concerns her patients who are new mothers, and its context is mainly their psychotherapy sessions.

> Having the baby there in the therapy—not yet born or recently born—as a transitional object, occupying (literally or figuratively) the space between patient and therapist as the patient's needs dictated; having the baby as a solace, a manipulated object, a butt, a lover—and also as a safe middleman for the passage of various feelings between patient and therapist, which could be meant seriously or playfully and never quite defined—was, I believe, an agent of positive change. (Loewald 400)

Of course, mothers normally "perceive the baby as a separate person," and Loewald explains that she is "extending the concept 'transitional object' beyond its original reference" (397-98). She states, "I am speaking rather of a particular time-limited developmental passage in the mother, through a transitional object stage of perception of

her child" (398). And she argues that this "'transitional object relationship' of mother to infant is a normal, adaptive, self-limited phase of her early perceptions of the child" (399). Referring to the everyday social occurrences, Loewald claims that "societies expect and give room for a natural psychological transition in a mother, from pregnancy, through delivery, up until somewhere around the end of the baby's first year" (401).

> The whole world seems to understand that the baby is the mother's transitional object. We ooh and aah over the infant, we half believe along with her that he is the most wonderful baby created. [. . .] We do not challenge the mother's deep absorption in every detail concerning this child. We have a pleasurable sense that maybe she and the baby, as a unit, are omnipotent. (Loewald 400-401)

The mother may playfully share this illusion of omnipotence, which is then gradually tempered with the mother's "coexisting adult reality testing" during the mother's "transitional object stage" in which the mother "will treat her baby in many ways as a transitional object" (Loewald 401).

Loewald's application of the term "transitional object" to the mother's perception of the baby is insightful, but as psychoanalytic psychotherapist Rozsika Parker says of the parallel between the maternal ambivalence and infantile ambivalence, it is important to "differentiate its possible origin in infantile development from the lived experience of mothers" (Parker 19). While a mother treats her baby as a transitional object, she is, unlike her baby, very much aware of the realness of her baby as a separate person as well as of the outer reality. Even as she regresses to the primary, infantile phase of development as suggested earlier, all of this experience, including her going through the

transitional object stage, is a *re*-experiencing. For Winnicott, transitional object and transitional phenomena refer to "the intermediate area of experience, between the thumb and the teddy bear, between the oral erotism and true object-relationship, between primary creative activity and projection of what has already been introjected, between primary unawareness of indebtedness and the acknowledgement of indebtedness ('Say: ta!')" ("Transitional Objects" 89). But the mother is already aware of her indebtedness to her baby. A mother may say to her infant, "You make me so happy!" for instance. A Japanese phrase, "Thank you for your birth,"[32] may sound strange to English speakers, but it is a familiar and popular, if new, expression in Japan. It is now used widely in various Japanese media such as mothers' blogs, memoirs and other books, magazines, and television. A mother's sentimental phrase such as this, said to her newborn baby, may allow her to express her sense of indebtedness.

She is also aware of the transience of her child's childhood. The awareness of transience is also a familiar part of mother's everyday experiences such as hearing amiable comments from her friends and relatives about her baby's "growing up so fast!," or looking at her toddler's babyhood pictures taken a year ago and realizing that her baby is no longer a baby, or being told by other mothers with older children that her child will be "leaving for college before you know it!" A mother of a pre-schooler once offered to baby-sit my then 8-month-old daughter, saying, "I am mourning the end of my child's babyhood." Two years later, I found myself saying exactly the same. Of course, most mothers are genuinely happy that their children are growing up. But these same mothers

[32] "生まれてくれてありがとう" or "生まれてきてくれてありがとう," or some variations of it.

may also be aware of the bittersweet foretaste of separation. A mother may indeed mourn with delight the end of her child's babyhood and eventually her child's childhood. According to Kitayama, transitional object becomes "emotionally transient rather than just transitional" when it is mourned ("Transience" 940). Building on Kitayama's theorization of transience and Loewald's proposition that the baby is the mother's transitional object, I would argue that the baby may be considered as the mother's "transient" object, not just transitional.

Interestingly, mothers even savor the sense of transience in relation to their baby. It seems as if the mother's recognition of her baby's transience enhances their love just as the aesthetic appreciation of transience enhances beauty. Imagining that her baby's babyhood does not last forever, that one day she is going to miss her child's babyhood, and that someday she is gong to look back at these nursing-every-three-hours, sleep-deprived days fondly and miss them, somehow makes the mother reaffirm her love and devotion for her baby. The mother may more acutely feel the sense of transience when she becomes aware of the baby's vulnerability and total dependence on the mother. As Parker says, "the imaginary loss of the child puts the mother in touch with the full force of her desire and love for the child" (25). The mother may imagine the loss of her child as she worries about the child's safety; the strong desire to protect her child is accompanied by the imaginary loss that she fiercely wants to prevent. Winnicott's comment on the following lullaby is a case in point.

> Rockabye Baby, on the tree top,
>
> When the wind blows the cradle will rock,
>
> When the bough breaks the cradle will fall,

Down will come baby, cradle and all.

Winnicott says that by singing a lullaby like this one "the parent is expressing hate in the words" ("Hate" 74). While Winnicott's use of the word "hate" may sound uncomfortably and inappropriately harsh in referring to what a mother may feel toward her baby, in any intense loving relationships, where there is love, there can also be hate, as manifest in a statement by anyone in love: "I love him, but I hate him! He drives me nuts!" While healthy coexistence of love and hate between lovers is culturally accepted as normal, maternal hate is culturally condemned as a repulsive anomaly and often met with disgust, which makes acknowledgement of maternal hate an extra burden that only a few mothers would bear. Incidentally, Winnicott, drawing an analogy between the mother's hate for her baby and the analyst's hate for his/her patient, says that "as an analyst I have ways of expressing hate. Hate is expressed by the existence of the end of the 'hour' [. . .] even when there is no difficulty whatever, and when the patient is pleased to go" ("Hate" 71). He is *this* close to teasing out the sense of transience that helps both the analyst and the mother "hate appropriately." On the lullaby, he suggests that these words perhaps help the mother's "ability to be hurt so much by her baby and to hate so much without paying the child out" ("Hate" 74). This lullaby may very well be an expression of hate, but Winnicott overlooks the mechanism behind the process. He says, "This is not a sentimental rhyme. Sentimentality is useless for parents, as it contains a denial of hate, and sentimentality in a mother is no good at all from the infant's point of view" ("Hate" 74).

While this lullaby itself is surely unsentimental, it seems to me that these unsentimental words are likely to make the mother sentimental with the thought of her

baby's potential death. In addition, guilt may result from having put her baby in danger in her fantasy. And then she may feel gratitude because her baby is not in danger in actuality despite her fantasy. Again, what is involved in this imaginary loss of the child is a recognition and appreciation of transience. The fact of transience itself is unsentimental, just like this lullaby, but recognition and appreciation of transience is sentimental, for it involves such feelings as guilt and mourning. This hypothetical mother is negotiating her maternal ambivalence through this lullaby that is about transience of the baby. I would argue that sentimentality actually *helps* the mother "hate appropriately" her baby. Sentimentality is not a denial of hate as Winnicott suggests, but a management of hate.

Nonetheless, Winnicott's discussion of the mother having to "hate appropriately" her baby illustrates the importance of maternal ambivalence. He says,

> A mother has to be able to tolerate hating her baby without doing anything about it. She cannot express it to him. If, for fear of what she may do, she cannot hate appropriately when hurt by her child she must fall back on masochism, and I think it is this that gives rise to the false theory of a natural masochism in women. ("Hate" 74)

Even masochism can be a way for the mother to negotiate her maternal ambivalence, although Winnicott does not consider it as an "appropriate" way to hate her baby. More "mother-centered" approaches to maternal ambivalence have proposed "normalizing maternal ambivalence" (Hoffman "Mothers' Ambivalence" 1225). Psychoanalyst Leon Hoffman, maintaining that maternal ambivalence is "ubiquitous and universal," suggests that "Keeping fantasies of aggression and the accompanying ambivalence about the child

completely out of consciousness can have a detrimental impact on the mother's childrearing" ("Mothers' Ambivalence" 1232). The aforementioned psychotherapist, Rozsika Parker, goes even further and asserts that maternal ambivalence can actually provide creative possibilities (4-8). She claims that "the conflict between love and hate actually spurs mothers on to struggle to understand and know their baby. [. . .] It is the troubling co-existence of love and hate that propels a mother into thinking about what goes on between herself and her child" (7). Many psychoanalysts have written about maternal ambivalence, but the focus has "more usually been on its negative outcome for the child, rather than on its contribution to maternal thinking" (Parker 12), and "maternal ambivalence is deemed the origin of patients' pathology" (Parker 164). Arguing against those who see maternal ambivalence as a "risk factor" (Parker 19)—pathological and/or pathogenic—Parker insists on exploring "manageable" and "unmanageable" maternal ambivalence, how "unmanageable" maternal ambivalence may be resolved, and how one may achieve "manageable" maternal ambivalence (6).

Drawing on Kleinian depressive position, Parker suggests that the mother negotiates her "entry into a maternal depressive position":

> Then we can see that the mother's achievement of ambivalence—the awareness of her co-existing love and hate for the baby—can promote a sense of concern and responsibility towards, and differentiation of self from, the baby. Maternal ambivalence signifies the mother's capacity to know herself and to tolerate traits in herself she may consider less than admirable—and to hold a more complete image of her baby. Accordingly, idealization and/or denigration of self and, by extension, her baby,

> diminish. But the sense of loss and sorrow that accompanies maternal ambivalence cannot be avoided. Acknowledging that she hates where she loves is acutely painful for a mother. The parallel is with the loss Klein's baby undergoes when it gives up the image of the all-perfect, all-loving mother. (17)

I would add that recognition of transience of the baby's babyhood or the child's childhood is an important part of this process. Transience is a part of everyday mothering, and recognizing it helps the mother "hate her baby appropriately" and achieve manageable maternal ambivalence.

Conclusion: Transience and Nostalgia

Even though transience is a fact of life, we may not realize how transient childhood is while in the midst of childrearing. When the infant wakes up every three hours and demands nursing, the mother may feel as if sleeping through the night is a luxury that she has forfeited forever. But just a couple of months later, the baby is sleeping soundly through the night, and the mother remembers those sleepless nights fondly with a bittersweet sense of nostalgia, since she now realizes that her baby does not stay a baby forever. Even before she realizes it herself, maybe other, more experienced mothers may tell her that her baby's babyhood does not last forever, that in fact time flies really quickly, so, be sure to enjoy it now. Then the mother, too, will later tell other new mothers that their newly born babies do not stay babies forever, and that they should enjoy their babies while they can. She is remembering her own child's babyhood nostalgically at the sight of those newly born babies and their mothers. In these instances,

the sense of nostalgia makes the sense of transience circulate and vice versa.[33] In other words, when nostalgia and transience are paired, the understanding of nostalgia as mainly the state of "inactivity and stasis" (Bassin 428) may be replaced by a more positive view of nostalgia, highlighting its generative aspect.

But such a positive, creative, generative aspect of nostalgia is often understated. Distinguishing between normal and pathological nostalgia, psychoanalyst David Werman, maintains that "Nostalgia is a ubiquitous human experience" (Werman 397). Although Werman recognizes that nostalgia "has been a major theme in myth and poetry; the Bible, Homer's Odyssey—the literature of all ages—give eloquent voice to this human phenomenon" (387), he does not go beyond the view of nostalgia as a "substitute for mourning, as an attempted mastery through idealization and displacement of a painful past" (398). He states that "nostalgia may prove to be a means of distorting the past" (396), but he does not refer to the possibility that this distortion can be generative rather than static. Similarly, building on the past psychoanalytic studies on nostalgia, Donna Bassin, a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst, defines nostalgia as "an incomplete mourning, an attempt to reenact reunion with the lost object," that involves a "bittersweet pleasure tarnished with the adult knowledge of loss" (Bassin 428). She writes,

> The pleasure of nostalgia resides in the search for the old object. Awareness of loss is avoided. This leads to an indefinite quest for an object that can never be found—a quest that ironically temporarily fulfills

[33] I borrowed the expression from Rozsika Parker who writes that "ambivalence [. . .] makes passions circulate" (20). Parker is drawing on Julia Kristeva's remark that "motherhood makes passions circulate" (Parker 20): "maternity [. . .] circulates passion between life and death, self and other, culture and nature, singularity and ethics, narcissism and self-denial" (Kristeva, "A New Type" 298).

> the desire. In nostalgia, the linkages are unrecognized, the mourning for the mother or powerful transformative other is refused, and one continually seeks to duplicate the transformational relationship outside of oneself rather than recreate it within. (429)

Again, nostalgia is seen as an unproductive, backward fixation. But one may notice that the pleasure in nostalgia resembles the pleasure in transience described by Kitayama. Both nostalgia and transience involve bittersweet knowledge of loss, but while the sense of nostalgia belongs to the loss in the past, the sense of transience belongs to the loss in the future. Nostalgia and transience may be said to be both alike and opposite at the same time, the two sides of the same coin. If the sense of nostalgia is not accompanied by recognition of transience—the awareness that nothing is eternal, that life goes on and that nothing will stop the flow of time—it may very well be the state of "inactivity and stasis." But transience, being a fact of life, finds its way into the sense of nostalgia, as in the case of the mother, for whom the nostalgic memory of her child's babyhood and recognition of the transience of her child's childhood are intertwined. One may also feel the sense of transience at the passing of the seasons while nostalgically remembering the same season of the years past. The spring of this year may remind us of the spring of the last year, or the spring of ten years ago, and we cannot but fail to be reminded of the passing of time. Again, the sense of transience and nostalgia are inseparable parts of each other, evoking and enhancing each other. Transience makes nostalgia circulate, not letting it stay inactive or static.

Bassin suggests that mothering evokes nostalgia (437). But in her attempt at "disembedding the mother as a subject in her own right" (426), she assigns nostalgia only

to the daughterly subjectivity of the mother, as a "longing for one's own mother (fantasized or real)," and "one of the obstacles to maternal subjectivity" (437). But the mother, as I discussed earlier, takes the role of the mother of her daughter and the daughter of her own mother at times simultaneously and at times alternately. Maternal subjectivity is always already blended with the daughterly subjectivity, or the mother's subjectivity as a daughter of her own mother. It is still the "mother's" subjectivity; but it does not consist of the "maternal" subjectivity only. Mother's subjectivity is a combination of maternal subjectivity and daughterly subjectivity, in addition to all the other possible types of subjectivities. Such fluid subjectivities also enhance circulation of nostalgia and transience, or incomplete mourning and foretaste of mourning, rendering them generative rather than static.

In a culture that does not hide its disgust against what it considers to be maternal anomaly, many mothers cannot afford the luxury of acknowledging their maternal ambivalence. In a culture that still clings on to the fantasy of idealized motherhood, telling mothers that the coexistence of love and hate against their children is normal and healthy may not be as empowering as one may hope. But, unrecognized maternal ambivalence does not have to lead to unmanageable maternal ambivalence. In fact, I argue, it is possible to render maternal ambivalence manageable without recognizing or consciously accepting it as such. This chapter suggested that one of the ways mothers do so is through sentimentality. The mother's sentimental realization that her child's childhood is transient allows her, inadvertently, to "hate her baby appropriately."

CHAPTER 3

The Mother Goddess: Okamoto Kanoko's "Sushi"

Introduction

Memories of one's mother are often tinged with a bittersweet sense of nostalgia. At first glance, Okamoto Kanoko's (1889-1939) "Sushi" (1939) may seem like just such a story— the nostalgic memories of a man's childhood, particularly of his mother. But just beneath the heartwarming—although not without a bittersweet sense of transience—narrative of the mother-son relationship lurks, quietly but unmistakably, associations with cannibalism, death, the bodily incorporation of food, the idealized fantasy mother, and the erotic image of the split halves[34] of the mother. This chapter examines the representation of the mother in a short story, "Sushi," by Okamoto Kanoko, one of the prominent female authors in Japan, suggesting the ways in which eroticism of the maternal as well as the sense of transience run as an undertone of the story. I will highlight the erotic fantasy of motherhood and "transient" mother-space in the story that is apparently about the incorporation of the "good" object and vomiting out of the "bad" object (in Kleinian[35] psychoanalytic terms), the "good" mother who feeds her child the "good" food, and the idealization of the "good" mother.

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[34] I am referring to "splitting" as explained in Kleinian object-relations theory—both a developmental achievement and a defense mechanism where a child separates objects into "good, gratifying objects" and "bad, frustrating objects." As explained below, the mother in the story is split into the "good" mother and the "bad" mother.

[35] As introduced in the previous chapters, Melanie Klein (1882-1960) is one of the most influential British psychoanalysts particularly in analysis of children.

"Sushi" begins with the frame-story where Minato, a gentleman in his fifties, becomes a regular customer of a small *sushi* restaurant called Fukuzushi. The frame-story is told from Tomoyo's (a high-school age daughter of Fukuzushi's owner-chef couple) perspective, until one day when Minato and Tomoyo accidentally find each other in the neighborhood and Minato starts telling her about his childhood, at which point the narrative perspective shifts to that of Minato. As a young child, Minato has a kind of psychological problem with eating. He avoids eating anything substantial to the point of starving himself. When his mother begs him to eat and he tries, he feels sick and vomits everything. In her attempt to help her child eat, his mother makes *sushi* for him playfully. His food aversion is cured. Minato grows up, gets married, and gets old. After his second wife dies, he quits his job with enough money to wander around, never settling down in one place. As Minato gets to the end of his recollection, the text switches back to the current time, where Minato finishes his conversation with Tomoyo. Since then Minato stops coming to Tomoyo's restaurant. Tomoyo misses him for a while but resolves that he must have moved elsewhere.

In Okamoto's works, the maternal and the erotic are often intertwined and blended inextricably. Her celebrated work, "A Mother's Love" ("Boshi jojō" [Mother-child lyric]),[36] for instance, is "a daring look at the erotic side of maternal feeling" (Mori 67), a semi-autobiographical novella in which Okamoto does not hide her "attachment too desperate and extreme to be considered typical, even by Japanese standards," to her grown-up son (Birnbaum 49). The mother in this novella says to herself,

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[36] In *Rabbits, Crabs, Etc.: Stories by Japanese Women*, Phyllis Birnbaum includes a partial translation of this story under the title "A Mother's Love" (51-97).

> My love for my son is not just some primitive maternal feeling. [. . .] It's a love that inspires my sense of poetry, makes me feel the whole romance of life, has transformed the way I think about everything. Yes, the love for my son is greedy, asking for much. Maybe it's good, such a love, maybe it's bad, but there must be good in a feeling that seems to be so basic. It's hard to decide about whether a certain feeling of love is good or bad when it is different from everything else. ("A Mother's Love" 79)

In the Japanese original, the mother uses the word "essence"[37] referring to her maternal feeing ("Boshi jojō" 204). This passage is an example of Okamoto's extravagant idealization of what she considers to be the "essence" of maternal feeling.

Okamoto is often called "narcissistic" by her biographers and by literary critics. In her insightful study and analysis of Okamoto's life and fiction, particularly focusing on the frequent labeling of Okamoto as "narcissistic," Maryellen Mori, an American scholar of Japanese literature, points out the "considerable gap between [Okamoto's] actual performance as a mother and her grandiose view of herself as an incarnation of the Great Mother archetype" (84). She refers to Okamoto's oft-cited mothering practice where she would tie her crying child to furniture in order to keep studying and writing (Mori 84; and Kubota 5), as well as Okamoto's son's (Okamoto Tarō, 1911-1996) recollection from his childhood of "being left alone for days at a time when he was ill" (Mori 84).[38] But if, as Mori aptly states, Okamoto's expression of maternal eroticism suggests an "infantile

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[37] "本質"

[38] Okamoto Tarō, *Haha no tegami* [Mother's letter], *Okamoto Tarō chosakushū* [Collected works by Okamoto Tarō], Vol. 7 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1980).

sense of 'oceanic fusion'" rather than "adult sexuality" (85), this apparent "gap" between the Great Mother archetype, of which Okamoto perceives herself as an incarnation and portrays as such in her literature (Mori 84), and the "narcissistic mother" that Okamoto may have been in actuality does not seem to be a gap at all, at least not for Okamoto anyway.

Similarly, in his praise of Okamoto's "narcissism," Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, a Japanese literary critic, refers to Okamoto's early short work, "Kishimo no ai" [Love of the mother-demon] (1929),[39] as the "key to understand Okamoto's literature" (8). Shibusawa calls "Kishimo no ai" Okamoto's early masterpiece, which "already reflects her life-long theme" (9), what Okamoto calls "violent identification process of love" that is *Kishimo*'s [mother-demon] desire to eat children (Okamoto, "Kishimo no ai" 107, also cited in Shibusawa 10). Decades before the feminist revival of *yamamba* [mountain witch] literature in Japan, Okamoto's literature already presents the devouring, dreadful, and (auto)-erotic maternal love as an inherent part, not only of the "Great Mother" myths and legends that include cannibalistic *yamamba*, but also of everyday motherhood as shown in "Sushi."

Some Japanese feminist literary critics such as Miyauchi Junko and Kōra Rumiko celebrate Okamoto's narcissistic identification with the "Great Mother" archetype, or the earth-goddess who is, supposedly, the source of all life, as an empowering expression of

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[39] The work is a retelling of a Buddhist tale about a mother-demon-goddess (*Kishimojin*) who steals and eats others' babies because they are irresistibly adorable, reminiscent of the extreme, dreadful aspect of maternal love in the "mountain witch" legend. Its first English translation by Charlotte Eubanks is included in Eubanks, 289-294, as "The Love of *Kishimo*." Its full version is in *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan, 1913-193*, ed. William J. Tyler (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008): 453-61.

resistance against patriarchy. Maryellen Mori, too, interprets Okamoto's "self-mythologizing through fiction writing" as "an act of resistance and a mode of self-empowerment" (101). Like Miyauchi and Kōra, Mori states that Okamoto's stories "revive a paradigm of femininity that is rooted in an ancient, mythical model of womanhood" which rejects restrictive gender norms (101). But such a romanticized version of the primordial goddess, too, is a construct of cultural fantasy, just another model of an ideal woman, the goddess the mother, who conveniently and unconditionally embraces and heals the man-child. The more Okamoto exalts what she considers to be the "essence" of motherhood, the further she is subsumed under the cultural fantasy of the blissful, sacred, and omnipotent mother-child "oneness." She is merely endorsing and enacting a typical male wishful fantasy.

"Good Mother" and "Bad Mother"

In "Sushi," Minato begins the story of his childhood as follows: "It may be true that a strange child is born into an old, decaying family. Or perhaps a child can feel more keenly than an adult a premonition that precedes the fall of the house. Or a baby could be affected by this strong premonition in his mother's womb even. . ." (46). This "strange" child, Minato in his childhood, could eat nothing but plain scrambled eggs and some dried seaweed for meals, and salted rice crackers for snacks. Everything else feels "painful for the child to eat. He felt the lumps of food with their color, smell and taste would contaminate his body. He wished for food as pure as air" (47). At this point for the boy, food is the "bad" object in Kleinian object-relations theory; such a "bad" food will "contaminate" his body. As he refuses to eat, he "felt he did not mind fainting, nor even dying. But instead of letting go, he [. . .] called out, 'Mother!'" (48):

> But he was not calling his own mother. He liked his mother best of all in the family yet he had the feeling that somewhere else there was a woman he could really call his "Mother." Of course, if that woman could have heard his calls and appeared to him, he might have fainted. Even so there was some sad comfort in calling to this woman. "Mother, Mother…." He kept calling in a voice [thin] like paper trembling in the wind. (48)

His mother comes to him right away and comforts him; he feels embarrassed and blushes because his mother mistakenly thought he was calling out for her (48). The link between eating, incorporating the object, which this boy feels may contaminate him, hence rejecting those "bad" objects, and his idealization of the "good" mother is conveniently presented in Minato's recollection of his childhood. The "bad" food is associated with the other women in his house—a maid and a cook—who prepare his food. As was common in wealthy households in the past, his mother does not usually cook. His family has household maids to do the housework such as cooking. So, the boy not only splits his mother into a "good" mother and a "bad" mother in his fantasy, but he actually has several other persons—household maids—who also represent the "bad" mother. When he forces himself to eat the "bad" food, the images of the "bad mothers," the household maid and cook, flash through him and he vomits:

> as soon as he swallowed, the thought that the food he had just eaten was prepared by women other than his mother wrenched his stomach. The image of the maid's red underwear flashing through her kimono and that of the darkish hair oil dripping down the side of an old woman who cooked rice rummaged through his stomach. (51)

The association between the erotic image—red underwear—and "contaminated" as well as "contaminating" food, with the dirty, repulsive hair oil of the old woman, is illustrated explicitly here. As the boy refuses those "bad" objects, that is, "bad" food prepared by the "bad" mothers, the "cold marble art object placed in the alcove" (47) that he licks in hunger may be a substitute for the mother's breast; but it is a "cold," milkless breast, rather than the "good" breast he may have once enjoyed and is now missing.

According to Melanie Klein, splitting of the objects into their "good" aspects and their "bad" aspects is one of the achievements of the first four months of life that she calls paranoid-schizoid position (Segal 35). The baby's experience with its first part-object, its mother's breast, can be satisfying but at times lacking or frustrating. Hence the baby perceives the "good" breast and the "bad" breast, giving rise to a "good" mother and a "bad" mother respectively. Persecutory anxiety and idealization in connection with splitting play the key role in the subsequent depressive position, which arises with the fear of "losing his loved objects" due to the fear of "persecution by terrifying objects" (Klein, "Mourning" 348):

> The ego is driven by depressive anxieties (anxiety lest the loved objects as well as itself should be destroyed) to build up omnipotent and violent phantasies, partly for the purpose of controlling and mastering the 'bad', dangerous objects, partly in order to save and restore the loved ones (Klein, "Mourning" 349).

The "Sushi" boy's rejection of food, perceived as a bad mother, as well as his apparent inability to achieve "object constancy"—what psychoanalyst Edith Jacobson calls a "fusion of good and bad maternal images into a unified 'good' but also sometimes 'bad'

mother" (Jacobson 63)—could be read as a defense against "persecution by terrifying object." The boy is constantly calling out for the "idealized" mother in whose goodness he could indulgently bask; at the same time, he is afraid if she really appears, or if she merges with his actual mother.

It is important to note that this boy fears that the food would literally "contaminate his body" (Okamoto 47). That is, not only does this boy think that the food prepared by the "bad" mother is "bad," but also that by eating it, it will make him "bad" as well. The early mode of identification through incorporation is also crucial later when this boy eagerly eats the "good" *sushi* that his mother makes herself. Freud had described a close connection between the oral object-relationship and the early mode of identification. He describes the oral phase in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*:

> The first of these is the oral, or, as it might be called, cannibalistic pregenital sexual organization. Here sexual activity has not yet been separated from the ingestion of food; nor are opposite currents within the activity differentiated. The object of both activities is the same; the sexual aim consists in the incorporation of the object—the prototype of a process which, in the form of identification, is later to play such an important psychological part. (198)

Freud later elaborates his views on identification through incorporation in "Mourning and Melancholia": The subject's mode of identification with the lost object regresses to that of primal narcissism where the "ego wishes to incorporate this object into itself, and the method by which it would do so, in this oral or cannibalistic stage, is by devouring it" (171).

What "cures" the boy's food aversion is his mother's "*sushi* therapy." She buys a brand new cutting board, a knife, a wooden bowl and other utensils, and sets them ready in front of the boy. She shows him her clean hands, "flipping [them] many times like a magician," and says, "Now watch this. Everything I have here is new and clean. The cook is your mother. My hands have been scrubbed and washed. Did you see it?" (52). Their coughing together from the sour steam of the *sushi* rice marks and anticipates their sharing of a playful experience. The mother makes the first *sushi* rice ball, and puts a slice of egg custard on it. The boy is told that he can eat it with his hand, and he does.

> The taste of vinegar-seasoned warm rice mixed gently with sweet egg custard spread on his tongue. It was delicious. It gave him the feeling that his naked skin was caressed with soft smooth hands. Savoring, he swallowed it. Then he felt a strange sensation: this delicious taste of sushi mingling with his love for the mother suddenly sprung in himself like warm scented water, and filled his entire body. (52-53)

While eating the *sushi*, the boy feels like snuggling to his mother. The allusion to the satisfying nursing experience, hence incorporation of the good object, culminates with the image of the "warm scented water" and the caress of the soft smooth hands, suggesting the pleasurable experience of infancy. The next piece is a squid *sushi*. The boy feels revolted at first, but with the mother's encouragement, he eats it and again is delighted in his adventure. For the next piece, the mother uses a piece of transparent fish. This time he encourages himself to be brave, that is, internalizing the mother's encouragement, and eats it.

> The white transparent piece surprised him with its wonderful taste. The more he chewed it, the more delicious it became on his tongue and he could feel its nutrition passing through his thin throat, coming into his body.
>
> It must have been a real fish, he knew. He could actually eat fish! For the first time in his life he felt a new strength being born in him. It was a fresh power of a conqueror who had just killed a live animal by biting into it, tearing it. He was so happy that he looked around as far as he could. This happiness made the sides of his belly itch, and he raised his dancing fingers to scratch them.
>
> "Hee, hee, hee…," the child laughed a strange high-pitched laugh. (54)

If his first egg *sushi* represents the incorporation of the "good" object through the early experience of suckling, this fish *sushi* aptly expands his adventure into the wider world with his aggression and conquests. Now the child is screaming impatiently, "Sushi! Sushi!" (54). To this, the mother tries to hide her joy and feigns a vacant face—"It was the beautiful face that the boy liked best of all, the face he had never forgotten all his life" (54).

Then comes the playing together experience, their "passionate numbness" in engrossment, and also the boy's "playing the mother" by delightfully fixing the *sushi* himself:

> The boy kept eating one after another. The mother and the child were racing now. As soon as the mother had made one sushi and put it on this plate, the boy picked it up. They were so engrossed in the race and being

> drawn together into a passionate numbness that they thought of nothing else. A delightful rhythm accompanied their hands. […] [As the *sushi* piece dropped on the plate, t]he boy loved it even more when this happened. He picked up the fish, put it on the rice ball and rearranged the shape before he ate it. It tasted better if he did this. (55)

As if Okamoto is closely tracing the child's development through the sequence of events in the *sushi* eating and playing scene, which is just as erotic as it is playful, the session leads to the boy's "playing the mother." Playing the mother, or the "magic, illusory fantasies" of "being or becoming the mother," "indicate[s] how much the child wants to maintain the mother as a part of himself and to adhere to the primitive aim of merging with her without distinction and consideration of the external and his own, inner reality" (Jacobson 43). This climactic *sushi* feast scene between the boy and the mother is both erotic and nurturing (literally, too), the two aspects inextricable as well as reciprocal.

With this happy, if only momentary, experience, the boy seems to reach toward object constancy. But it is an ambivalent process, as Okamoto's following treatment of this transitory "achievement" shows. As the encounter with the idealized mother and to merge with her have been both longed for with fascination and feared with horror in the earlier scene, the fusion of good and bad maternal images into a unified, actual mother who is both good and bad, as all human beings are, is now expressed in a melancholic tone with a sense of loss:

> The image of the phantom mother he had been secretly calling and this mother who was making sushi for him now became superimposed, became almost one. Was it happening in his imagination, or was it an

> optical illusion, he wondered. He wanted the two to become one, of course; but if that happened, he would have been frightened. Could it be possible that the phantom mother was the same as this mother who was giving him such delicious food? If so, he was sorry, very sorry, that he directed his love to another woman, betraying this mother. (55-56)

Obviously, the boy has definitely become healthier; he can eat all kinds of food, and he is no longer a weak, "strange child." But Okamoto's narrative that follows does not allow the readers the feeling of a happy ending. Rather, things go downhill from there. Once wealthy and glorious, the family decays, and all of his family members but Minato are now dead. Mother's *sushi*-therapy may have "cured" the boy's food aversion and helped him take a step toward object constancy, but the underlying tone of melancholy and decay throughout the story resists a happy resolution, suggesting that this happy moment of resolution is fleeting, like everything else in the story, and is intensified and cherished in Minato's mind *because* it is fleeting, as all precious memories of childhood are.

Motherhood as Transience

The psychoanalytic concept of "transience" examined in the previous chapter further enriches the reading of this sense of melancholy in Okamoto's "Sushi." Kitayama Osamu's psychoanalytic account of motherhood as transience reaffirmed the familiar link between mother-child relationship and adult erotic relationships, both tinged with the bittersweet recognition of impermanence and the pain of separation, highlighting the child's and the mother's "awareness of a sense of transience" (Kitayama, "Transience" 943). Even the playful *sushi* scene between the mother and the child in Okamoto's "Sushi" may also correspond to the shared experience of the mother and the child

"viewing together" the transient object such as the fireflies and bubbles that Kitayama described in his psychoanalytic study of transience.

Reading Okamoto's "Sushi," it is difficult not to notice the prevalent sense of ephemerality and almost masochistic appreciation of it. Indeed, Okamoto's narrative is full of description of nature in ways that remind the readers of the impermanence of everything in nature, and Okamoto successfully links the image of transience of nature such as river, flower, trees, fish, and frog to the *sushi* restaurant where the customers come and go, just like the fish in the river pool in the following scene:

> It was early spring. [Tomoyo] looked into a little pool of water by the bank where the flow of the river almost stopped. The pool appeared an intense light green like the color of new tea leaves. Several silver crucian carp came floating into the pool waving their tails and feeding on the green moss of a pole. They stayed there for a short while and swam away. Quickly another group came into the pool reflecting the sun on their tail fins and were gone again. The same fish did not stay in the pool long, but the change was so swift and quiet that it seemed unnoticeable. [. . .]
>
> Our customers are like this, Tomoyo pondered. Fukuzushi had a group of steady patrons but their members were constantly changing. [. . .] The customers came and went, [. . .] (37)

Even such a bright spring scene contains transience, although Tomoyo, rather than accepting the fish's transience, entertains a youthful fantasy: "These small carp in the pool might as well be always the same ones, she thought" (37).

Okamoto's description of nature suggests passing of time and passing of the seasons, evoking the aching feeling of nostalgia. Unlike the spring pond scene above that is full of sun, Minato's storytelling later ends in the dusk of the evening, Tomoyo and Minato finding themselves in the "evening breeze," "the shadow," and the "dark[ness]" (59). The sense of evanescent as well as continuously flowing time and cycle of life, in which everything perishes and renews, is more explicit in this scene:

> A wisteria arbor grew from the ground near the remains of the burned hospital. Supporting poles had collapsed and the twisted vines of the tree hung down to the ground. Yet young leaves sprouted from the tip of the vines, and the cluster of thin flowers bloomed looking like drops of purple dew. An azalea bush remained. It used to decorate the base of a rock in the garden. The rock was carried away leaving a hole in the ground. The plant, with one side burned, still had white flowers. (58)

The sweet pain of acknowledging the impermanence of nature in this scene reflects the bittersweet memories of the mother for Minato. For the aforementioned psychoanalyst Kitayama, too, nature as the mother, despite being a problematic association,[40] is a useful metaphor that links his discussions of the "wounded caretakers" and of the "transient

[40] It should be noted that the cultural construction that associates women with nature can be either detrimental or empowering for women depending on each culture's perception of nature and culture in relation to each other. For instance, anthropologist Sherry Ortner in her famous essay "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" (1972) criticizes the cultural assumptions that label women as closely affiliated with nature. On the other hand, Japanese literary critic Kōra Rumiko celebrates such essentialist association between women and nature, often interpreted as women's corporeality, as empowering for women.

mothers" in the figure of a folkloric crane wife who must exit, as examined in the previous chapter, "leaving a sense of transience and debt or gratitude" ("Transience" 947).

Here, unlike Tomoyo in the earlier pond scene, who pretends that the transitory figures—fish—are not really gone, Minato, now in his fifties, positively takes pleasure in nostalgia and even in his own transience: "lately memories of my mother come back to me very often. It may be that I myself am getting old" (58). He comes to the *sushi* restaurant because, he says, "I miss her very much, and when I think of her, I also miss sushi" (58), as if to savor the feeling of "missing her" as he eats *sushi* which reminds him of her. The order of the *sushi* course Minato usually requests is the exact reverse of how his mother accustomed him starting with the egg custard, proceeding to the light tasted fish, and ending with the more robust flavored fish:

> By now he [the chef] remembered the course of sushi Minato usually followed. It began with *chutoro* which is the part of tuna that has a little more fat in it, then went to broiled fish garnished with thickened soy sauce. Fish with blue skin that has a light taste followed next, and ended with egg custard and a seaweed roll. (40)

By tracing his mother's *sushi* session in reverse, Minato may very well be regressing to his childhood.

The linkage between the mother and the restaurant is presented as the restaurant's "intimate warmth" and the way the customers can have their meals "prepared exactly in the way they wanted" (32). More importantly, however, it is not the chef who is considered the mother. Rather, the customers are being the mother to and being mothered by each other at the same time, in the maternal space which is this restaurant.

For instance, that "intimate warmth" is received from the customers' eyes to each other, "as though they had been playmates of a hide-and-seek game, hiding from harsh reality" (33). And yet, this place is also a transient place, as suggested by the flow of the river that Tomoyo compares with the restaurant in her imagination.

The sense of transience in Okamoto's works may have been influenced by her passionate study of Buddhism. Commentaries on Okamoto's studies in Buddhism and its influence on her literature abound, ranging from nostalgic memoirs by her friends to biographical studies to literary criticisms.[41] Okamoto published a number of essays on Buddhism,[42] one of which is titled, in fact, "*Mujō*," the very Buddhist term to which Kitayama referred in relation to transience, meaning "nothing remains unchanged, everything is transient."

Despite her serious and enthusiastic study in Buddhism, there was no incongruity between "aesthetic and sensual pleasure" on the one hand and "access to the sacred" on

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[41] Some of the examples include Sugisaki Kazuko's "A Writer's Life: A Biographical Sketch: Kanoko Okamoto"; Maryellen T. Mori's "The Splendor of Self-Exaltation: The Life and Fiction of Okamoto Kanoko"; Kōra Rumiko's *Okamoto Kanoko Inochi no kaiki* [Okamoto Kanoko: Cycle of life]; Miyauchi Junko's *Okamoto Kanoko Mujō no umi e* [Okamoto Kanoko: To the sea of *mujō*]; Furuya Teruko's "Kanoko no naka no bukkyō" [Buddhism in Kanoko] and *Okamoto Kanoko: Hanayagu inochi* [Okamoto Kanoko: Brilliant life]; Senuma Shigeki's "Kanoko no shisō to bungaku" [Kanoko's thought and literature]; Oketani Hideaki's "Seimei no kikyō e no bungaku" [Literature toward the origin of life]; Kinoshita Miyako's "Kanoko no bukkyō to geijutsukan" [Kanoko's Buddhism and aesthetics]; Chika Toyo's "Okamoto Kanoko to Namu-amida-butsu" [Okamoto Kanoko and *Namu-amida-butsu* (oral invocation of the Buddha Amitābha)]; and Setouchi Harumi's "Kaifurenge" [fully-open lotus (attainment of enlightenment)] and "Kanoko to bukkyō to watashi" [Kanoko and Buddhism and me], just to list a few.

[42] All of her essays on Buddhism are reprinted in *Okamoto Kanoko zenshū*, vols. 9 and 10.

the other for Okamoto (Mori 88). Mori criticizes Okamoto's interpretation of Buddhism as follows:

> One senses that at its core is neither a sophisticated grasp of doctrine nor genuine religious piety, but a worship of beauty and vitality. For all her erudition, Kanoko was not basically an intellectual, but an aesthete with a mystical bent. Although Buddhism provided her with a vocabulary for expressing her characters' spiritual aspirations and their visionary outlooks, the religious imagination that informs her writings seems more like a fusion of aestheticism and animism. (87)

Perhaps this rather seemingly primitive and animistic incorporation of Buddhism allowed Okamoto fusion of aesthetic, sensual, and sacred, as well as "transcendence beyond narrow definition of 'religious art'" (Kinoshita 12). As Japanese literary critic Furuya Teruko claims, "worship of beauty" does not make Okamoto a heretic, for, arguably, beauty has always been an inseparable part of religious, spiritual sensitivity, with its profound appeal to human senses (Furuya, "*Kanoko no naka no bukkyō*" [Buddhism in Kanoko] 7).

Okamoto's "Sushi," as if to serve as a case study for Kitayama's theory, shows a keen appreciation not just of the aesthetic aspect of transience but also of the masochistic connotation associated with transience. As presented in my previous chapter, Kitayama describes the pathological implication of "masochistic identification with the transitory figure(s)" in his discussion of "masochistic identification [. . .] between the mother and the child" ("Transience" 937 and 942). Again associating the "guilt feeling towards the [fragile/injured] mother" with the Japanese folktales that end with separation from the

mother figure, which is an injured animal in such folktales, Kitayama observes that "This depressive tendency [. . .] can be pathologically self-destructive, causing everything, including one's own self, to be felt as transient" ("Transience" 947). Minato in "Sushi" may very well fit this description as he too feels himself to be transient.

Masochistic *Amae*

Kitayama's interpretation of the Japanese folktales involving the transient mother figure introduced in my previous chapter and recalled above seems to suggest that the aesthetic appreciation of transience may be understood as a defensive attempt to ease the pain of inevitable impermanence of the mother-child relationship. Then, it parallels perfectly with Japanese psychoanalyst Doi Takeo's comment on *amae*, often translated as dependency, attachment, and passive desire to be loved as examined in chapter one. Doi interprets *amae* as "the desire to deny the fact of separation that is an inevitable part of human existence, and to obliterate the pain that this separation involves" (*The Anatomy of Dependence* 167). But the parallel ends quickly because while appreciation of transience and *amae* may both be defenses against the pain of separation, they manifest, at the first glance, as opposite reactions. Faced with the painful reality of impermanence and separation, the one with appreciation of transience would claim, "No, this aching is not bad; in fact, I like it. I am nostalgically enjoying this bittersweet pain. Sadness is beauty," while the other, with an *amae* mentality, may pretend that the transitory figure in question is not really gone. A closer look at *amae* in relation to Okamoto's "Sushi" suggests, however, that behind masochistic appreciation of transience also lies *amae*, as an implicit claim of self-surrender and helplessness. Moreover, my reading of "Sushi"

will carry this *amae*/masochism parallel a step further and argue that even the general masochistic demand for love implies the existence of *amae*-feeling.

Although Kitayama does refer to *amae* as relevant to his study of the "wounded caretaker"[43] whose masochistic maternal altruism forces a guilt feeling into the child, he only recognizes *amae* in the child or the male protagonists in the Japanese folktales such as "Crane Wife," not in the masochistically self-sacrificing mother herself ("Prohibition against Looking" 93-95). In his paper titled "The Wounded Caretaker and Guilt," Kitayama argues that the seemingly selfless self-sacrificing behavior of the caretaker cloaks a coercive masochism, intended to force the other to feel guilty and "force the other to love the subject" (230). In explaining this particular form of masochism, Kitayama cites psychoanalyst Ramon Ganzarain's presentation to the Japanese audience:

> Some critics of Christianity comment that when Christ advised his disciples to offer the other cheek when slapped, he was betting on the power of masochism by combining gentleness with pardon, thus attempting to control the world by inducing guilt in others as well as a sense of indebtedness. Mothers seem to be cast in a similar role in all these Japanese legends. (Ganzarain 97, also cited in Kitayama, "The Wounded Caretaker and Guilt" 232).

Kitayama's observation of masochistic demand for love through self-sacrifice agrees with the Kleinian proposition about guilt and the subsequent wish to make reparation leading to love (Klein and Riviere, *Love, Hate, and Reparation* 68). That is, the wounded caretaker is expecting the child to "feel sorry" and to want to "make good." Such expectation seems to be founded on the psychology of *amae*, for the wounded

[43] Kitayama, "The Wounded Caretaker and Guilt."

caretaker—the mother in Kitayama's examples—is manipulatively making herself appear helpless, vulnerable, and pitiable in order to induce the other—in this case, the child—to take care of her and love her. *Amae* exists in this very connection between one's claim of self-surrender, be it an acceptance of and/or display of her helplessness, vulnerability, or misery, and her expectation that such a "sorry state" *deserves* others' love and care. To the extent that the masochist is "betting on" (to borrow the above expression by Ganzarain) the feeling of guilt, indebtedness, and pity, that should, in the masochist's mind, make the other love him/her, such a masochistic demand for love implies the existence of *amae*-feeling.

Referring to his patients who "present themselves as quite helpless," Doi comments, "I subsequently realized that his initial helplessness and subsequent sensitivity really refer to the wish to be loved or to be taken care of. I was helped in detecting this wish by recalling the meaning of the intransitive verb *amaeru*, which may be translated as 'to depend and presume upon another's love' or 'to indulge in another's kindness'" ("Some Thought on Helplessness" 31). Again, the underlying assumption is that one's helpless state would make the other "have pity or sympathy for [him/her], or, to put it in psychoanalytic terms, to identify oneself with [his/her] helplessness" (Doi, "Some Thought on Helplessness" 33). In other words, a hypothetical helpless person is thinking, "I hope that you will take pity on me and take care of me." By surrendering himself and making himself helpless/vulnerable/pitiful, this hypothetical helpless person is betting on the other to take care of him and love him. In order to depend on the other's goodwill to take care of him, he first needs to appeal to the other's goodwill. To do that, he needs to make the other realize that he is in fact helpless and in need of care. Now, his appeal

may or may not be answered, but more often than not, an average person would usually "feel sorry" when someone is hurt, whether this average person actually volunteers to take care of him or not. People usually feel "sorry" just because someone is hurt, even if it is not their fault. Of course, "sorry" in this case does not mean remorse or guilt but sympathy and compassion. But, as we say "Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that," there is a strange feeling of guilt. It is strange because we did not make this person sick or injured. Even though we are not guilty, we feel guilty. If a person's "sorry state" is somehow related to us, we feel obligated to relieve his suffering, and if we cannot, we feel even more guilty. If a person reveals his vulnerability because he trusts that he can depend on us, we cannot but let him depend on us. If this person is calling attention to the fact that he is suffering because of us, his self-surrender can be even more powerfully manipulative.

Just to show an example of *amae*-feeling in the act of injuring oneself, I shall refer to a popular American film, *A Christmas Story* (1983). Only, this case is an innocent, childlike attempt for such an effect. The nine-year-old Ralph "Ralphie" Parker (played by the child Peter Billingsley) accidentally utters a swearword and is ordered by his mother to put a bar of soap in his mouth as a punishment, in order to "clean" his mouth. After that, in one of his many daydreaming scenes, he fantasizes that he comes home to his parents as a blind man-child with sunglasses and a cane. In his fantasy, his parents are shocked and cling to him, pleading with him to tell them what caused his blindness. Ralph answers in a pitiful voice, "it was . . . soap poisoning." The parents wail over him and Ralph secretly grins at the camera. The scene is obviously cute, for the audience understand Ralph's childlike, harmless thought, which is probably

something like, “I will make you feel sorry! See what you did to me!” The audience “get” his *amae*-logic of “Now you are going to love me and take care of me unconditionally because you feel sorry for me and for what you did to me” and smile because it is so childlike.

With *amae*, although one appeals to the other’s goodwill, his/her request to be taken care of is never expressed explicitly. As Doi has repeatedly emphasized, *amae* is non-verbal: “verbalization spoils the wish to *amaeru* and makes its true satisfaction virtually impossible” (Doi, “The Concept” 350). The person who wants to *amaeru* would only make his/her helpless, vulnerable, or pitiful state known, and the rest is left up to the other party. The other must take care of this person *voluntarily* without ever having been asked. The explicit request is avoided because, to refer again to psychoanalyst Evelyne Schwaber’s patient quoted in my chapter one, “I want you to understand me without my having to spell it out. If you really care about me, you would know; if I have to ask, it feels like begging. Even if you then understand, it is no longer the same” (Schwaber, “Interpretation” 234, also cited in Doi, “*Amae* and Transference Love” 173). It may seem like there is a gap between one’s self-surrender—claim of helplessness, vulnerability, or misery—and one’s assumption that he/she deserves to be taken care of because of this surrender. There seems to be a gap because the very plea, “please help me, care for me, love me,” is missing. What bridges this gap is *amae*, an implicit request for love and care. If one were to make his/her request explicit, he/she may be “dependent,” but his/her desire for *amae* is not satisfied.

Although Doi does not use the term "surrender" in his description of *amae*, Emmanuel Ghent, a Canadian psychoanalyst, in his attempt for a positive definition of "surrender" aptly notices the element of surrender in *amae*:

> My hunch is that there is something like a universal need, wish or longing for what I am calling surrender and that it assumes many forms. In some societies there are culturally sanctioned occasions for its realization in the form of ecstatic rituals and healing trances. In other societies, perhaps most notably in Japan where the psychology of *amae* is so central to one's way of being, something akin to surrender is experienced as almost universally desired and desirable. In many people in our own culture the wish for surrender remains buried; in some it is expressed in creative and productive ways, and in others its derivatives appear in pathological form, deflected away from normal channels by that most unwelcome price-tag: dread. (Ghent 114)

Much has been written about masochistic surrender, but Ghent considers surrender to be the "antithesis" of submission and masochism (108). He is trying to redefine "surrender," not with a connotation of "defeat" but as one that "will convey a quality of liberation and expansion of the self as a corollary to the letting down of defensive barriers" (Ghent 108). While I agree with Ghent's relating *amae* with surrender, *amae* would have no problem with the conventional, negative connotations associated with surrender that he tries to get rid of. In fact, I find it interesting that Ghent felt it necessary to emphasize that his definition of surrender "has nothing to do with hoisting a white flag" (108) in order to make the concept of "surrender" less disagreeable. With *amae*, the

element of defeat, submission, injury, helplessness, vulnerability, pain, etc, is indispensable in order to appeal to the others' goodwill and make them respond to one's *amae*.

Amae in "Sushi"

In chapter one, I argued that Doi has, perhaps inadvertently, shown that *amae* is fundamentally erotic. Doi considers a possibility that Freud's concept of "identification" may correspond to *amae* (*The Anatomy of Dependence* 172). Referring to Freud's remark that "identification is, first of all, the original form of emotional tie with an object,"[44] Doi suggests,

> it seems to me that here identification is almost equated with *amae*, since *amae* can be said to be a movement to merge with an object emotionally. Freud mentions elsewhere the affectionate current which constitutes a normal attitude in love along with the sensual current that as the older of the two 'it springs from the earliest years of childhood' (1912, p. 180)[45]. Curiously, he did not put together these two statements about identification and affectionate current. Perhaps he couldn't do so without the concept of *amae*. ("The Concept" 351)

Although Doi claimed that *amae* is a "*nonsexualized* drive for close dependent affiliation" ("*Amae* and Transference" 165; emphasis added), Okamoto's "Sushi"

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[44] Freud, "Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego" 107, also cited in Doi, *The Anatomy of Dependence* 173.

[45] Freud, "On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love" 180, also cited in Doi, "The Concept" 351.

brilliantly and aptly brings to light the erotic implication of such *amae* as the wish to merge with the other, which also suggests a masochistic pleasure of surrender.

In "Sushi," Minato's ambivalence about *amae*, or refusal of and desperate seeking of *amae*, is apparent both in his youth and in his middle age. As a young boy, he "did not like anything sweet [*amai*]"[46] (46), and when "he felt sad and lonely […] he would bite into anything sour and soft like green plums and small unripe tangerines" (49). On the one hand, he constantly calls out for the "idealized" mother. He wants to bask in her goodness and merge with her. On the other hand, he "might have fainted" (48) with horror if this "phantom mother" (55) had really appeared. Merging with the mother, the momentary experience of oneness that he had anticipated with both fascination and horror, happens with their *sushi* making session as they are "drawn together into a passionate numbness that they thought of nothing else" (55). With the "delightful rhythm [accompanying] their hands" as they get "engrossed in the race," the "phantom mother" and the real mother "became almost one" (55). The scene suggests a euphoric, almost ecstatic moment of merger, of letting go of oneself completely in and with each other—close to "surrender" as Ghent's use of the term. As an adult in his fifties, Minato is observed by Tomoyo as acting like "an old man starving for human warmth" (42). When offered a drink by other customers, he cannot refuse despite his doctor's prohibition because "you are so kind to offer me" (42). Tomoyo comments that "he was a kind of person who, having received kindness, would have to return it many times over. [. . .] He

[46] "Sweet" is translated as "*amai*" in Japanese. The adjective *amai*, which has the same root as *amae* and *amaeru*, means "sweet" as in the taste of food. Hence *amae* suggests "something sweet and desirable" (Doi, "The Concept" 349).

was diminishing something precious of his own by responding so heartily to anyone's whim" (42).

Before the climactic *sushi* feast scene between the boy and the mother, the boy experiences a feeling of "guilt" and goes through a failed, masochistic attempt to make reparation. The boy hears his parents "quarrelling bitterly behind the closed door" (49). Apparently, his elementary school teachers were concerned about his health and contacted the parents, and the father blames the mother. The mother seems hurt, sitting on the floor and bowing to the boy in a manner that is only proper when a low-rank person makes a plea to a high-rank person, begs him to eat, adding that "Otherwise, I don't think I can stay here. I feel I have no place in this house" (50). The boy responds with an extreme feeling of guilt and shame for humiliating the mother:

> I have committed the sin, the boy thought, the sin he had known his ill-formed character was bound to commit someday. He had caused his own mother to bow to him, with her hands flat on the floor. His face flushed and his body began to shake. But he felt a strange peace inside. He thought to himself, I have done something very wrong, so wrong that I might as well be dead. I don't care if I die. I'll eat anything. If eating something strange should make me vomit, make my body impure and rot, so be it. I won't regret it. Maybe it's better that I am dead, because as long as I am alive, I'll be so choosy about what I can or cannot eat, and that will make me a big trouble to everybody around me, and to myself, as well. (51)

The boy then tries to eat dinner that day, but ends up vomiting as the food instantly and violently conjures up repulsive images of the chef maids. His suicide fantasy is, first of all, an expression of aggression turned inward; for suicidal action is the "discharge of self-destructive energy" as psychoanalyst Edith Jacobson explains in regard to "turning of drives toward the self" (Jacobson 84). But just as importantly, Okamoto's description of the boy's inflated wish to remove himself by death so that he would not be a burden to his mother, his fantasy that only if he could magically disappear by death everything would be fine, suggests his grandiose, almost frantically omnipotent, wish for reparation.

The idea of "apology by suicide" is a readily recognized premise in Japan upon which Okamoto draws as she insinuates the boy's wish to atone for his "sin" by death. But the idea may certainly sound peculiar, as the previous scholarly interests in Japanese suicides may attest. For instance, psychologist and anthropologist George A. DeVos has identified culturally recognized motives for suicide in both traditional and modern Japan. He highlights the common elements of "role narcissism"—"an intense identification of one's total self with one's professional or social role" (469)—and "egocentric" motives in various forms of suicides ranging from pre-modern "*seppuku*" (or "*hara-kiri*," a form of ritual suicide by disembowelment practiced by *samurai*, the feudal warriors) to modern day "responsibility suicide" (33) and "apology suicide" (464-65). What DeVos calls "egocentric" suicide involves "an implicit sensitive awareness of the instrumental controlling effects of one's suicide on others, either positively or negatively" (472). DeVos sees this form of suicide as based on the notion that "one's own suffering can cause guilt in others and therefore can induce action" (472). Building upon this notion, anthropologist Takie Sugiyama Lebra, too, in her discussion of the legitimacy of

voluntary death in Japan refers to the mechanism by which one's guilt is believed to be canceled by the guilt aroused in the other as a result of one's suicide (*Japanese Patterns of Behavior* 195):

> Intropunitive communication, on the other hand, is intended when a person has made a serious error or has failed in performance and takes his life to demonstrate the sincerity of his repentance and apology. A suicide note in this case is likely to contain a statement like *Shinde owabi suru* ("I apologize by dying"). Suicidal apology may be considered an extension of the practice of self-mutilation, for example, finger-chopping, to prove the sincerity of the apology. The ultimate objective of the intropunitive message is expiation of guilt. By proving his sincerity in repenting and apologizing, the suicide can expect to expiate his guilt and to be forgiven by the victim of his misconduct. (*Japanese Patterns of Behavior* 194-95)

Among other things, *seppuku* is regarded as a form of repentance to "atone for failure in his duties" ("Seppuku," Encyclopædia Britannica). Admittedly, *samurai*'s ritual suicide that is associated with the sense of honor, dedication, and loyalty may seem irrelevant to the boy's childish death fantasy in Okamoto's "Sushi." But, as DeVos reveals, beneath the seemingly "altruistic" suicides of the *samurai* and their "sacrificial giving up of one's life in dedication to a cause" (462) may lie their narcissistic pathology (466) and "the need [. . .] to resolve resentment" resulting in an unsuccessful attempt to create "myth or illusion of maternal nurturance" (472).

Nevertheless, it is difficult to substantiate DeVos's generalizing claim that Japan may be "particularly prone to suicides" (485). Admitting that "Japan is often seen by us

[Westerners], and possibly by the Japanese themselves, as the 'suicide nation,'" Maurice Pinguet, the author of *Voluntary Death in Japan* (1984), argues that statistically "people are no more inclined to kill themselves in Japan than they are in the West" (14). Referring to the high suicide rate during the 1950s in Japan, Pinguet states, "Okazaki[47] was not wholly mistaken when he dubbed Japan the 'suicide nation', but he was wrong to suggest that this phenomenon, in fact temporary, was a permanent feature of Japanese society" (14-15). On the other hand, the newspaper articles on the current suicide rates in Japan (Curtin) as well as the scholarly publications (DeVos; Iga and Tatai; and Lebra, *Japanese Patterns of Behavior*) seem to confirm this image of Japan as the "suicide nation." An article in *Asia Times* (July 28, 2004) cites that the major reasons for recent suicides are unemployment, bankruptcies and other economic problems (Curtin). Pinguet agrees that when money trouble "strikes a ruined petty bourgeois, or a wage-earner unable to pay his debts" it could be a motivation for suicide, citing that "In 1979, more than a tenth of male suicides [in Japan] were due to money trouble" (31-32). The *Asia Times* article also refers to "lack of religious prohibition against suicide," "a literary tradition that romanticizes suicide," and "a view of suicide as an honorable act, a way of taking responsibility for failure" as contributing cultural factors (Curtin).

Although those who commit "responsibility suicide" or "apology suicide" may insist that their suicide is their way of taking responsibility and proving their sincerity, it can also be argued that their suicide is an ultimate *disavowal* of responsibility. There is something extremely childish in their allegedly repentant resolve to remove themselves

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[47] Okazaki Aayanori, a demographer. The author of *Jisatsu no kuni—Nihon no kiroku* [Suicide Nation—Record of Japan] (Tōyō Keizai Shinpōsha, 1958).

conveniently from the impossible situation and wishing that "if only I disappear, everything will be all right," like the *sushi* boy in Okamoto's story. It appears to be an ultimate "surrender" with an inflated expectation.

With an understanding of suicide as an apology, the *sushi* boy's suicidal self-punishment fantasy can be read as an attempt at reparation. In my previous chapter, I have explained that Melanie Klein defines reparation as including "the variety of processes by which the ego feels it undoes harm done in phantasy, restores, preserves and revives objects" ("The Psycho-analytic" 133). As Klein discussed, reparation, or wish to make good, is closely related to feelings of guilt ("Love, Guilt and Reparation" 310-311). At the perceived graveness of the offense, however, the *sushi* boy's reparation takes the form of excessive self-punishment, the recourse which may be consistent with the situation explained by Frank A. Johnson, a scholar of psychiatry and author of *Dependency and Japanese Socialization: Psychoanalytic and Anthropological Investigations into* Amae, as follows:

> in situations where obligation is experienced as unlimited (as in certain asymmetric status relations), the real or imagined enormity of any injury may not be placated by prescriptive apologies. [. . .] In the face of such major transgressions, ritual propitiation is not satisfactory. In these instances relief may not be possible through the use of ceremonials, third parties, or the exhibition of severe mortification. If these mechanisms fail, the consciousness of destructive consequences of one's behavior (toward parents, coworkers, the nation, or the emperor in prewar times) makes the combined experiences of guilt and shame unbearable. When propitiation

> or resolution is perceived to be impossible, the ultimate mortification and self-punishment of suicide may result. (310)

The *sushi* boy's solution is depressive, but there is also an element of defense in his fantasy of *omnipotent* reparation by death for he imagines that once he dies, he would no longer be a burden to his mother, and that he would no longer experience guilt.

Winnicott[48] and Kitayama would perhaps call the boy's reparation "false reparation": "This false reparation appears through the patient's identification with the mother and the dominating factor is not the patient's own guilt but the mother's organized defence against depression and unconscious guilt" (Winnicott, "Reparation" 91, also cited in Kitayama, "The Wounded Caretaker" 231). The guilt that the *sushi* boy feels is really "implanted guilt" (Winnicott "The Depressive Position" 270, also cited in Kitayama, "The Wounded Caretaker" 231) due to his mother's display of injury as she says "you know how he [father] is, he blames me for everything" (50) and self-degradation as she bows with her head and palms on the floor and begs, pushing the boy to make such "false reparation."

The notion of "apology by suicide" surely sounds suspicious, for it may actually be closer to blackmailing than apology because its aim is to manipulate others by making them feel guilty for one's suicide. Even though it is a "voluntary death" (Pinguet), the responsibility apparently falls on the others. And, yes, it is definitely aggression turned toward the self. But where else can it turn? For the *sushi* boy, his teacher is making his father make the mother make the boy eat this food. The boy's self-destructive behavior

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[48] As introduced in the previous chapters, Donald Woods Winnicott (1896-1971) is an influential British pediatrician, psychiatrist, and psychoanalyst.

seems to scream, "You are making me do it. See what happens! I'm going to die, and it's your fault." For Ralph in *A Christmas Story* mentioned above, soap-biting was not an apology but a punishment given by his parent. But had he put soap into his mouth voluntarily because "he was sorry," which would be self-punitive soap biting resulting in blindness, there could have been something more complicated going on.

Conclusion

Using Doi's concept of *amae* in reading literary texts is not a new approach. In fact, Japanese literary scholars Hirakawa Sukehiro and Tsuruta Kin'ya edited a book titled exactly that, "Amae" *de bungaku o toku* [Reading literature through the perspectives of "*amae*"], in 1996, which came out of a conference with the same theme. But theirs is primarily and exclusively a literary study. Their thesis that *amae* is useful in analyzing literary texts has rich implications, but they take the concept of *amae* as given. This chapter complements their study by reexamining *amae* as a psychoanalytic concept.

On the other hand, psychoanalytic reading of literature is still a controversial approach for some literary critics. For instance, in her discussion of Okamoto's "Sushi," Japanese scholar Miyauchi Junko dismisses a psychoanalytic interpretation by a Japanese psychiatrist, Shimosaka Kōzō, as "meaningless"[49] (Miyauchi 218). But Shimosaka was treating Okamoto's "Sushi" as a case in his psychoanalytic study of eating disorder, and was not assuming a literary analysis by any means whatsoever. It seems to me that just as a work of literature may serve as a useful hint for a psychiatrist in understanding the human mind, psychoanalytic theories have much to offer for literary scholars in understanding literary works. Psychoanalytic interpretation of a literary work is of course different from the literary analysis of such a work, but it is too insightful to be

[49] "意味がない"

dismissed so quickly as "meaningless." In this chapter, I have attempted to explore the ways in which psychoanalytic theories may contribute to the reading of the story as well as the ways in which such reading may offer an insight into the psychoanalytic theory itself.

In "Sushi," that which is maternal is inherently erotic. Okamoto unfolds the erotically charged fantasy projected onto the maternal figure along with her life-long theme, "violent identification process of love" ("Kishimo no ai" 107). A reader may be left bewildered as to whose fantasy it is. Is it the mother who is erotic, or the child? Erotic from whose point of view? It may very well be the reader's own fantasy, merged with Okamoto's intuitive, if eccentric, perspective on the mother-child relationship, that makes this story a full-blown ode to the nostalgic memory of the mother. Minato's mother is indeed a goddess who introduced Minato into the circle of life, first by bringing him into this world and later by curing his food aversion; the same goddess of life, now at the end of the story, lures Minato into sweet death as Minato recognizes himself as getting old. Okamoto's oft-praised exaltation of motherhood as a primordial maternal goddess who is the source of all life and thus allegedly beyond patriarchal social institutions may be appealing for some feminist literary critics with perhaps the nature worship bent.[50] But Okamoto's narcissistic identification with the earth-goddess may have been a precursor to the current alliance between the conservative and nostalgic

[50] Feminist readings of Okamoto's work often engage in the uncritical discussion of maternal goddess and the circle of life. Some of the examples include Miyauchi Junko's *Okamoto Kanoko Mujō no umi e* [Okamoto Kanoko: To the sea of *mujō*]; Kōra Rumiko's *Okamoto Kanoko Inochi no kaiki* [Okamoto Kanoko: Cycle of life]; and Furuya Teruko's *Okamoto Kanoko: Hanayagu inochi* [Okamoto Kanoko: Brilliant life].

idealization of the past and the seemingly feminist celebration of the female reproductive body, endorsing the cultural fantasy of the blissful, sacred, and omnipotent mother-child "oneness."

Okamoto's "Sushi" presents the momentary illusion of the mother-child oneness as euphoric, sensual albeit asexual, loss of boundary in a pleasurable merger of identity. The continuity between the infantile mother-child mutuality and adult interpersonal relationships is an uncontested assumption in psychoanalysis, too. For example, psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin, maintains that

> the positive experience of attunement allows the individual to maintain a more permeable boundary and enter more readily into states in which there is a momentary suspension of felt boundaries between inside and outside. The capacity to enter into states in which distinctness and union are reconciled underlies the most intense experience of adult erotic life. In erotic union we can experience that form of mutual recognition in which both partners lose themselves in each other without loss of self; they lose self-consciousness without loss of awareness. Thus early experiences of mutual recognition already prefigure the dynamics of erotic life. (*Bonds of Love* 28-29)

Aforementioned psychoanalyst Edith Jacobson, too, refers to the "earliest wishful fantasies of merging and being one with the mother (breast)" as the basis of all object relations and identification (39): "Even normally, the experience of physical merging and of an 'identity' of pleasure in the sexual act may harbor elements of happiness derived from the feeling of return to the lost, original union with the mother" (39).

Perhaps we cannot escape our tendency to idealize the infantile oneness with the mother as sacred and omnipotent. Our culture may be a pursuit of such a euphoric, illusory experience of oneness, be it in religious euphoria or aesthetic euphoria. Okamoto's fusion of aesthetic, sensual, and sacred in her literature, which may have been influenced by her passionate study of Buddhism, can be interpreted as a manifestation of her pursuit of such blissful oneness. Okamoto's readers may, perhaps too eagerly, invite themselves to catch a glimpse of that blissful oneness with the mother, and by extension with the archaic earth-mother the goddess as well as the mother-earth the universe, into which Okamoto has narcissistically submerged herself.

CHAPTER 4

Illusory Mother in Kanai Mieko's "Yamamba"

Introduction

In her short story titled "Yamamba" [mountain witch] (1973), Kanai Mieko (b. 1947) rewrites the *sushi*-mother in Okamoto Kanoko's "Sushi" (1939) as the *yamamba*-mother. The transient experience with the mother in "Sushi" examined in the previous chapter is reinterpreted and retold by Kanai as an illusory encounter with the erotic and maternal *yamamba* in her "Yamamba." Kanai's "Yamamba" starts with a quotation from Okamoto's "Sushi" as an epigraph thus announcing from the outset that hers is a response to Okamoto's seemingly heartwarming story of the mother-son relationship. The quotation comes from protagonist Minato's recollection of his childhood, his first *sushi* experience with his mother which magically cured his food aversion: "It must have been a real fish, he knew. He could actually eat fish! For the first time in his life he felt a new strength being born in him. It was a fresh power of a conqueror who had just killed a live animal by biting into it, tearing it" (Okamoto, "Sushi" 54; cited in Kanai, "Yamamba" 557). Kanai's "Yamamba," which is now devoid of Okamoto's bittersweet sense of nostalgia, is a radical reinterpretation of Okamoto's exalted image of motherhood. The link between cannibalism, death, the bodily incorporation of food, the idealized fantasy mother, and the erotic image of the split half of the mother, that is only quietly implied in Okamoto's "Sushi" now rises to the forefront of Kanai's narrative.

The main body of the story "Yamamba" is a boy's recollection of his earlier years when he was thirteen-year-old, with an embedded "*yamamba*" story told by his grandfather, who is recalling the memory of his own childhood. Thus the narrative time

in the story is anything but chronological. There is an embedding within embedding, recollections within recollection. The protagonist boy's recollection is framed by the opening scene in which the boy, now older, reminiscing and questioning his "having been too young to do anything"[51] (558). This opening scene is, chronologically speaking, the end of the story where the boy has already experienced everything that happens in the story.

In the main story—the boy's recollection—the thirteen-year-old boy is looking forward to his upcoming summer break while remembering his previous summer break. Every summer, this sickly boy spends the two months vacation at his grandfather's farm house—"the children's place" (566), the grandfather calls it—in the mountain with his seven cousins. For more than a year the boy has been in love with one of his cousins, Sayuri, who is two years older than he. His thoughts of her are accompanied with death fantasy and blood imagery such as a drop of crimson-red grenadine (pomegranate) syrup, the blood-tainted mouthwash running down the surface of the snow-white sink, blood oozing from the gums, and the odor of blood (561). Like the *sushi* boy in Okamoto's story, this boy has a problem with eating. He refuses to eat meat because it feels repulsive to him. One night the grandfather tells the boy about his childhood encounter with a *yamamba*, whom he calls his "true mother." In the grandfather's recollection, the *yamamba* bit off her nipple and told him to suck her blood from it. Referring to the folklore of the cannibalistic *yamamba*, the grandfather supposes he, too, may have eaten

[51] Since Kanai's "Yamamba" has not been translated into English, the quotations from this text are my translation, except for the epigraph, the quote from Okamoto's "Sushi," for which I used Sugisaki's translation.

human flesh while with her for one year. He would not have minded if she had eaten him, he says, eagerly hoping that the next time he sees her, she will eat him. Like a child, the grandfather believes, "one day, my Mommy will come" (576), feeling disappointed that she has not come to take him to death on the night when he tells the boy his story. Day by day the other children in the house become increasingly aggressive to the point of madness. They keep killing animals, first for food, but later for fun, and leave the carcasses uncovered. The house is now full of the rotten odor of these dead animals. In the orgiastic chaos, the younger children have discovered sexual play. The boy is indifferent, only obsessed with his grandfather's impending death. "Maybe he has already gone crazy and he might one day kill that young maid lover of his and eat her," the sickly boy in his fever, shaking, seriously fears (578). One night the boy walks into the forest hoping to meet the *yamamba*, and witnesses Sayuri embracing a young man. Whatever the boy has expected to see in the *yamamba* and what he actually witnesses—the erotic illusion—overlap as the boy stares at Sayuri's embrace. After this encounter with *yamamba*esque Sayuri, the boy gets sick again, and he is told by the doctor to take a year off and stay in this mountain house to improve his health.

At the end of the story, a year has almost passed. None of his cousins returns to the grandfather's mountain house this summer. The boy has completely forgotten about Sayuri now and occasionally sleeps with the grandfather's maid lover who "has a bite scar on her nipple" (579). Did the grandfather bite it in reliving his fantasy? Or was it the boy? Either way, the circle of life has gone around one cycle: the boy is now playing the part of the younger-day grandfather, and the maid is the *yamamba* this time around. Like the grandfather, the boy has been away from home for a year. The boy wonders

how he will go home to his mother. The story ends with the boy's playing with a mist-spray to form a "rainbow bridge to death" (579) on the maid's breasts, while thinking of the grandfather's nearing death.

As far as the prior studies on Kanai's works are concerned, unlike Okamoto Kanoko discussed in the previous chapter, Kanai is not usually considered as a writer of "motherhood." She is rather known for her "father-daughter plots"[52] (Kitada, "Kanai Mieko" 159). The "eroticized parent-child relations" (Sherif 250) in her works are frequently conveyed within the context of father-daughter relations, as in one of her best known works in English translation, "Rabbits"[53] (1972). A scholar of Japanese literature, Susan Napier, comments that Kanai's "Rabbits" is "an extraordinary and horrific version of a case of Oedipal wish-fulfillment on the part of a young girl," and that it is a "mirror image" of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's short fiction, *The Bridge of Dreams*,[54] which is about a "quasi-incestuous relationship" between a young boy and his stepmother (Napier 86). Even in the story titled "Boshizō" [Portrait of *mother* and child] (emphasis added) (1972) by Kanai, the "mother" is actually a girl in love with her father, and the "child" is her father who has lost his memory in an accident and calls his daughter "Mother."

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[52] This term is borrowed from the title of a book, *The Father-Daughter Plot: Japanese Literary Women and the Law of the Father*, eds. Rebecca L. Copeland and Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

[53] Kanai Mieko, "Rabbits," trans. Phyllis Birnbaum, *Rabbits, Crabs, Etc.: Stories by Japanese Women* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1982), 1-16. Trans. of "Usagi" [rabbits].

[54] Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, "The Bridge of Dreams," *Seven Japanese Tales*, trans. Howard Hibbett (New York: Knoph, 1963; New York: Perigee-Putnam, 1981) 95-159, trans. of *Yume no ukihashi*, 1959.

Sharalyn Orbaugh, also a scholar of Japanese literature, analyzes a set of Kanai's short stories including "Rabbbits" and "Boshizō" and situates them in the discourse of gender and body (Orbaugh). All of the four texts she examines—"Kikan" [The homecoming] (1970) and "Funiku" ("Rotting Meat"[55]) (1972) in addition to the two mentioned above—concern the theme of what a Japanese scholar, Yoshida Sanroku, calls "the non-existing another being" (Yoshida 179). This "non-existing another being" or the "other being who does not exist" (Yoshida 176) is, according to Yoshida, the main concern for Kanai in most of her works. The father in "Rabbits" is obviously an example of such "other being" (Yoshida 183). In fact, a Japanese scholar, Kitada Sachie, alludes to the death of Kanai's father when Kanai was five years old as one of the significant factors contributing to Kanai's inclination to "father-daughter plots" in which the father is presented in the image of the "non-existing lover" or "eternal lover" ("Kanai Mieko" 159). But these "fathers" in Kanai's works, Kitada points out, seem closer to the all-embracing and engulfing "maternal" images (159), although Kitada does not refer to Kanai's "Yamamba" in this or any other context. Similarly, Orbaugh's aforementioned study on Kanai's works *almost* refers to "Yamamba" as she discusses the stories that "exploit the fundamental human terror or desire of being literally eaten" (151), to which Kanai's "Yamamba" clearly belongs. Indeed, although Orbaugh does not mention Kanai's "Yamamba" specifically, she even brings up the folkloric *yamamba* (*yamauba*) stories in general in this context (161).

As explained in the introductory chapter, *yamamba* is a folkloric figure: a cannibalistic crone living in the mountains, who is both reminiscent of the maternal

[55] Kanai, "Rotting Meat," trans. Mary A. Knighton, *Fiction International* 29 (1996): 110-115.

goddess of fertility and an evil female demon. In this chapter, I will look at how Kanai's "Yamamba" further complicates the erotic fantasy of euphoric oneness with the other projected onto the maternal figure. Kanai's retelling of the *yamamba* legend calls attention to the very fascination and loathing that this figure invokes regarding motherhood and sexuality. Kanai plays upon the fascinating uncanniness of the *yamamba* as an ambivalent figure, who represents that which is maternal as well as erotic. She emphasizes the seemingly paradoxical maternal image of *yamamba* as a nurturing, loving, embracing mother on the one hand and a dangerous, engulfing mother on the other. This apparent maternal paradox is further enriched by another seemingly paradoxical image of the erotic *yamamba*—the sensuous, beautiful, idealized fantasy woman who is also an ogress, fatally luring and entrapping men into sweet death by devouring.

My reading of Kanai's "Yamamba" shows that these seemingly contradictory images of *yamamba* are in fact not contradictory at all. That is, the very desire for erotic union is ultimately the desire to lose oneself in the other in the merging of identities and blurring of the self/other boundaries, which can be traced back to the fantasy of the earliest mother-infant unity before the establishment of such boundaries. Devouring, then, is an extreme form of identification through literally incorporating the other into the self. The desire to become one with the other both in the intensity of erotic pleasure and in the intensity of maternal love, to break down the bodily boundaries, can be translated as "I want to become one with you," which really means both "I want to eat you up" and "I want to be eaten up by you." Such dangerous and luring fusion with that which is maternal is both longed for in erotic fantasy and repudiated with horror. Kanai's playing

upon devouring and being devoured using the contemporary *yamamba* is really a playing upon the ambivalence of subjectivities, the blurring of the self/other distinctions, and merging of identities.

Exploring what Kanai highlights as she reinterprets and reworks Okamoto's "Sushi" in her "Yamamba" not only clarifies what Kanai saw in Okamoto's "Sushi"—the eroticism of that which is maternal—but also offers a different perspective on the sentimental appreciation of "transience" suggested in the previous chapter. The "transient" mother-space that Okamoto unfolded in her "Sushi" suggested a hopeful "circle of life" with a Buddhist undertone. In Kanai's "Yamamba" on the other hand, this "circle of life" seems closer to an unsettling "circle of death" with no salvation. To put it differently, Kanai's is more like a Möbius band, whose ends are joined like a circle but with a half-twist along the way so that if one traces one surface of the band, one ends up on the other side. I will examine this half-twist performed by Kanai. Kanai's "Yamamba" is a distillation of Okamoto's "Sushi," focusing on and inflating the illusory experience with the mother as both erotic and nurturing being. By amplifying the illusion to the point of grotesque, Kanai's version of the mother forces the reader into disillusion.

The Abject: Death Infecting Life

Underlying the paradox of fascination and loathing in Kanai's "Yamamba" is Lacanian feminist psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva's notion of "abjection." I will read Kanai's use of "that which is maternal" in her "Yamamba" as the question of identification, subjectivity, the ambiguous and ambivalent self/other conceptualization, that ultimately originates from the archaic, undifferentiated relation to what Kristeva calls "abject," that thing that threatens to engulf the subject and lures one toward the sweet

union with the mother-death-other. According to Kristeva, the abject is what the subject has to expel as filthy and disgusting. Like the corpse, it is "death infecting life," "something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (Kristeva, *Powers* 4). Referring to things like corpse, excrements, menstrual blood, incest, perversion, cannibalism, murder, decay, and so on, Kristeva characterizes the abject as both repulsive and yet fascinating, that which "disturbs identity, system, order," the "in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" that "does not respect borders, positions, rules" (*Powers* 4).

Abjection is to expel, vomit, disavow, "to abject," turning away from such "abject" in repugnance and fascination as in the purification rite of the defilement, which is really a defense against "the temptation to return" to the archaic, undifferentiated relation to the mother (Kristeva, *Powers* 63-64). That is, "to ward off the subject's fear of his very own identity sinking irretrievably into the mother" (Kristeva, *Powers* 64). According to Kristeva, separation from the mother is the first instance of abjection, which remains ambiguous since it "preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (*Powers* 10).

In Kanai's story, the apparent paradoxes of the maternal and erotic *yamamba* collapse "in a burst of beauty" (Kristeva, *Powers* 210) in the midst of playing upon and violating the conventional boundaries between self and other, reality and illusion, life and death. Kanai's use of "abjection" hovers over her story as she plays with the blurring of the borders, merging of identities, and the erotic fusion with the maternal in death. Like

her motif of the "odor" that is a perfect manifestation of the infecting, invading "abject," the allusions to things like cannibalism, blood, death, the erotic and the maternal permeate her story without clear borders that separate them.

The thirteen-year-old boy in Kanai's "Yamamba" refuses to eat meat, approximating Okamoto's *sushi* boy. As discussed in the previous chapter, Okamoto associated the boy's food loathing with his inability to achieve the coherent, whole perception of his mother. In other words, his food loathing was presented as the boy's tender wish to eat only his mother's hand-made food, complicated by a personal case of psychological developmental pathology. The *sushi* boy feels that the food prepared by the maids would literally "contaminate his body" (Okamoto, "Sushi" 48). The heart-warming, sentimental therapy that Okamoto offers is the mother's hand-made *sushi*. But Kanai skips the sentimental therapy and directly exposes the mutual violence between the eater and the eaten inherent in the act of eating. Despite her much gentler treatment of it, Okamoto, too, is obviously aware of the bodily violations implicated in eating and being eaten: the *sushi* boy feels that the food would "contaminate" (violate) his body (Okamoto, "Sushi" 47); upon eating fish successfully, the boy feels "a fresh power of a conqueror who had just killed a live animal by biting into it, tearing it" (Okamoto, "Sushi" 54).

Kanai's protagonist's meat-loathing is first introduced after the grandfather and the children try to decide which farm animal to kill for dinner. With their mouth dripping the deep-purple color juice from plums—another blood imagery suggesting cannibalism—the children scream for pig, rabbit, chicken, and their various favorite methods of cooking (567). Then they engage in physical fight over the choice of their prey (567). Sayuri, being the eldest of the cousins, scolds them, insisting that she will not

eat any meat: “How can you eat those animals that you have cared for so affectionately? You even gave them names. Look at their eyes. How cruel of you!” (568). The other children perplexedly reply: “But they seem so adorable and delicious” (568). The boy feels repulsed at the thought of eating meat: “that soft, amorphous, bloody mass of flesh with the smell of fat almost made him vomit” (568). The grandfather later tells the boy softly as if talking to himself that whether it is an animal meat or certain plant or nuts or drink, the “essence” of food tastes all the same (571). He says that even human flesh and blood are no different—they are essentially the same food (571). The grandfather problematizes the usual distinction between cannibalism and the supposedly “normal” food eating.[56] What the grandfather means by “the food in its essence”[57] is life itself, or more precisely, the dead life. To eat is to eat the other’s life (that is now dead), animal or plant; to eat life is really to eat death. One may call it “meat,” but it is really a “bloody mass of flesh” of a dead animal. Drawing on Kristeva’s notion of “abjection,” one can see that *any* food is potentially repulsive, a defilement that violates the inside/outside boundary; hence exists the civilization’s wide-ranging food taboo. In this context, the boy’s refusal of meat, or “food loathing,” is “the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection” (Kristeva, *Powers* 2), to borrow Kristeva’s words.

Further blurring the distinction between animal flesh and plant’s flesh, the text insists on the corporeality of the plants. According to the frame-narrator, the

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[56] In her discussion of Kanai’s aforementioned “Funiku” (“Rotting Meat”), Orbaugh explores the ways in which Kanai blurs the distinction between “meat—the flesh of a dead animal—[. . .] and a corpse—the flesh of a dead human” (Orbaugh 138).

[57]“本質的な食物”

"corporeality of the plant"[58] exists in its odor—the odor that fills the air of the mountain forest. The boy smells the corporeality of the plant, the erotic, bodily smell that arouses him (570). "Odor" is a recurrent motif in many of Kanai's works (Orbaugh), and its significance is again intensified by a reference to Kristeva's characterization of the "abject" as that which "disturbs identity, system, order," the "in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" that "does not respect borders, positions, rules" (Kristeva, *Powers* 4). The amorphous, invasive, and infectious "odor" is present all over Kanai's story, permeating and disturbing the borders.

With every mention of odor, be it the "odor of the plants," "the odor of the season," or "the rotten odor of the carcass," Kanai is referring, ultimately, to the odor of life and death. It is the animate life of the plants that emits the bodily odor of life, filling the air, wind, and the seasons, for which Kanai uses the word "*kan'nō-teki*"[59] [erotic, sensual] to describe them. Kanai writes, "In the midst of summertime, the season of the forest plants' overwhelming growth, the boy liked to breath in the sensual (*kan'nō-teki*) scent of the breeding vegetation, fresh and sparkling" (569). This scent "arises from the sultry grass vapor," and it is "sweet, languid, and drowsy" (569). One can perhaps suppose how such a healthy growth of the summer plants can be perceived as "erotic" by imagining the humid air in the subtropical rainforest and the vegetation's overwhelming vigor of life. At night, as the air becomes more intense, the grandfather says to the boy: "On the transparent night like this, the odor of the plants becomes heavier than the perfume from the sweaty armpit" (573). He is talking about the night when he

[58] "植物にとっての肉体"

[59] "官能的"

encountered the *yamamba* in the forest long time ago as well as this very night when is telling the boy about that experience. "The odor of the season is in its full burst with arousal," the grandfather says, "on a transparent night like this that makes one lose control" (573). Later that summer, the boy unintentionally traces his grandfather's story in actuality, and he, too, encounters the night forest that reveals its "hidden meaning" (578): the corporeality[60] of the plants, trees, and the mountain forest that now emits the thick odor of the underworld. The boy is at the entrance into the dark underworld, "the labyrinth of the forest's body odor as heavy as the breathing plant's nightly perspiration" (578).

The erotic odor of life that Kanai depicts is associated with the "corporeality of the plants," the vegetation that is surely alive and breeding. But such odor of reproducing life is fused with the odor of death. Right after the grandfather's *yamamba* story, Kanai illustrates the bloodshed: "the children have become increasingly ferocious. They now insanely and unnecessarily keep killing their stock animals. [. . .] They dump the carcass in the big hole, [. . .] leave them uncovered, and the air is full of rotten odor of carrion" (577)—the odor of death. Initially, the children killed animals to eat them—not that there was no joy and excitement in the act of killing the animals even then. But it was the erotic odor of life that drove these children to random animal killing (570, 572). Referring again to the erotic scent of the heavy air, the frame-narrator wonders, "Maybe it is the air of this place that changed the children [into savagery]" (572). There is no boundary, both metaphorically and literally, between the odor of life and odor of death. The odor is amorphous, invasive and infectious. As Kristeva says of the abject, it is

[60] "肉体"

"death infecting life" (Kristeva, *Powers* 4). Kanai exposes the unsettling ambiguity between life and death. Not only is the odor of life fused with the odor of death, but in fact, life itself is fused with death. The supposed border between life and death is not as solid as is normally assumed.

In Kanai's "Yamamba," the "children's place" indeed turns out to be the "land of death," which is bursting with "nurturing horror" (Kristeva, *Powers* 210) of that which is abject: recurrent associations of blood imagery, animal flesh and carcass, orgiastic animal slaughtering, the odor of life and death, death fantasy, the beautiful, nourishing death-mother and cannibalism. On the surface, none of these seems to be present in Okamoto's "Sushi." There is no superficial resemblance between the two stories, except for the young protagonists' food loathing. But Kanai's "Yamamba" is in fact a loyal caricature of Okamoto's "Sushi." Every single "abject" in Kanai's "Yamamba" is already present in Okamoto's "Sushi," only thoroughly subsumed under the exalted illusion of the mother, rendering its appearance benign and ordinary. Kanai's caricature does not rip off Okamoto's illusion. On the contrary, Kanai focuses on the illusion itself and augments it to an excess, revealing the grotesqueness of the illusion. The mother herself underneath that illusion is not Kanai's concern because, in Kanai's "Yamamba," there is no real mother under that illusion.

The Illusory Mother

According to Kristeva, mother and death are the ultimate "abject" (*Powers* 4). So is Kanai's *yamamba*, for she is obviously a death-mother. But Kanai adds a critical twist to the obvious because in her story titled "Yamamba," "The *Yamamba*" does not exist. She is an illusion. Kanai's text will not be satisfied with the straightforward

interpretation of *yamamba* as the abject. From the outset, the grandfather's childhood encounter with the *yamamba* is presented as a dreamy reminiscence. He starts telling his story to the boy as follows:

> I was younger than you at the time. I had been sick in bed with fever. That night, the eros of nature became the odor which made the night incredibly transparent. [. . .] I walked toward the "wind forest" like a sleepwalker or a madman possessed by the moon. [. . .] I was lured into the forest by some irresistible, magnetic force of the night. [. . .] The night forest was full of voluptuous light. This must be like the kingdom at the bottom of the sea where the mermaid lived, I imagined. (573)

With these fantasy-like images such as mermaid, the readers are invited to assume that the grandfather either had a dream or was hallucinating due to fever. The grandfather himself recalls that he used to think that it was a dream, but now he thinks that it really happened, for "when one gets old, the childhood dreams and reality are merged and become indistinguishable" (574). He thus defies the conventional boundary between fantasy and reality. He says he has a feeling that he will see the *yamamba* woman soon again, for he has dreams of her often recently, although, he adds, he now needs the young woman's body to help him dream.

Having established the setting of his story as a dream or fantasy, the grandfather talks about the *yamamba,* although it is not until the end of his story that he calls her *yamamba*. In the night forest, he met the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. This beautiful woman who did not seem very young invited him into the deep mountain. He thought that this woman must be his "true mother" (574):

> Otherwise, why would she look at me so tenderly and affectionately? The mother that a child sees everyday is a "false" mother. I am sorry but your everyday mother seldom reveals her "true mother" face. This beautiful woman had a face that was a combination of the images of the transient beauty that my mother showed only momentarily from time to time . . . , that is why I thought that this was my true mother. (574-75)

In his imagination, he had split the image of his mother into a "true," idealized mother on the one hand and a "false," everyday mother on the other. What he calls his "true mother" corresponds to the "phantom mother" in Okamoto's "Sushi"; the equivalent of the "true mother's face" that the grandfather in Kanai's "Yamamba" speaks of is, for Okamoto's *sushi* boy, his mother's face upon her successful *sushi* feeding—that "beautiful face that the boy liked best of all, the face he had never forgotten all his life" (Okamoto, "Sushi" 54). As discussed in the previous chapter, this idealized mother represents unnaturally good quality only, including the pleasurable and satisfying suckling experience of infancy and the impossible mother-infant omnipotent merger to which one supposedly longs to return.

In Kanai's version, the suckling fantasy is more directly actualized:

> After walking for a while, I was exhausted and I told her I couldn't walk any more. She sat down under the big oak tree and held me on her lap. [. . .] She—my true mother—revealed her breast, bent her head and bit off her pink nipple with her wet, glossy teeth. Strangely showing no sign of pain, she smiled and told me to suck her bloody nipple. I kept sucking and sucking as told. It tasted mildly sweet. I felt a deep satisfaction in

> knowing that this was how I had been nursed and nurtured by my mother. The happiness made my whole body itch. (575)

It is physiologically true that the breast-milk is made from blood;[61] but in this scene, the nurturing white milk comes in the form of actual red blood, again suggesting cannibalism. The infantile wish to merge with the mother and bask in her nurturance blends with a sensual, bodily pleasure, as well as with the blood imagery described earlier in the death fantasy, the animal slaughtering, and the bloody flesh that has repulsed the boy. This climax does correspond to the *sushi* session in Okamoto's "Sushi," but Kanai's is an amalgamation of Okamoto's more diffused series of several climactic moments within the *sushi* making session. For instance, the grandfather-boy's "itchiness" matches with

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[61] While blood circulates though the mammary gland (the milk-producing organ in mammals including humans) the milk-secreting cells take up the nutrients from the blood necessary to produce milk. Some of these nutrients are secreted directly; others are synthesized within the milk-secreting cells and then secreted.

It is interesting to note that in many Japanese websites on breast-feeding that target parents of an infant, this physiological process is made clear in simple terms such as "breast-milk is made from mother's blood," and is used positively and encouragingly to explain the benefits of breastfeeding. The following websites are just a few examples of such websites on parenting and breastfeeding:
[http://www.mirucom.net/gohan/shinpi/ketsueki.html];
[http://www.beanstalksnow.co.jp/sukoyaka/ganbaru/bonyu/shinpi2.htm]

On the contrary, none of the major websites on parenting and breastfeeding in English mentions blood as having anything to do with the production of breast-milk. The physiology of lactation is made clear only in other types of websites such as the one on dairy industry or the one on anatomy listed below:
[http://www.milkproduction.com/Library/Articles/Efficient_Milking_The_Mammary_Gland.htm];
[http://www.answers.com/topic/mammary-gland]

the *sushi* boy's excited itchiness upon being able to eat his first real fish. Okamoto writes, "This happiness made the sides of his belly itch, and he raised his dancing fingers to scratch them" ("Sushi" 54). In Okamoto's "Sushi," the itchy pleasure is ascribed to the boy's joy in his aggression, a "fresh power of a conqueror who had just killed a live animal by biting into it, tearing it" (54). Kanai dislocates the same itchy happiness to an infantile pleasure of suckling, alluding that the latter is just as aggressive as the former. In both cases, these two children are aggressively incorporating the live other into the self.

It is indeed strange that this *yamamba*-mother shows no sign of pain when biting off her own nipple, the act that is even stranger. It is less strange to say that the grandfather in his childhood *imagines* the mother's nipple bitten off. He *imagines* that he is not the one who caused this harm to the mother—she did it herself. He *imagines* that she is not in pain anyway. One may be reminded of the Kleinian[62] baby's fantasy of cutting, biting, tearing up the mother (mother's breasts) during its early months ("paranoid-schizoid position") and its "predominantly oral impulse to suck dry, bite up, scoop out and rob the mother's body of its good contents" (Klein, "Notes" 8). Melanie Klein explains the baby's "phantasied oral-sadistic attacks on the mother's breast" ("Notes" 2) as follows:

> I believe that oral-sadistic impulses towards the mother's breast are active from the beginning of life, though with the onset of teething the cannibalistic impulses increase in strength. [. . .]

[62] As introduced in the previous chapters, Melanie Klein (1882-1960) is one of the most influential psychoanalysts particularly in analysis of children.

> In states of frustration and anxiety the oral-sadistic and cannibalistic desires are reinforced, and then the infant feels that he has taken in the nipple and the breast in bits. ("Notes" 5)

Subsequently in what Klein termed "depressive position," the baby feels guilty for injuring the mother and wants to make reparation. On the feeling of guilt, Klein writes, "The feeling that the harm done to the loved object is caused by the subject's aggressive impulses I take to be the essence of guilt" ("On the Theory" 36). But in Kanai's story, the grandfather in his childhood is feeling no sense of guilt, not only because he disavows the possibility that he may have been the cause of the harm done to the mother, but also because he refuses to acknowledge the harm at all. If *sushi* boy's problem lies in his inability to work through the depressive position, the grandfather-boy in Kanai's version is yet to achieve the depressive position.

While the grandfather-boy was living with the "true mother" for a year—he was calling her "Mommy" by then—his parents desperately searched for him, concluding that he must have either died, fallen into a river, been kidnapped, or eaten by a *yamamba*, for people believed that a *yamamba* lived in that mountain. This is the first mention of "*yamamba*" in the text (575), already around three-quarters into the story. In the story titled "Yamamba," the *yamamba* has been absent. Kanai successfully highlights *yamamba*'s absence by mentioning *yamamba* at this time, although paradoxical it may sound.

The grandfather then says, "She may have been a *yamamba*. They say *yamamba* lives in that mountain. They say *yamamba* eats human flesh. [. . .] I must have eaten it, too, then. To tell you the truth, I wouldn't have minded if she ate me up. Next time, I

really hope she will eat me up" (576). After a year, the woman tells the grandfather-boy to go home, and he hesitantly left this "relived infancy" (576) and resumed a normal life. While the grandfather thinks that he was with this "true mother" the *yamamba*, his family and neighbors assumed that he was dead, eaten by the *yamamba*. This "true mother"=*yamamba*=death equation becomes an alluring death fantasy for the grandfather: "Like a child, the grandfather believes that his Mommy in the dream will come to take him to death" (576). The boy thinks that the grandfather will die soon: "Since the grandfather is wishing for death, death as a blessing, it will come, he reasons" (576). Wanting to be eaten by the "mother," the grandfather no longer "abjects" the "abject." For him, death and the mother are explicitly and erotically linked—he needs the body of the young maid to have the dream of the *yamamba* mother. Death, in this sense, is an erotic, blissful reunion with the "maternal." He literally wants to be eaten up by the mother-death.

The boy's attempt to reenact the grandfather's *yamamba* story also testifies to the illusiveness of *yamamba* as a figure that does not exist, or a figure that exists only as a fantasy. As the boy walks into the forest hoping to see *yamamba*, he sees Sayuri smiling and embracing a young man, which is suggestive of the "primal scene." He sees this Sayuri-*yamamba*'s "legs, pale arms holding a man . . . , and things like that, he saw everything" (579). For the grandfather, the *yamamba* represents death as well as the "true" mother with the face "that was a combination of the images of the transient beauty that my mother showed only momentarily from time to time" (574). For the boy, the *yamamba* is a combination of the grandfather's *yamamba*, the sight of Sayuri with her pale arms caressing a man, plus the grandfather's maid lover who later becomes the boy's

lover—a wink at the tired motif of quasi-incestuous mother-son relationship—while he stays in the mountain for a year. The text suggests that "The *Yamamba*" with a capital "Y" does not exist, in the same sense as in Lacan's well known sentence, "The Woman does not exist"[63] (*Television* 38; *Seminar, Book XX* 7, 72-73). By that, Lacan means that "Woman with a capital *W*, Woman as singular in essence, does not exist; Woman as an all-encompassing idea is an illusion. There is a multiplicity of women, but no essence of 'Womanhood' or 'Womanliness.'"[64] Kanai's text is asserting exactly the same about "The Mother." The "true mother" (*yamamba*) is a child's fantasy.

Circle of Death

The old leaf falls and a young leaf sprouts again. We call it circle of life. The previous chapter examined how Okamoto's text accentuates the sense of transience in her portrayal of the circle of life—something is perishing right next to something else beginning to grow. In her narrative, transience is being nostalgically savored. If transience makes nostalgia circulate and vice versa as I argued in my chapter on transience, the circle of life is indeed circulating in Okamoto's "Sushi," abundant with the sense of transience and nostalgia. In Kanai's "Yamamba" on the other hand, although life is juxtaposed with death as in Okamoto's "Sushi," Kanai effectively halts the flow of the circle, avoiding any feeling of nostalgia. The circle of life is not circulating.

The apparent contrast between Okamoto's river pond scene where the groups of fish swim down the stream versus the dead pond with carcass in Kanai's version

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[63] In footnotes to Lacan's *Seminar, Book XX*, the translator, Bruce Fink, explains that in French, the singular feminine article *la* in Lacan's "*la femme n'existe pas*" indicates the universal, but in English, "saying '*the* woman does not exist' is virtually non-sensical" (7, 72-73).

[64] Footnote by the translator, Bruce Fink, in Lacan, *Seminar, Book XX* 7.

epitomizes the apparent difference between the circulating circle of life versus the stagnant circle of death. As suggested in the previous chapter, the early spring river bank in Okamoto's "Sushi" is rich with a sense of transience as well as signs of new lives. Kanai uses the same river pond motif and converts it not only into a mud pond but also a grave hole or the animal carcass dumpster. One day the children at the grandfather's summer house decide to make a swimming pool in the yard. They spend two days digging a huge hole and fill it with water, which turns into a mud water. One of the youngest children almost drowns in the muddy water hole. Later, the pond becomes just a big hole, used as a dumpster for the leftover flesh, carcass, and skin of the animals that the children killed. Since they "leave them uncovered, [. . .] the air is full of rotten odor of carrion" (577).

By converting Okamoto's flowing river pond into the carcass dumpster mud pond, Kanai's text indeed reinterprets the circle of life as a circle of death. More precisely, the text is a disillusionment that a circle of life *is* really a circle of death, just as to eat is really to eat the other's life, which is really to eat the other's death, as discussed earlier. In the grandfather's stockyard, the new lives are being born to the rabbits, the hen, and the pig. The children burst into cheers to see them. But right after the births of new lives, the next paragraph hints at their eventual fate—being eaten—as the grandfather asks the children what they want to eat for dinner: he says, "we have to kill a pig or a bird or a rabbit for tonight's feast. What do you kids all want to eat?" (566).

Similarly, the grandfather's house is both the "land of child" and the "land of death" at the same time. The grandfather says to Sayuri, "you probably won't be coming to this place from the next year on. Like all the others before you. For this is the

children's place" (566).[65] This is the children's place, the place where the grandfather's grandchildren spend the summer vacations. But in the boy's fantasy this mountain place stands for the fairytale "land of death" (560). Later, it has literally become the land of death as the children keep killing the animals randomly. The land of child is the land of death—no wonder the boy smells the odor of death in the odor of life. At the beginning of the story, the boy thinks about a fairytale rainbow bridge, "the bridge for the dead to cross to the land of death" (560). This bridge is obviously illusory, if only because the narrative has explicitly dwelled on a transitory rainbow (558-559) before introducing this rainbow bridge to death (560). There is no such thing as the bridge to the land of death. This *is* the land of death already.

The illusory rainbow bridge to death is a persistent image throughout the story. At the beginning, the thirteen-year-old boy is waiting for the upcoming summer vacation. He sees a rainbow, which is described as "the strange daydream that became a belt-sash made of a prime fabric. It announced the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the summer. It was a bridge between one season to the next" (558). He gazes in rapture at the rainbow "as if at the pleasant illusion" (558). The rainbow becomes thinner and soon disappears. In the boy's daydream, one transitory image leads to another transitory image: the very transience of the rainbow reminds the boy about the equally transient scene from the previous summer. The boy is now thinking of an erotic picture projected momentarily and accidentally by the slide projector—Kanai uses a more old-fashioned

[65] Kanai refuses to bestow any significance to Sayuri's transition from child to woman nor to the boy's from child to man despite its obvious presence in the plot. By deliberately not addressing the coming of age aspects of her plot, Kanai is perhaps delivering a subtle parody of the typical coming of age stories.

(and poetic) term, magic lantern[66]—by the boy's mischief at the children's summer show. The narrator explicitly links the two illusory images—the rainbow and the erotic picture—and says, "just like that erotic picture, the rainbow gets pale and quickly disappears" (559). Then the narrative flashes further back to the beginning of that previous summer when the boy is twelve-year-old. He is again thinking about the rainbow. This time, he is thinking about a fairytale rainbow, described as "the bridge for the dead to cross to the land of death" (560). He writes a letter to Sayuri about this fairytale rainbow. He imagines the early-summer rainbow as the bridge to the grandfather's mountain house, "the children's place" where he and Sayuri can meet. "The land of death" and "the children's place" has just got equated as the rainbow bridge's destination, foreshadowing the actual transformation of the grandfather's house into a slaughterhouse later. The boy does not send the letter to Sayuri, whom he would rather keep as his fantasy.

And death, too, is a fantasy in Kanai's narrative. I have already discussed the grandfather's wish to be eaten up by the mother-death. The grandfather fantasizes death as an erotic, blissful reunion with the "maternal." The boy also daydreams about death in fascination while thinking about his crush on Sayuri:

> The image of the land of death somewhere over the rainbow breed the brilliant thought of [Sayuri's] imagined death. Upon this thought, the dream of the evanescent, pastel shaded seven colored ribbon forms into a dark and vivid image of death. Death, then, becomes a dream of white and black ribbons tied onto the bouquet of purple and yellow colored pansy. (561)

[66] "幻燈機"

He delightfully and indulgently fantasizes Sayuri's death in his crazed daydream, only to be reminded of her "undeniably healthy physical shape" (561-62), at which point he turns the death fantasy to himself with an equal pleasure. Nonetheless, he repeatedly imagines Sayuri walking across the rainbow bridge for the dead. In his fantasy she is wearing the light pink tights and the fluffy costume with spangles. He also imagines the angels with the white and silver wings, waiting, lined on the other side of the rainbow. At the end of the story, the boy is playing with a mist-spray forming a rainbow on his maid lover's breasts. Of course, he is again thinking about the rainbow bridge to death (579).

The boy seems to be replicating the younger-day grandfather in multiple ways including his encounter with a version of *yamamba*—Sayuri with another man—in the forest and his spending a year in the mountain with yet another version of *yamamba*—the grandfather's maid lover. This is an interesting twist by Kanai on Okamoto's plot in which Minato is both the old man and the boy himself. Minato's story of a boy is his recollection of his own childhood. In Kanai's text, the grandfather tells a story of his childhood, too, but there is another boy who is listening to it and later enacts it. Kanai's version unsettles the idea of continuous identity, for the boy embodies the grandfather's childhood-self at the same time as he remains the other. The text suggests that the past self may be seen as the other. Recollection of one's childhood suggests, in and of itself, a circle of life. But Kanai's narrative does not allow a complete circle, because as the boy takes over the part of the childhood grandfather, the band of the circle gets half-twisted as in a Möbius band. Tracing the grandfather's life, one ends up on the other side of the Möbius band tracing the boy's life. In other words, the grandfather's life and the boy's life become both distinct and fused at the same time.

Unlike the grandfather's childhood memory of *yamamba* that has already been made into a coherent narrative, the boy's encounter with *yamamba* is in fragments, like the close-up image of Sayuri's leg and arms around a man. Other fragmentary images include the boy's flashback memories such as the erotic picture projected on the magic lantern, the daydreams of the rainbow, his crush on Sayuri and the unsent letter for her, his death fantasy for Sayuri, and the maid lover who "does not even look beautiful" (579). What the grandfather has constructed into a blissful union with the death-mother is still a nightmarish pastiche for the boy. But all of these images, in addition to the image of his mother and the grandfather's *yamamba* story, may later fuse into one, feeding into his own *yamamba* narrative as was the case for his grandfather who says, "with age, the childhood dreams and reality are merged and become indistinguishable" (574). Such a confession by the grandfather calls into question his own reliability as a narrator of his own story; Kanai, then, is ultimately calling into question her own narrator's reliability as well, who is telling the story about the boy.

Unlike Minato in Okamoto's "Sushi" whose recollection ends in a nostalgic yearning for his mother, the grandfather's recollection in Kanai's "Yamamba" is devoid of nostalgia. While Minato says that "lately *memories* of my mother come back to me very often" (Okamoto, "Sushi" 58; emphasis added), the grandfather tells the boy that he lately has *dreams* of his "Mommy" the *yamamba* very often (574). He wants be eaten up by *yamamba*. While Minato is yearning for his past—memories of his mother—the grandfather is yearning for what has yet to happen—his death. However, Kanai did not make up the grandfather's death wish out of the blue. By quoting Okamoto's "Sushi" in the epigraph, Kanai has promised a retelling of "Sushi," and she delivers it. In "Sushi,"

the mother and death already, if subtly, overlap; and Minato, too, is thinking of his own transience.

In Okamoto's "Sushi," the sense of nostalgia and transience makes the circle of life circulate. By effectively removing the nostalgic appreciation of transience, Kanai halts the circulation, thus rendering it a stagnant circle of death. In my chapter on psychoanalytic understanding of transience, transience was explained as a "foretaste of mourning" (Freud, "On Transience" 306), and nostalgia "incomplete mourning" (Bassin 428) or a "substitute for mourning" (Werman 398). But is there such a thing as complete mourning? Kanai's text, from which mourning in any way—be it the foretaste of it or substitute for it—has been carefully cleared, not only answers in a negative but also offers the same negative answer for Okamoto's text as well. Okamoto's text appreciates transience and nostalgically savors it, circulating mourning which always remains incomplete hence nostalgia.

It is not that Okamoto's text portrays the circle of life whereas Kanai's text portrays the circle of death. The circle of death can already be glimpsed under the circle of life in Okamoto's text. Kanai's text only makes the continuity between the two obvious. By performing the half-twist of the Möbius band discussed above, she effectively demonstrates the continuity between the comforting notion of the circle of life and the unsettling and frightening circle of death.

I have already discussed the ways in which Kanai's text suggests that eating life is really eating death. Interestingly, the scene in which the mother feeds fish *sushi* to the boy in Okamoto's text is translated into the nursing scene where *yamamba* breast-feeds her blood to the grandfather-boy in Kanai's text. In both scenes, the mother is feeding a

life to the boy—in the latter, literally feeding her own life. Recently, a Japanese literary critic, Kōra Rumiko, interpreted the use of fish in Okamoto's works as symbolizing woman's life, thus suggesting that eating fish means eating woman's life (Kōra, *Okamoto Kanoko* 62-78).[67] But decades before such feminist reinterpretations of Okamoto's works began to flourish, Kanai had already read this food metaphor in Okamoto's "Sushi," and translates it into a more obviously masochistic life-feeding scene in "Yamamba."

Kanai's text also elucidates what is behind the circle of life and death. In Okamoto's "Sushi," the mother nurtures the young boy; later as he gets old, the memory of the mother pulls him towards death. The "mother" seems to be behind the wheel, turning the circle of life. Kanai's text not only presents the circle of life as the circle of death by associating the mother with death clearly from the beginning, but also it unmistakably presents this "mother" as an illusion. The *yamamba* is the mother in the child's fantasy. What is behind the wheel is an illusion.

Conclusion

In Okamoto's "Sushi," the boy catches a glimpse of his mother's most beautiful face. The glimpse is transient. In Kanai's "Yamamba," this transient moment is frozen up as if with a "pause" button, stretched out for a year, and magnified. Kanai interpreted Okamoto's *sushi*-mother as the *yamamba*, and claimed that there is no such thing as Yamamba in her story titled "Yamamba." Kanai's "Yamamba" is a distillation of

[67] The section is a reprint of Kōra's "Kafuchōsei to on'na no 'inochi': Okamono Kanoko 'Karei' ni tsuite" [patriarchy and woman's "life": on Okamoto Kanoko's "The House Spirit"], *Josei no jikohyōgen to bunka* [women's self-expression and culture], ed. Mizuta Noriko (Tokyo: Tabata shoten, 1993).

Okamoto's "Sushi," focusing on and inflating the illusory experience with the mother as both erotic and nurturing being. In magnifying the fantasy of the Mother to the point of grotesque and thus offering disillusionment, Kanai distances herself from the narcissistic inflation of the Mother.

On the other hand, Okamoto's text may have been narcissistically subsumed under the illusion of motherhood. Many critics have suggested that Okamoto considered herself to be the goddess the earth-mother. For instance, Maryellen Mori, a scholar of Japanese literature introduced in the previous chapter, elaborates on Okamoto's "self-deification" as follows:

> Her self-exaltation was fueled and sustained by the worshipers, mostly male, with whom she surrounded herself. [. . .] Ippei [her husband] encouraged Kanoko's inclination to regard herself as not only 'special' but as a goddess. [. . .] Kanoko acted out her personal version of the 'eternal feminine', a combination of wanton nymph and earth-mother deity. (92)

Similarly, Japanese critic Okuno Takeo calls Okamoto an "early-Neolithic earth-mother goddess" (19-20). Another Japanese critic, Tsuji Kunio, also associates the "maternal" Okamoto with the earth and the sun (4, 7). Such exaltation of the "mother" and herself as the mother-goddess is an attempt, on Okamoto's part, to fulfill the fantasy of the ideal Woman that no one can fulfill. Kanai's allegorical narrative reminds us of the impossibility of fulfilling such a fantasy.

Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, a Japanese critic who praised Okamoto's narcissism as her merit ("Okamoto" 6-12), had also praised Kanai for the opposite: "her foremost merit is

her clear detachment from any *an sich*[68] narcissism typical in women writers" (Shibusawa, "*Usagi*" 626). Kanai herself has more than once expressed her dislike of Okamoto's narcissism by saying, "it turns me off" ("Okamoto" 5, 9; "Zadankai" 63). At a round-table talk in 1976—three years after she wrote "Yamamba" and a year after her critical essay on Okamoto's works—Kanai said that she had read all of Okamoto's works in the complete works volumes but was now "fed up with" them and would not read them again in the future ("Zadankai" 63). But at the time she was writing "Yamamba" and the critical essay titled "Okamoto Kanoko," Kanai has presented an excellent interpretation of Okamoto's works.

In her critical essay, Kanai praises a scene in Okamoto's *Nyotai kaiken* [female body revealed][69] as "one of the most exquisite and erotic in Kanako's oeuvre" (Kanai, "Okamoto" 8).[70] Kanai is referring to the scene in which the protagonist girl Nanako is on the boat looking through her glass of soda at her boyfriend Bōtarō being beaten on the shore, first with pity and shock but later in pleasure and ecstatic rapture:

> Nanako's lipstick had left an imprint on the edge of the glass. Her trembling hand had smeared the lipstick stain, and now a charming crimson rain cloud appeared over the figure of the distressed young youth she saw through the soda. Two or three rivulets of color rolled down over him. As crimson cloud secreted more and more streams, the stain diffused

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[68] Shibusawa uses the Japanese translation of this Hegelian concept, "即自," which literally means 'in itself.'

[69] The title is translated as "Becoming a Woman" in Mori 77.

[70] Cited and translated in Mori 79.

> until the boy's form was encircled by countless rosy nebulae. (Okamoto, *Nyotai* 223; cited in Kanai, "Okamoto" 8)[71]

It is this scene, arguably, that Kanai had used in her "Yamamba" as one of the blood imageries in the boy's daydreams. Kanai writes, "in the transparent glass full of lusciousness, a drop of crimson-red grenadine syrup alluringly flares down" ("Yamamba" 561). Sayuri in her "Yamamba," then, is not only a remake of Tomoyo in Okamoto's "Sushi" but also of Nanako in Okamoto's *Nyotai kaiken*, a novel about a girl's coming of age. One may wish to read Nanako as a free-spirited, strong girl who defies the stereotypical female role of passivity and submissiveness. Kanai's text deflates such wish by presenting Sayuri, who is neither passive nor submissive, and yet remains an object of the other's fantasy. Wanton nymph is no less a construct of fantasy, the ideal Woman and an object of the other's desire than a passive submissive stereotype.

Kanai's text does the same for the figure of *yamamba*. Her presentation of *yamamba* disagrees with more recent feminist literary critics who offer an enthusiastic reading of *yamamba* as the figure of female resistance. Celebrating *yamamba* as the earth-mother goddess, such critics may easily slip into exaltation of that which is maternal, which, in and of itself, is just another version of the ideal Woman. In Kanai's version, *yamamba*'s devouring is not the act of aggression against men's will but a wish fulfillment on their part. Such retelling is not an utter invention by Kanai but rather her faithful interpretation of the folktale in which the man first thinks that the *yamamba* wants to eat him up, and the *yamamba* only reacts to his thought. The man in the folktale thinks, "You want to eat me up, don't you?" The *yamamba* then says, "You just thought, 'You want to eat me up, don't you?' didn't you?" Kanai rewrites this as "You want her

[71] Cited and translated in Mori 78-79.

to eat you up, don't you?" The grandfather in Kanai's text would answer yes. To the boy in Kanai's text, the narrator may say, "Do you want her to eat you up or what!?"

But the narrator's hypothetical question above is not the *yamamba*'s voice. In Kanai's text, *yamamba* is effectively devoid of voice. Who knows if *yamamba* really wants to eat up men or not? In the next chapter, I will examine how Ōba Minako (1930-2007) portrays *yamamba*'s voice. In her "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" (1976), *yamamba*'s devouring is understood not as men's projection but as her own real desire to incorporate men/babies. In Kanai's "Yamamba," everything is in the boy's head. It is his illusion. In Ōba's "The Smile," on the other hand, everything is in *Yamamba*'s head. It is her illusion.

CHAPTER 5

The Daughter's Voice of Her Mother: Ōba Minako's "The Smile of a Mountain Witch"

Introduction

Like Kanai Mieko's "Yamamba" [Mountain Witch] (1973) discussed in the previous chapter, Ōba Minako's (1930-2007) short story, "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" ("Yamamba no bishō") (1976), too, is a parody of a folkloric *yamamba* (mountain witch) story. While Kanai's text suggests that "The *Yamamba*" with a capital "Y" does not exist, meaning that there is no such thing as "the essence" of *yamamba* as a universal figure, Ōba's text portrays *yamamba* as a paradigmatic figure, implying that every woman is *yamamba* as Ōba articulated in an interview (Ōba and Mizuta 84). Ōba, like Kanai, imagines *yamamba*'s devouring as a fantasy, but unlike Kanai, Ōba presents the *yamamba* as the subject, who is doing the desiring. In Kanai's narrative, the devouring *yamamba* is the object of the grandfather-boy's fantasy of being eaten up by the death-mother. Ōba's narrative, on the other hand, starts with a folkloric *yamamba*'s desire to devour men. Recounting the devouring fantasy as the desire to break down the bodily boundaries and to become one with the other, Ōba's narrator likens this "expression of ultimate affection" (Ōba, "The Smile" 196), to an intense love of a mother: "Does not a mother in an emotional moment often squeeze her child and exclaim, 'You're so dear to me I could eat you up!'?" ("The Smile" 196).

Such a powerful statement of maternal subjectivity may give an impression that this text is a mother's story. By presenting the *yamamba* as the mother as the subject, the narrative may seem to give voice to maternal subjectivity. But my reading of Ōba's "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" actually problematizes the very idea of maternal subjectivity

because I will show that this story is in fact a daughter's story of her mother on multiple levels. In my chapter on transience, I argued how maternal subjectivity is always already blended with daughterly subjectivity, or the mother's subjectivity as a daughter of her own mother. Ōba's narrative embodies this idea of maternal subjectivity as a fluid subjectivity. As a mother, the mother is already objectified by her child with whom she identifies herself. As a daughter of her own mother, the mother has already objectified her own mother—real or fantasy—with whom she also identifies herself. Ōba's text literally blurs the distinctions between the mothers' and the daughters' identities in the three generational mother-daughter relationships as if in a movie in which the same actress doubles the roles of a mother in the early scenes and a grown-up daughter who is now a mother in the later scenes, and so on and on. The mother *yamamba* is also the daughter *yamamba*; the *yamamba* is both the *yamamba*'s mother and the *yamamba*'s daughter, all at the same time.

"The Smile" is told by an omniscient narrator as if it were one of the typical *yamamba* folktales. Indeed, the story opens with a familiar Japanese folktale of a *yamamba*: "I would like to tell you about a legendary witch who lives in the mountains" (194). According to the classic *yamamba* tales, the narrator says, the old mountain-witch (*yamamba*) waits in her mountain hut "for a man from the village to lose his way, meaning to devour him" (194).[72] Having lost his way in the mountains, the man finds *yamamba*'s hut. He asks for a lodging for the night. The *yamamba* feeds him, and while he is eating, he becomes frightened of the hag's eerie appearance and by her uncanny ability to read his mind. As soon as the man wonders if this old woman is planning to

[72] Unless noted otherwise, the quotations from the text are Mizuta's translation.

devour him, the *yamamba* reads his mind and verbalizes it aloud. In the end, the man runs away, pursued by the *yamamba*. After telling this classic mountain-witch tale, the narrator ponders upon the *yamamba*'s childhood, maidenhood, and mature womanhood, for in the folktales, the *yamamba* is always old. The narrator wonders if the well-known folktales of "cranes, foxes, snowy heron or other beasts or birds" (195) who assume a human figure and marry a human husband in a village may have been the stories of a young *yamamba*.

Then the narrator switches to the story of a present-day *yamamba*, which is Ōba's invention. This present-day *yamamba* spends all her life in a human settlement, and dies at the age of sixty-two. The narrator describes the dead *yamamba*'s body, commenting that it looks like the figure of a goddess. The narrator also observes "a strange innocence and the bashfulness of a little girl" (196) around the *yamamba*'s smile. The story then goes back in time to the *yamamba*'s childhood. As a young child, the *yamamba*-girl verbalizes her mother's thoughts, sometimes making the mother laugh, sometimes making the mother tired. As she grows up, the girl stops verbalizing what is on her mind and instead behaves in ways that she thinks would please everyone around her. Since she wants "too many people to like her" (198), she does what she thinks people want her to do in accordance with what she reads in their minds. Eventually, she matures and marries an "ordinary" and "typical" man for whom a wife must be a "substitute for his mother" (198). This man demands that his wife must be a magnanimous mother, a dignified goddess, a loving idiot, and an evil and sinister beast (199). "Since the woman was gratified by the man" (199), the *yamamba*-woman tries to keep him happy by performing such a fantasy woman. As she gets old, she gains too much weight, partly

because she cannot refuse food that anyone offers her "in order not to disappoint the person" (200). She feels that there is no one around her who speaks the same language as she does. In her loneliness, she fantasizes a life in the deep mountains where she would be free like a *yamamba* in a folktale or a beautiful fairy. She suffers from obesity, arteriosclerosis, numbness in her joints, headaches and tinnitus, but the doctor keeps telling her that she is "merely going through menopause" (201) for over twenty years.

One morning, the *yamamba*-woman collapses and is diagnosed with cerebral thrombosis. Right before she collapses, she is looking at her face in the mirror and feels numbness "as though her body belonged to someone else" (202). She is thinking of her mother: "It was a stiffness related to the vague memory of her mother, long gone, far away" (202). The *yamamba* is hospitalized and is told that she may not survive past a couple of days. Her husband sends for their son and daughter. At first, the three of them take good care of her, but after two days when her doctor says that she may live longer than expected and that one patient in the same condition had lived two years in a coma hooked on an intravenous drip, the family start to worry about their own inconveniences. The son goes home because he cannot take time off from work any longer since he has to feed his own children. The daughter stays with the mother, but is worried about her own little daughter, too. The *yamamba*'s daughter's daughterly memory of her childhood with the now dying mother is interlaced with her motherly concern for her own little daughter. The *yamamba* lives two more days and dies from self-suffocation after she "reads" in her daughter's mind that she is a burden for her daughter, who wants to be freed from her. With her last breath, the *yamamba* realizes that "her own mother must have been a genuine mountain witch as well" (206). The narrator says, "when she died she had a

mysteriously naïve face with the innocent smile of a newborn baby" (206). The daughter comments that the mother looks peaceful and that she must have been happy.

This story is most often read as a feminist satire on a stereotypical self-sacrificing woman in patriarchic Japanese society. Ever since its English translation appeared in 1982, it has been a popular piece for analysis among feminist scholars of modern Japanese literature. Its popularity, to a large extent, owes Mizuta Noriko, its translator as well as its enthusiastic commentator, who set a precedent for the feminist interpretation of this story (Mizuta, *Feminizumu* 79-81). Mizuta argues that despite the *yamamba*-woman's apparent submissiveness, she is an independent-minded woman with a highly sophisticated self-awareness (Mizuta, *Feminizumu* 80), and is indeed "controlling and manipulating" (Mizuta, "Madonna" 447). Mizuta recognizes *yamamba* as the archetypal woman in many of Ōba's fiction including "The Smile" (Mizuta, "Madonna" 445). Mizuta describes Ōba's *yamamba*-like female characters as the mother-figure, the fertility goddess who is both nurturing and devouring, and traces them back to Izanami, the maternal deity of the Japanese foundation myth ("Madonna" 445-46). According to the Japanese foundation myth of Izanami and Izanagi, Izanami dies after giving birth to a fire-deity who burns her genitals. Izanagi, the paternal deity, goes after her to the underworld of death in an attempt to bring her back, but he breaks the prohibition of "don't look," only to see her corpse crawling with maggots and he flees. Ashamed and furious, Izanami chases after him. Izanagi throws food to deter the chase, makes a river that separates them, and pronounces divorce. Ōba herself refers to Izanami in an interview with Mizuta and sees Izanami as the early prototype of the folkloric *yamamba*

(Ōba and Mizuta 150). Several years later, scholar of Japanese literature Yumiko Hulvey reiterates the *yamamba*-Izanami connection (241, 243, and 246).

While Mizuta champions *yamamba* as the figure of resistance against patriarchy, a survivor and an outsider who nullifies patriarchal establishment (Mizuta, "Yamamba no yume" 10-16, 28-30, and 37), Meera Viswanathan, a scholar of Japanese literature, is skeptical of the effectiveness of *yamamba* as the figure of female resistance. Viswanathan compares Ōba's use of *yamamba* with the French feminist critic Hélène Cixous's use of Medusa from Greek mythology. Viswanathan argues that unlike Cixous's Medusa which subverts the monstrous image into the figure of autonomy, creative energy, triumph and authority, Ōba's contemporary *yamamba* is "domesticated" and unable to reach "a mode of authentic being" (258). Similarly, Susan Napier, a scholar of Japanese literature, describes Ōba's *yamamba*'s desire for solitude as a "muted protest" (84), underlining "the impossibility of such an achievement" (83).

Other critics focus more on Ōba's presentation of her *yamamba* as a typical (Japanese) woman than its effectiveness as a figure of resistance. For instance, Amy Gwen Christiansen, a scholar of Japanese literature, emphasizes that the *yamamba*'s mind-reading skills are "simply traits commonly associated with women: the ability to understand others, to give, and to love" (55). Unlike Mizuta, Christiansen reads in Ōba's contemporary *yamamba* the "self-imposed surrender of autonomy" (62). Similarly, Susan Fisher, also a scholar of Japanese literature, maintains that Ōba's *yamamba* behaves in accordance with the typical image of Japanese womanhood (457). Particularly the *yamamba*'s mind-reading, Fisher explains, "is not unrealistic if we think of it as the refined intuition of a well-socialized female, one who has learned that her role

is not to understand and meet her own needs, but to anticipate the needs of others" (456). Drawing on feminist sociologist and psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow's study of girls' psychological development and their relationally defined sense of self, Fisher argues that "it seems likely that Japanese women are imbued even more strongly than their Western counterparts with this sense of interconnectedness" (456).

In direct response to Fisher's paper, Japanese scholar Hirakawa Sukehiro offers an explicitly and deliberately un-feminist interpretation of this story. He cites from one of the major Japanese novelists Natsume Sōseki's[73] (1867-1916) *Ten Nights' Dreams* (*Yume jūya*) a short chapter titled "The Third Night" ("*Dai san-ya*") in its entirety in which a blind boy repeatedly and uncannily read his father's mind. At the end of the story, the blind boy turns out to have been a blind man whom the father had killed a hundred years ago. Hirakawa argues that Ōba, a keen reader of Sōseki's novels, who has frequently referred to Sōseki's *Ten Nights* in her own works, must have used the mind-reading motif in her story as a variation of Sōseki's "The Third Dream" (Hirakawa 439). Hirakawa criticizes Fisher's feminist interpretation as "too orthodox"[74] of an analysis (442). He further claims, rather harshly, that to criticize the "backwardness" of Japan's gender relationship seen in Ōba's work may arguably be a form of Orientalism and that Ōba knows better than to resort to any kind of ideology[75] including feminism (431, 441 and 443-44).

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[73] According to the literary convention, he is referred to as Sōseki.

[74] "まともすぎる"

[75] "イズム"

Although Hirakawa's interpretation deliberately downplays the importance of mother-daughter plot in this story, for other Japanese literary scholars like Michiko Niikuni Wilson, the mother-daughter plot becomes the main focus of their analysis. Wilson concludes that "in 'A *Yamamba*'s Final Smile,'[76] a satire on the devouring and castrating mother, the daughter and the dying mother seem to reach a reconciliation without sacrificing their individuality and womanhood" (118). Another scholar of Japanese literature who analyzes Ōba's *yamamba* first and foremost as a mother is Linda Marie Flores. Defining "maternal subjectivity" as "the profound bond between mother and child" (Flores 213), Flores reads the *yamamba*'s suicide in Ōba's "The Smile" as an expression of maternal subjectivity.

With the exception of Hirakawa's boldly un-feminist analysis, all of the commentaries on "The Smile" reviewed above agree on the reading of Ōba's *yamamba* in this story as a devouring mother and a self-sacrificing mother. In this chapter, I seek to complement these preceding analyses of the *yamamba* as the mother by exploring the daughterly subjectivities of the *yamamba* as the daughter as well as of the *yamamba*'s daughter. This seemingly straightforward story does not allow a straightforward reading of the *yamamba* as the mother as the subject. With the endlessly alternating identities of the mother *yamamba* and the daughter *yamamba* as well as the dizzying interchanges between maternal subjectivity and daughterly subjectivity, Ōba does not pretend to disembed the mother. A mother always carries her own mother around with her as well as her child. Playing with the concept of identification, Ōba's narrative embeds maternal

[76] This is Wilson's own translation of the title.

subjectivity within the three-generational mother-daughter relationships. Ōba's text does not extricate maternal subjectivity; it problematizes the very idea of maternal subjectivity.

"My Mother's Death"[77]

I will refer to Ōba's memoir essays about her late mother as well as her other pieces of fiction that deal with the mother-daughter plots and propose that her "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" reads like a fictionalized version of her memoir essay titled "Haha no shi" [My Mother's Death] (1969) written shortly after her mother died in 1969. Reading the *yamamba*'s death scene in Ōba's "The Smile" is a *déjà vu* experience of reading her essay on her mother's death, for Ōba uses the identical terms to describe both events. Ōba's mother, Shiina Mutsuko, passed away at the age of sixty-two in May 1969. Shortly afterward, Ōba published her "Haha no shi" in the August 1969 issue of *Chuōkōron*, a monthly literary magazine, years before the publication of "The Smile" in 1976.[78] Reading Ōba's "The Smile" and her two-page essay about her mother's death side by side, I was intrigued by the striking parallels between these two works, one a piece of fiction, the other a memoir essay. This is not to say, by any means whatsoever, that Ōba's "The Smile" is autobiographical. Nor do these two works stand one-to-one correspondences in terms of characters and episodes. On the contrary, reading "Haha no shi" and other memoir essays that Ōba has written in memory of her mother is akin to revealing the trick of a magic and is crucial in reading "The Smile" as the daughter's

[77] Since Ōba's memoir essays have not been translated into English, the quotations from this and other essays are my translation.

[78] The chronology of Ōba's's life and major works is in the appendix of *Oba Minako zenshū* [The Complete Works of Ōba Minako], vol. 10, 478.

story of her mother and understanding the ways in which Ōba has folded into her fiction her memories of her mother.

The creative process which allowed Ōba to develop her initial two-page account of her mother's death—similar to a diary entry—into "The Smile," a fifteen-page piece of fiction, attests to the very thesis that psychoanalyst George Pollock proposed in his study on bereavement and mourning. Examining the relationship between the mourning process and the creative outcome in the lives of various artists, writers and music composers including James Barrie (Pollock, "On Siblings" 454-64)—the author of *Peter Pan*—and Mozart (Pollock, "Mourning" 427-29), Pollock suggests that "the creative product may reflect the mourning process in theme, style, form, content and it may itself stand as a memorial" ("Process" 267). While Pollock states that "My thesis [. . .] is that the successful completion of the mourning process results in creative outcome" and that "This end result can be a great work of art, music, sculpture, literature, poetry, philosophy or science" ("Process" 267), he also notes that the mourner does not have to be an artist to see the positive, creative outcome of the mourning process: "In the less gifted—and we have seen this in many clinical situations—a creative outcome may be manifested in a new real relationship, the ability to feel joy, satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment or newer sublimations that reflect a successful resolution of the mourning process" ("Process" 267). Nor the mourning process itself necessarily needs to be successfully completed in order for the mourner's creative work to flourish:

> In some individuals, great creativity may not be the outcome of the successfully completed mourning process but may be indicative of attempts at completing the mourning work. These creative attempts may

> be conceptualized as restitution, reparation, discharge or sublimation. Though they may not always be successful in terms of mourning work solutions, the intrinsic aesthetic or scientific merit of the work still may be great despite the failure of mourning completion. (Pollock, "Process" 267)

The "fundamental connection between the mourning process, the creative process and the psychoanalytic therapeutic process" ("On Siblings" 444) that Pollock finds leads him to further propose that "the mourning process may be a critical factor in the creative process even without object loss through death" ("Process" 268).

The creative outcome as a result of mourning process has been recognized by Freud, too, referring to his own father's death. Drawing on Freud's biographer Ernest Jones, Pollock notes that "Freud told us it was this experience, his father's death [1896] and his mourning for him, that led Freud (1900) to write 'The Interpretation of Dreams'" (Pollock, "Process" 267). In his Preface to the Second Edition (1908) of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud wrote, "this book has a further subjective significance for me personally—a significance which I only grasped after I had completed it. It was, I found, a portion of my own self-analysis, my reaction to my father's death—that is to say, to the most important event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life" (xxvi). Like Jones, Pollock concludes that "Freud's father's death was the stimulus for the transformation of Freud's scientific interest and research into the mechanism of dreams and of mental life, as well as for the composing of his monumental book" ("Process" 267).

Melanie Klein,[79] too, as Pollock points out, discusses the creativity and sublimation in relation to mourning and reparation of the lost object:

> while grief is experienced to the full and despair at its height, the love for the object wells up and the mourner feels more strongly that life inside and outside will go on after all, and that the lost loved object can be preserved within. At this stage in mourning, suffering can become productive. We know that painful experiences of all kinds sometimes stimulate sublimations, or even bring out quite new gifts in some people, who may take to painting, writing or other productive activities under the stress of frustrations and hardships. Others become more productive in a different way—more capable of appreciating people and things, more tolerant in their relation to others—they become wiser. (Klein, "Mourning" 143)

Even without referring to the psychoanalytic understanding of reparation in relation to the Kleinian depressive position discussed in my chapter on transience, the positive outcome of mourning thus described sounds quite commonsensical: "they become wiser."

The parallel between Ōba's memoir essay about her mother's death and her "The Smile" that no biographer nor scholar of Ōba Minako has pointed out allows us to read "The Smile" as a memorial which reflects Ōba's mourning her mother's death. Even at the superficial level, Ōba's contemporary *yamamba* in "The Smile" dies in ways that are reminiscent of how Ōba described her mother's death in her essay. This initial impression of similarity is, first, due to Ōba's use of identical terms in these two pieces.

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[79] As introduced in the previous chapters, Melanie Klein (1882-1960) is one of the most influential psychoanalysts particularly in analysis of children.

The *yamamba* in "The Smile" dies from cerebral thrombosis (202). In "Haha no shi," Ōba writes that her mother died of cerebral thrombosis, too (306). According to Ōba's "Haha no shi," the different parts of her mother's body "got paralyzed one after another and in the end she suffered from suffocation" (306). The *yamamba* in "The Smile," too, experiences paralysis at the onset of cerebral thrombosis: "She felt a slight numbness as though her body belonged to someone else. It was a stiffness related to the vague memory of her mother, [. . .] her limbs were paralyzed and her consciousness dimmed" (202). Although Ōba's mother's death was not of self-suffocation as was the case for the *yamamba* in "The Smile," she, too, was suffocated from the accumulated saliva in her mouth (Ōba, "Haha no shi" 306). Ōba rewrites this death scene as follows in "The Smile": "the saliva which had gathered trickled down the side of her mouth. [. . .] [I]t would be more truthful to say that she summoned up the last of her strength to suffocate her own self and body by washing down the accumulated saliva into her windpipe" (204). In an attempt at resuscitation, both doctors—a fictional doctor in "The Smile" and a real doctor who attended Ōba's mother—"injected cardiac medication through a thick needle into her heart"[80] (Ōba, "Haha no shi" 306 and "The Smile" 204). Before she became ill, Ōba's mother used to talk of her arteriosclerosis (Ōba, "Haha no shi" 306). The *yamamba* in "The Smile," too, develops arteriosclerosis (201). These very specific medical terms such as "arteriosclerosis," "cerebral thrombosis," "paralysis,"

[80] This is Mizuta's translation in "The Smile." The original Japanese in "The Smile" is "太い針を心臓に突き立てて強心剤を打った" ("Yamamba no bishō" 349) and in "Haha no shi," "強心剤の太い針を直かに心臓に突き立てる" ("Haha no shi" 306).

"suffocation," and "cardiac injection" that Ōba used in her essay about her mother's death reappear, one after another, in the last few pages of "The Smile."[81]

In addition to "Haha no shi," Ōba wrote a number of memoir essays about her mother after her death.[82] Some of her portrayals of her mother in these essays find their reflections in "The Smile." For instance, the *yamamba* in "The Smile" not only shares the similar death scene with Ōba's mother, but she also dies at the same age, sixty-two, as Ōba's mother ("The Smile" 196).[83] Also, as the *yamamba* in "The Smile" gets old, she becomes "exceedingly fat, so much so that when she walked just a little her shoulders would heave with every breath" (189). Ōba mentions her mother's being fat, too, in an essay about her parents ("Torawarenai"[84] 414). Like the *yamamba* in "The Smile," her mother, "being fat, would gasp for breath" ("Torawarenai" 414) when she walks. They

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[81] In the original Japanese, these terms are "動脈硬化," "脳血栓," "麻痺," "窒息," and "強心剤," respectively. "麻痺" is translated as "numbness" in "The Smile" (202), but in Japanese, Ōba uses the same word, "麻痺," for her mother's paralysis ("Haha no shi" 306) and the *yamamba*'s numbness ("Yamamba no bishō" 346).

[82] Among them are "Otozure" [A Visit] (N.d. Rpt. 1973). "Aru jōbutsu" [To Rest in Peace] (1977), "Torawarenai otoko to on'na no kankei" [Unconventional Relationships between Man and Woman] (1981), "Omokage—Enchi Fumiko" [Reminiscence: on Enchi Fumiko] (1987), "Kōnagi shite koso arikunare" [She May be Wandering around as a Street Shamaness] (1988), and "Matsuyama kagami" [The Matsuyama Mirror] (1988).

[83] Ōba mentions her mother's age at the time of death, sixty-two, in her essays, "Omogage" (195) and "Kōnagi" (339).

[84] In this essay, "Torawarenai otoko to on'na no kankei" [Unconventional Relationships between Man and Woman] (1981), Ōba reflects upon her late parents' relationship with each other, her relationship with her husband, and relationships between man and woman in general.

both make the same breathing sound, "*haahaa*" (Japanese onomatopoeia for heavy breathing) ("Yamamba no bishō" 344 and "Torawarenai" 414). Furthermore, Ōba recalls, "Despite her diabetes, my mother loved to eat sweets" ("Aru jōbutsu"[85] 322). Ōba's father, on the contrary, had a strong will, according to Ōba ("Aru jōbutsu" 322), and would advise his wife not to eat so much sweets for "it is not good for her health" ("Torawarenai" 414). Ōba's mother used to reply, "I can't resist. It is so delicious" ("Torawarenai" 414). The *yamamba* in "The Smile," too, "just loved to eat" (189), and would often say, "Oh dear, here I go again" (189). The husband in "The Smile" "often boasted that he was a man of iron will" (189) and he would refuse to eat what is "not good for his health" (189), echoing Ōba's father.

Again, this is not to suggest that Ōba created her *yamamba* character in the image of her mother. Ōba's memory of her mother may be reflected in "The Smile," sometimes obviously, but other times in a reverse reflection. For example, unlike the *yamamba* in "The Smile" who would, in an effort to please others, say what she thinks others want her to say, Ōba's mother, according to Ōba, always expressed what is on her mind. In Ōba's words, her mother "had a strong ego; she couldn't help expressing what's on her mind. She would be so candid that what she says could freeze your heart. She would do that even to her husband and children" ("Haha no shi" 306). In fact, Ōba recalls her mother being quite "free-spirited"[86] ("Torawarenai" 414), even "self-serving and selfish"[87] ("Haha no shi" 305). Unlike the *yamamba* in "The Smile," Ōba's mother's eating too

[85] "Aru jōbutsu" [To Rest in Peace] (1977) is an essay about Ōba's father in relation to Ōba's mother. Ōba's father had passed away in 1976.

[86] "気まま"

[87] "自分勝手で我儘な"

much has nothing to do with pleasing others but, according to how Ōba describes it, rather with her sloppiness and self-indulgency ("Torawarenai" 414 and "Aru jōbutsu" 322).

The relationship between Ōba's mother and father seems to have been nothing like the one between the *yamamba* and her husband in "The Smile," either. Ōba comments that "My mother's free-spiritedness must have saved my father. [. . .] He seemed exuberant at her being the way she was" ("Torawarenai 415). Unlike the husband in "The Smile" who thinks his wife stupid (200), Ōba's father thought his wife was smarter than himself ("Aru jōbutsu" 322). He did think his wife was lazy, however ("Aru jōbutsu" 322), like the husband in "The Smile" does (199). Ōba observes that her father seems to have been madly in love with her mother, but that it may have been because he was actually obsessed with himself ("Aru jōbutsu" 323).

In fact, when Ōba criticizes her father for his loneliness, his loneliness seems similar to the *yamamba*'s loneliness in "The Smile." Ōba writes about her father that "He used to expect so much in people that he would always get disappointed. In the end he would one-sidedly refuse others" ("Aru jōbutsu" 323). Ōba continues, "Thus my father had no friends, and he himself is to be blamed for his loneliness, we all thought" ("Aru jōbutsu" 323). The *yamamba* in "The Smile" is familiar with the similar kind of loneliness: "Perhaps because she demanded too much of herself and because she wanted too many people to like her, she had to spend an incredible amount of mental energy every day. So that before she realized it she had become antisocial [. . .] avoiding being with others" (198). Ōba's father used to say, "I hate people" ("Aru jōbutsu" 324). He was rigid, according to Ōba, and "would not understand those who are, or things that are,

different from himself, [. . .] hence his children come to fear him" ("Aru jōbutsu" 323). His misanthropy finds its slanted reflection in the *yamamba* in "The Smile":

> Because his use of words [. . .] so differed from hers, she would at times be overwhelmed by a sense of acute loneliness. She would come to fear not only her husband but many of the others around her as well, feeling as though she were surrounded by foreigners who did not speak the same language. Sometimes she thought she would rather live as a hermit [. . .] just as she locked herself up in her room all day without playing when she was a little girl. (200-201)

The reflection is slanted in that in Ōba's personal recollection, the lonely one—Ōba's father—is being feared by others whereas in fiction, the lonely one—the *yamamba*—fears others. As for not understanding others who are different, Ōba's father is the one who does not understand, and the *yamamba* is the one who is not understood, or so it appears. Although understanding others and being understood by others seem like the opposites, they are indeed the opposite sides of the same coin. To be more specific, when someone says nobody understands her, maybe it is she who does not understand others.

Needless to say, the *yamamba* character in Ōba's fiction is neither Ōba's mother nor father. But as slanted or reversed as the above reflections are, it is impossible not to notice Ōba's voice going over the same motifs again and again in her essays about her mother; these same motifs also permeate "The Smile." One of such motifs concerns saying or not saying what is on one's mind. In her essay about her mother's death, Ōba emphasizes her mother's always expressing what is on her mind so much so that it could "freeze your heart" ("Haha no shi" 306). This motif gets elaborated in several of Ōba's

fiction including “The Smile.” In “The Smile,” the *yamamba*-girl says to her mother, “When I say whatever is on my mind, people give me unpleasant looks, so I decided not to speak out any more” (197). The mother responds, “say whatever is on your mind. You don’t have to pretend. You’re a child” (197). Ōba returns to this mother-daughter conversation in her short story, “Bōshi” [A Hat] (1981). In it, a young daughter notices her mother’s displeasure when she speaks honestly even though her mother tells her to be honest always (378). In fact, this mother-daughter conversation about being or not being candid had already began in Ōba’s debut piece, a short story titled “The Three Crabs” (“Sanbiki no kani”) (1968). In it a mother says to her ten-year-old daughter, “[I] can’t tell anyone what [I] really think, you know, so that’s why I want to tell you the truth now and then” (91). Her husband expresses displeasure at her saying such things to a child. But a little later he also tells her, “don’t tell lies in front of the child” (92). To this, the mother replies that her daughter “is a sensitive and intelligent child, so she knows that telling a harmless lie in order not to hurt others’ feelings is not a sin” (92). And she mockingly says, “One can’t tell a lie in front of a child, but not the truth either” (92). This is a mirror image of what the girl in “Bōshi” as well as the *yamamba*-girl in “The Smile” must be thinking: “One can’t tell a lie in front of a grown-up, but not the truth either.”

The *yamamba*’s mind-reading in “The Smile,” or the ability to know how others are feeling, is also a motif that Ōba had been kneading since “The Three Crabs.” In “The Three Crabs,” the protagonist says, “I always know what other people are feeling. That naturally makes me confident, so maybe I seem arrogant. Some people simply can’t tell how others feel, or else they ignore it even if they can tell. But I happen to be sensitive”

(91). She may indeed be "arrogant," in the same way that Ōba makes the protagonist in "The Smile," the *yamamba*, sound arrogant: "If only one could not see another's heart, one would not become weary and would be able to live happily" ("The Smile" 199). Under the pretence of sympathy for the protagonist, the narrator in "The Smile" reveals the protagonist's arrogance in thinking that she can "read other people's hearts": "The thought of extorting all those who tormented her in the human world made her heart beat with excitement: all those dull-headed, slow-witted people who could walk around with the looks of smug, happy heroes just because they were not capable of reading other people's hearts" (201). Apparently, Ōba herself is sensitive about being sensitive to other people's feelings. In her memoir essays, Ōba writes of her mother that she was "extremely sensitive" ("Haha no shi" 306), and that Ōba "inherited her super-sensitive mind" from her mother ("Haha no shi" 307).

In the aforementioned short story "Bōshi," too, the ability to "hear" others' unspoken thoughts becomes an issue for the protagonist when she is a young girl. The girl's mother and the grandmother insist that she "wears a hat," both literally and metaphorically. The mother expects that if the girl wore a hat, the girl would not speak so candidly as to hurt others. The grandmother tells the girl, "If you wear the hat, you can really hear other people's words. You can even hear what the birds are saying" (378). Readers familiar with Japanese folktales would easily associate Ōba's use of the magical hat in "Bōshi" with "Kiki-mimi-zukin" [Magical Listening Hood], a folktale in which wearing a special hood makes anyone able to understand birds and animal's languages. With the hat on, the girl "heard all the words the birds were speaking inside the grandmother" (379).

Mother's death seems to be Ōba's frequent topic both in her fiction and in her memoir essays. Both "The Smile" and "Bōshi" end with the mother's death scene. In one of her memoir essays, Ōba pictures her mother after her death in some sort of field with a gust of wind. Ōba writes that whenever she thinks of a well-known verse which she associates with her mother, she finds herself "in a gray field, and a gust of wind passes by. [. . .] And I see my mother's back and hear her voice, fading in the distance" ("Kōnagi" 339-340). In "The Smile," as the *yamamba* presumably gets ready to return to the mountain after her death, the narrator pictures her in "a dry riverbed"—a field, in other words—with the "rushing wind" (205). Both of these mothers seem to have been placed in the same field in Ōba's imagination. In fact, in Ōba's "Haha no shi," the essay about her mother's death, the term Ōba uses for burial, or the ritual of the cremation burial procession to be precise, is directly linked with a "field." The term is "nobe-okuri,"[88] literally, "field send-off." It is a common but somewhat dated term for the ritual of cremation[89] burial procession. "Nobe" in "nobe-okuri" literally means "field," but it alone can suggest the association with the field as the site of cremation. In "The Smile," too, Ōba uses the word "nobe-okuri" ("Yamamba no bishō" 350) although it is translated simply as "funeral" ("The Smile" 205).

These parallels between Ōba's fiction and her memoir essays notwithstanding, her memoir essays are not to be confused with her life. Her memoir essays are no less the product of her imagination and creation than her fiction. And precisely because they are

[88] "野辺送り"

[89] Almost all of deceased Japanese today are cremated.

the product of her imagination and creation, these essays reveal more about her fiction than about her life, aiding in our reading of her fiction, "The Smile."

Daughter's Guilt

The reason why I insist on reading Ōba's "The Smile" as a daughter's story is to bring to light the daughterly feelings of guilt in the story. In spite of the pervasive sense of guilt in "The Smile" on multiple levels, most of the prior commentaries on this story have overlooked the element of guilt. The protagonist is often discussed as a self-sacrificing mother and a devouring mother, but not as a guilt inducing mother. If read as the daughter's story, however, "The Smile" unmistakably spells guilt virtually on every page. Reading this text as the daughter's story enables me to draw attention to guilt as a point of reference in my analysis.

The protagonist—the mother *yamamba*—suffocates herself and dies after she reads her daughter's mind that says her daughter "did not want to be tied down by her any longer" and that she is a burden to her daughter (204-205). The daughter does not realize that her mother has committed suicide on her account, but such an act is potentially a cause of tremendous guilt. Even if it were not a suicide, if a mother dies right after her daughter thinks of her as a burden, the daughter would feel horribly guilty.

In fact, Ōba comes back to this theme of daughter's feeling of guilt over her mother's death again and again in her memoir essays. Like the *yamamba*'s daughter in "The Smile," Ōba was by her mother's side as her mother's consciousness grew dim before her death ("Aru jōbutsu" 324). Ōba recalls that as she was at her mother's deathbed, she was preoccupied with a piece of fiction she was working on at the time and felt impatient staying by her unconscious mother ("Aru jōbutsu" 324). In her fiction, too,

Ōba reworks the daughter's preoccupation with her own life at the mother's deathbed again in "Bōshi." At the mother's deathbed, the protagonist in "Bōshi" is thinking about a man with whom she had to cancel a date due to her mother's critical condition. In the past, this protagonist would often go out to the places like gym and café, explaining to the weakening mother that it was for work, knowing that her mother wanted her to stay by her side. The daughter comforts her mother, while "dreaming of a day when her mother is no longer around" ("Bōshi" 389).

In "The Smile," the *yamamba*'s daughter and son speak of the same impatience at having to care for the dying mother while being preoccupied with their own work and young families. The daughter is worried about her own young daughter at home, and, according to what the *yamamba* "reads" in her mind, thinks,

> Mother, I don't need you to protect me any more. You've outlived your usefulness. If you have to be dependent on me, if you can't take care of yourself without being a burden to others, please, mother, please disappear quietly. Please don't torment me any longer. I, too, am preparing myself so that I won't trouble my daughter as I am being troubled by you. (205)

The *yamamba* also imagines that her son is thinking,

> Mother, I have incessantly chirping chicks at home. I myself don't know why I have to keep on putting food in their mouths. But when I catch myself, I'm always flying toward my nest, carrying food in my beak. Before I even think about it, I am doing it. If I were to stop carrying food to them and stay close to you all the time, the human race would have perished a long time ago. In other words, for me to do as I do for them is

> the only way in which I can prolong and keep the blood you gave me. (205)

But the more the *yamamba*'s daughter and son justify themselves for their preoccupation with their own lives at their mother's deathbed, the more painfully the feeling of guilt is exposed, for, after all, the children do not want their mother to think that they consider her as a burden. The *yamamba* in "The Smile" may have "read" her children's mind and assumed that they consider her as a burden, but they have never voiced that to their mother.

Ōba exposes the daughter's guilt feeling, not just for considering her mother a burden but also for *being* a burden as a child to her mother. When the *yamamba* in "The Smile" is a young girl, she "knew that she was a burden to her mother—in fact, she had sensed that she was a burden to her as far back as she could remember—and she wanted to free her mother, as well as herself. At the same time, somewhere in her heart she held a grudge against her mother" (198). In her memoir essays, Ōba articulates her use of the word "burden" that a daughter feels herself to have been to her mother. She writes, "my life has thrived by encroaching upon my parents' lives" ("Aru jōbutsu" 324). Even though Ōba's mother used to say to Ōba, "it's only natural for parents to raise their children; you owe me nothing" ("Haha no shi" 307), a daughter may nonetheless feel that she owes her mother everything. Remembering her late mother, Ōba also writes, "All parents are killed by their offspring in some ways" ("Kōnagi" 339). It is a circle of life, in other words, that makes one feel guilty both as a child to her mother and as a grown-up child to her aging mother.

Why would the circle of life make one feel guilty? Japanese psychoanalyst Kitayama Osamu, as discussed in my chapter on transience, explains this peculiar guilt in terms of irredeemable sense of debt. By proposing the term "debt" or "indebtedness" as a psychological concept that "explains the mechanism of endless repaying accompanied by masochistic identification" ("Transience" 941), Kitayama translates what literature and philosophy have always expressed as "I am sorry for being born"[90] into psychoanalytic language. Unlike Winnicottian interpretation of guilt-feeling as healthy development that depends on the mother's capacity to survive the baby's destructiveness "and so to be there to receive and understand the true reparative gesture" (Winnicott, "Psycho-Analysis" 24; sic), the child's guilt feelings over everything he/she owes his/her parents imply the impossibility of immediate reparation. Since the aged parents die before the grown-up child gets a chance to return what he/she owes them, the child feels guilty over the circle of life. Even if the child is not responsible for his/her parent's death, the child feels guilty nonetheless. Hence "All parents are killed by their offspring in some ways" (Ōba, "Kōnagi" 339), metaphorically speaking, from the child's point of view.

Speaking of the children's feeling of guilt over an imaginary parricide, Ōba's comment on the aforementioned Sōseki's "The Third Dream" identifies precisely such a feeling of guilt in her reading of the story: "some critics read this grudge as a feeling of guilt for patricide" (Ōba, "*Bunchō*" 216). The above Japanese critic Hirakawa's venturing to link Ōba's "The Smile" with Sōseki's "The Third Dream," then, may not

[90] Dazai Osamu (1909-1948), one of the most prominent authors in modern Japanese literature, used this phrase—"生れて、すみません" [sorry for being born]—as the subtitle of his short story, "Nijusseiki kishu" [A standard-bearer of the twentieth century] (1937), *Dazai Osamu zenshū* [The complete works of Dazai Osamu], vol. 2 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1988).

have been totally off the mark. In both stories, the circle of life is recast as an uncanny vortex of time in which a child that one is carrying on one's back is his/her parent that he/she has killed a long time ago.

Ōba borrows from another well-known Japanese story of guilt more explicitly. In "The Smile," the narrator imagines the young mountain witches to have been the "cranes, foxes, snowy herons, or other beasts or birds" in the familiar folktales (195). The story of "Crane Wife," a well-known Japanese folktale that I have introduced in my chapter on transience, fits exactly with Ōba's imagined stories of the young *yamamba*. These beasts or birds, according to Ōba's narrator, "become beautiful wives and live in human settlements" (195) like the Crane Wife. And like the Crane Wife, they "make extremely faithful spouses; they are very smart and full of delicate sentiments. Yet their fate somehow is inevitably tragic. Usually by the end of their tales they run back into the mountains, their fur or feathers pitifully fallen" (195-96). In the chapter on transience, I have discussed Kitayama's interpretation of the Crane Wife as a guilt-inducing mother. Ōba's literary imagination, too, allows her to begin the story of the daughter's guilt with the same folktale of a guilt-inducing Crane.

Corresponding to the daughter's guilt in "The Smile" is the mother's guilt; the narrative, in this case, is pointing at the daughter as the recipient of the mother's guilt feeling. As the mother and the young *yamamba* girl go shopping,

> her mother could not afford to buy her expensive dresses [. . .], the girl would purposely pick the dress her mother thought most adequate and pretended that she really liked it. [. . .]

> On such occasions her mother would look at her with a slightly sad expression on her face. And on the way home, she would buy her daughter something way beyond her means. (197)

The daughter knows that her mother is feeling guilty for not being able to afford better clothes for her. Not only does the girl pick the affordable dress, she also pretends that she really likes it as if to try to relieve her mother from guilt. The mother, too, knows that her daughter is putting on a show for her, and hence she looks at her daughter with "a slightly sad expression on her face" (197). The mother feels doubly guilty, and she acts on her guilt, buying her daughter "something way beyond her means" (197) as if to make up for the girl's concern for her mother's feeling. The girl, again, has to "receive" her mother's guilt feeling, and she would "pretend not to notice her mother's impulse and showed a happy face to her as though she was genuinely pleased by her new acquisition" (197-98). The daughter knows that the mother knows that the daughter knows that the mother is feeling guilty, while neither of them admits their guilt feelings. The daughter feels guilty, too, because she thinks that she has made her mother feel guilty. They are exchanging the ping-pong of guilt, the daughter ultimately being the recipient.

Although the *yamamba*'s suicide in "The Smile" may, at the first glance, seem like an ultimate self-sacrifice in order not to be a burden to her family, Ōba's narrative portrays it more like an act of aggression than sacrifice. Some critics may have assumed that the protagonist committed suicide *in order to* "'unburden' her family" (Wilson 62), in which case her suicide would be an "act of self-sacrifice" (Flores 206), but nowhere in the text is such a motivation mentioned. The protagonist reads her daughter's mind that says she is a burden, and then commits suicide. Although her suicide does indeed bring

"indescribable relief" (206) for the daughter, it may not have been the protagonist's intention. At the very least, the protagonist does not share a view of suicide as self-sacrifice. Anticipating her daughter's old age, the protagonist thinks that her daughter will either "live sturdily until the moment of her death at a hundred, or live haughtily and selfishly to the end, retaining the energy to kill herself at eighty" (205). Strangely as it may sound, the protagonist associates suicide with an energetic, positively haughty and selfish life.

Interestingly, in her memoir essays, Ōba has referred to her mother's death as "virtually a suicide" even though Ōba's mother did not commit suicide. Unlike in "The Smile," the "virtually a suicide" episode of her mother in Ōba's memoir essays has nothing to do with self-sacrifice. If anything, Ōba attributes these episodes to her mother's self-indulgence. For instance, after having established that her mother was overweight and loved to eat sweets, Ōba writes, "She would tell her maid to go buy sweets for guests all through the year, which was an excuse—she always ate those sweets herself. In the end, she died of diabetes, making us sigh that it was virtually a suicide" ("Torawarenai" 414). Even during her hospitalization for diabetes, Ōba's mother would tell her maid to go buy sweets for the visitors and then eat them herself when nobody is looking. Ōba again concludes, after this episode, that "hence my mother's death is virtually a suicide" ("Aru jōbutsu" 322).

There is nothing in Ōba's memoir essays that suggests that her mother has actually committed suicide on Ōba's account nor that she committed suicide at all. But Ōba has long entertained the idea of "mother's suicide" in remembering her mother's death, and polished it with the daughter's guilt, even though the "mother's suicide"

episodes in her memoir essays are portrayed in a very different tone from the "mother's suicide" scene in "The Smile." Ōba, writing as the daughter, notes in her memoir essay that she was preoccupied with her work at her mother's deathbed. She then elaborates on this episode in her fiction, implicating the daughter's guilt for thinking of her mother as a burden and for letting her die right after such a thought.

The maternal suicide in "The Smile" is an expression of daughter's guilt. Ōba writes in her memoir essay, "All parents are killed by their offspring in some ways" ("Kōnagi" 339). This can, in turn, mean that all children feel guilty at their parent's death for "killing" them in some ways. A child grows up by eating up his/her parents' lives. And in the end, the child let his/her parents die. The last words that the mother *yamamba* reads before her death in her daughter's mind, that the daughter considers her as a burden, is the last words that the daughter wants her mother to hear. These daughterly feelings of guilt have been familiar to Ōba herself, because she, too, was at her mother's deathbed and she, too, was preoccupied with her own life then.

Mother in the Mirror

Ōba is known for her use of Japanese folktales in her fiction. That "The Smile" draws on the familiar *yamamba* legend is obvious, offering critics an appealing starter. But Ōba embedded two additional Japanese folktales in "The Smile," more subtly than the mountain witch folktale, but the allusion is clear enough for anyone familiar with Japanese folktales. I have already discussed one of such folktales above, "Crane Wife."

The other is “Matsuyama kagami” [The Matsuyama mirror].[91] The story takes place in Matsuyama (or Matsu-no-yama) village in Echigo, an old province in north-central Japan, which approximately corresponds to Niigata prefecture today. The story is about a girl whose mother had been ill. Before the mother dies, she gives her daughter a mirror and tells her to look into the mirror to find her whenever she misses her after her death. The girl had never seen a mirror before, for it was a novelty in this rural area. After her mother dies, the girl longs for her mother and would always look into the mirror believing that the reflection is that of her mother. Ōba wrote a memoir essay titled “Matsuyama kagami,” referring to this folktale. In it, she writes, “recently as I walk through downtown, I sometimes see my late mother and get astonished, and then realize that it is my own reflection in the glass windows” (343). She then goes on to talk about an incidence where her late mother’s old friend mistook her for her mother. Seeing her mother in herself, Ōba ends this essay with a reflection on the circle of life and reproduction of life.

In “The Smile,” this motif of the daughter’s finding her mother in the mirror is used on the day that the protagonist falls fatally ill: “One morning, she examined herself thoroughly in the mirror. [. . .] She felt a slight numbness as though her body belonged to someone else. It was a stiffness related to the vague memory of her mother, long gone, far away. Somewhere, her flowing blood ebbed, and she felt dizzy” (202). Her own

[91] Like any folktales, there are many different versions of this story. There is even a *rakugo* (traditional comic storytelling) version with the same title, but it has nothing to do with mother and daughter, and definitely not the one Ōba was referring to in her essay titled “Matsuyama kagami.”

image in the mirror prompts her to her memory of her mother and her mother's death, leading to her own death.

A more tender appropriation of the "mother in the mirror" motif is presented in Ōba's memoir essay titled "Otozure" [A Visit] published in 1973, four years after her mother's death. Although published as a memoir essay, it reads like a story, because Ōba speaks of an actual woman's visit to her, has a conversation with her, and after more than half way through this short essay, Ōba reveals that this woman is her late mother. She sees her late mother in the mirror: "In the dim light of dawn, I received my mother's visit in the mirror. As I wore my mother's clothes [*kimono*] and tied the sash [*obi*], I saw my [late] mother coming toward me with a smile" (309). Then she ends her essay wondering if she lives till her mother's age. As in "The Smile," in this essay, too, the image of the late mother in the mirror both takes the daughter back to her mother's death in retrospection and takes her forward to her own death in anticipation.

For the daughter to see her late mother in her own reflection in the mirror is, on the one hand, another way of saying that her late mother is present within the daughter herself. In both "The Smile" and "Otozure," the mother slips into her daughter's mind through the image in the mirror. In other words, the mother has "visited" her daughter, befitting the title of Ōba's memoir essay, "Otozure" [A Visit]. On the other hand, however, it is really the daughter who, by slipping herself into her mother's image, is slipping into her mother, or visiting her mother. In "Otozure," Ōba literally slips into her mother's clothes and sash, which makes her resemble her mother who then has an imaginary conversation with her. On the day of her mother's funeral, too, Ōba wore her mother's mourning dress and sandal [*zōri*] while waiting for the cremation ("Haha no

shi" 307). Ōba's wearing her mother's clothes seems to be functionally equivalent to the "Matsuyama kagami" girl's looking into the mirror. In both cases, the daughter is seeking her mother's image in herself by assuming the image of her mother, Ōba through deliberately wearing her mother's clothes, the "Matsuyama kagami" girl through unknowingly looking at her own reflection believing that it is her mother's.

Does the mother become her daughter, or does the daughter become her mother? Does the mother slip into her daughter, or does the daughter slip into her mother? In "The Smile," three generations of women each play the role of the mother, and Ōba switches the casting for the mother and the daughter in the middle of the story. When the present-day *yamamba* is a young child, she is referred to as "the child" [*kodomo*]. During her maidenhood, the text consistently refers to her as "the daughter" [*musume*]. During these time period, "the mother" [*haha-oya*] refers to the *yamamba*'s mother. After the *yamamba* marries, the text now calls the *yamamba* "the woman" [*on'na*], and her mother is out of the story. The next time that "the mother" gets mentioned is when the *yamamba* is looking at the mirror thinking of her late mother, and then collapses. Suddenly, the *yamamba*'s grown-up daughter and son join the story and the *yamamba* is now being called "the mother" [*haha-oya*] in the text. But interestingly, as soon as the *yamamba* begins being referred to as "the mother," the narrator, who has been following the *yamamba*'s subjectivity up to this point, leaves her and takes up the subjectivity of the *yamamba*'s daughter. The mother *yamamba* is lying on bed almost unconscious anyway during her being referred to as "the mother." The text now refers to the *yamamba*'s daughter as "the daughter" [*musume*]. At the moment of the *yamamba*'s death, the narrative starts referring to the *yamamba* as "the woman" again, and returns to her

subjectivity. Right before her death, the woman again thinks of her mother. This switch from "the child" to "the daughter" to "the woman" to "the mother" and back to "the woman" in referring to the protagonist *yamamba* is clear and consistent in the Japanese original text. Although the English translation may have made the switch seem less deliberate, due to its frequent replacement of each term with simply "she," it still retains the majority of these specific terms.

Including the *yamamba*'s daughter's daughter, who is five years old and is mentioned only briefly, there are actually four generations of women in "The Smile." Calling each of them merely as "the mother" and "the daughter," the narrative successfully highlights the mother-daughter plot as the never-ending circle of life in which a mother raises a daughter who becomes a mother who raises a daughter who becomes a mother who raises a daughter and so on and on. Befitting the *yamamba* character who always "performs" the pleasing child or the pleasing woman, this never-ending circle of mother-daughter generations can be visualized as casting a double role in a movie. The leading character is the *yamamba* throughout the story, but the hypothetical actress who plays the *yamamba* switches. The young girl who plays the part of the childhood *yamamba* later plays the role of *yamamba*'s daughter. The actress who plays *yamamba*'s mother early in the story later plays the part of the grown-up *yamamba* herself. Hence when the grown-up *yamamba* sees herself in the mirror, her reflection is at the same time that of the *yamamba*'s mother in her youth.

Since Ōba is writing as a daughter and not as a son, the circle of guilt and the cross generational identifications between the parent and the child are seen only through the mother-daughter dyad. Even though the other parent-child dyads such as mother-son,

father-daughter, and father-son pairs may, in actuality, experience the same circle of guilt and identifications, they do not figure into Ōba's literary imagination. If I recall the hypothetical casting of an actress's double role in a movie, the actress who plays the part of the mother early in a movie can later play the part of her grown-up daughter, but not the part of her grown-up son. Both in Ōba's fiction and in her memoir essays, the daughter looks into the mirror and sees her mother's face, not her father's face. As Ōba notes in her memoir essay, her late mother's old friend mistook Ōba for her mother. Ōba saw her own reflection in the store's window and thought it was her late mother. Ōba wore her late mother's clothes and sandals while remembering her. All of these incidents of mother-daughter identifications noted in Ōba's memoir essays can easily happen to any mother-daughter pairs, but would be very unlikely to occur with the mother-son pairs. In short, as psychoanalyst Leon Hoffman states, the "girl and mother, unlike mother and son, have the 'same' body" ("When Daughter" 631).

Exploring the differences between the male and female psychological development, psychoanalyst Doris Bernstein emphasizes the significance for the mother and the daughter of having the same "female" body:

> there is one difference every mother experiences with her boy and girl baby, that is, the child's gender in relation to her own. I propose that the mother's experience of the girl as like herself, and the boy as different from herself, ties the girl to the mother in a reciprocal relationship and orients the boy to differentiate, from birth onward. In the body of her infant daughter, a mother can see her own past self; the body is known and familiar, one with which she can have total identification. In contrast, a

> boy can only be experienced by a woman as different from herself; there cannot be the deep biological understanding of the male body experience that a woman has with her daughter's. The mother's experience of her daughter as like herself, and her experience of her son as different, is overtly and subtly communicated to her children. (191)

Bernstein argues that since this sameness of the body, perceived by the mother, is "reflected back to her [the daughter] by mother's mirroring, reinforces the blurring of self boundaries, and self and object boundaries" for the daughter (191). This mother-daughter connection is imagined by Ōba as never-ending conversations with the mother who is in fact a part of the daughter herself. Psychoanalyst Kirsten Dahl, too, suggests that "The hallmark of adult female psychic organization lies in the daughter's capacity to permit continuing reverberations within herself of the representations of the tie to the mother in her ongoing intrapsychic dialogue with her mother" (202). Ōba's imaginary conversation with her late mother in the mirror can be read as the literal continuation of this dialogue.

Ōba's "The Smile" further elaborates on the circle of life motif by suggesting that being *yamamba* passes down through the generations. Right before the protagonist *yamamba* dies, she realizes that "her own mother must have been a genuine mountain witch as well" (206). This implies that her unknowing daughter, too, must be "a genuine mountain witch as well," and that she, too, will come to the same realization at the end of her life about her mother. In her essay, Ōba articulates her interest in the mother-daughter relationships as follows:

> The relationship between mother and daughter brings out the eeriness of human existence itself. This is because the mother comprehends as her

> own the horror of her daughter's self. At the same time, the mother remembers her being the daughter herself and witnessing the horror of human being that she, as a woman, saw through in her own mother. ("Beruiman"[92] 300-301)

Ōba's "The Smile" reads like an implementation of this theory of hers. In short, "The Smile" is yet another version of the story of the mother-daughter reproduction and identification across generations that Ōba has told and retold since her debut piece, "The Three Crabs."

In "The Three Crabs," Ōba introduces this life-long motif of hers after a conversation between Yuri, the mother, and Rie, her ten-year-old daughter, as follows: "The way Rie looked at her [Yuri] almost always made Yuri think of her own mother. She then recalled that she herself had once looked at her own mother in the same way" (93). In such a short statement, the text contains multiple and dizzying layers of identification. Yuri sees her own mother in her daughter while she also sees herself in her daughter. On the one hand, she identifies herself with her mother, being looked at by a daughter; on the other hand, she identifies herself with her daughter looking at and being looked at by a mother that is both her own mother and herself. Yuri literally plays the part of her own mother and daughter both simultaneously and alternately.

The "mother in the mirror" motif or the "Matsuyama Kagami" [The Matsuyama mirror] motif takes a violent turn in Ōba's appropriation in "The Smile." In one of the

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[92] Ōba's essay, "Beruiman kantoku no *Aki no sonata*" [Director Bergman's *Autumn Sonata*] (1981) is her reflection on a film director Ingmar Bergman, particularly on his *Autumn Sonata* with a focus on its mother-daughter dynamics.

versions of the folktale "Matsuyama Kagami," the girl's stepmother becomes suspicious of her stepdaughter's attachment to the mirror, and behaves bitterly against her. The girl is one day weeping by a pond, sees her face reflected in the pond and thinks it is her late mother's sad face, cries, "mother!" and jumps into the pond and dies.[93] Ōba's protagonist in "The Smile," too, looks at her face reflected in the spring water in the mountain in her fantasy: "half her face was smiling like an affectionate mother, while the other half was seething with demonic rage. Blood would trickle down from half her mouth while it devoured and ripped the man's flesh apart. The other half of her lips was caressing the man who curled up his body in the shadow of one of her breasts, sucking like a baby" (201). In her imagination, her hatred and anger surface, and she assumes the demonic figure of *yamamba* in her rage.

The mother, in this scene, is being fantasized as a terrifying mountain witch. The *yamamba* woman is looking at her own reflection at the same time as she is looking at her mother's face through her own reflection. The horror of *yamamba* that she sees is both her own face and that of her mother. On the one hand, this fantasy scene can be read as a classic case of splitting. The devouring, demonically rage-filled half-face of the *yamamba* woman's fantasy represents the aggressive side, split off from the other, nurturing side, that of "an affectionate mother." On the other hand, however, this fantasy is a culmination of the seemingly contradictory maternal images merged into one. The

[93] There is also a different version of this story with a happy-ending. The girl's stepmother realizes that the girl thinks her own reflection in the mirror is that of her late mother, and is moved by the purity and tenderness of the girl's affection for the late mother. The stepmother apologizes for her suspicion, and the girl also apologizes for making both parents concerned. The girl and the stepmother thus reconcile with each other.

erotic caress is fused with the maternal embrace. And as I discussed in my previous chapter on Kanai Mieko's "Yamamba," there is nothing contradictory about the maternal image as erotic, devouring, aggressive, and affectionate, all at the same time. As the narrator in "The Smile" aptly states, devouring *is* an "expression of ultimate affection" (196), and a mother *does* say to her baby, "You're so dear to me I could eat you up!" (196). The fantasy of devouring is a fantasy to break down the bodily boundaries, an extreme form of identification through literally incorporating the other into the self.

Conclusion

The folkloric *yamamba*'s devouring can be interpreted in several interrelated ways. First, it may reflect the child's unconscious fear of being devoured and destroyed by the mother, arising from the child's projection of early sadism. Now, the child's fantastic fear is reciprocated in reality if the mother, too, fantasizes the devouring. Ōba makes this mutual fantasy explicit as she links mother's love with the *yamamba*'s devouring. As the loving mother identifies with the baby so intensely to the point where her identity merges with that of the baby, the mother fantasizes literally incorporating the baby so that the boundary between self and other disappears. In the psychoanalytic framework, the earliest mode of identification during the oral, cannibalistic stage of infancy is by devouring, as obvious from observing a baby who would put everything into her mouth as she explores the world orally. What Ōba's narrator calls "ultimate affection" can be regarded as originating in the preliminary stage of identification, where affection takes the form of narcissistic identification through incorporation.

To be able to "read" other people's minds, as does *yamamba*, can also be regarded as the actualization of a fantasy of merger, an extreme form of identification. The series

of “mind-reading” conversations in the opening scene in “The Smile” takes the form in which the man thinks “A,” and the *yamamba* says “you just thought, ‘A,’ didn’t you?” repeating exactly what the man thinks. In other words, she is saying, “are you thinking what I am thinking?” or, more precisely, “are you thinking what I am thinking what you are thinking?” as well as “I am thinking what you are thinking.” Merging of thoughts implies merging of their identities. This implication is emphasized further by the fact that the whole “mind-reading” conversation revolves around the devouring. If *yamamba*’s man-eating is related to identification by incorporation of the other’s body, her “mind-reading” can aptly be read as manifesting identification by incorporation of the others’ thoughts through the mechanism of projective identification and introjection suggesting the earliest form of empathy, the ability to understand other people’s feelings. If empathy is the ability to understand other people’s feelings, the *yamamba* woman’s “mind-reading” ability in “The Smile” may be an important part of it. But when she behaves in a way which she thinks other people want her to behave, she is not complying with the other but with her own perception of the other. It may seem as if she is submitting herself to others, but her submission is based on her own ideas of what others are thinking. Furthermore, if she is “reading” others’ minds that are nonetheless her own perception, and internalizing what she thinks as their thoughts as hers, then it is impossible to distinguish who is putting whose thoughts into whose head.

The pre-school age *yamamba*-girl in “The Smile,” verbalizing her mother’s thoughts, says, “Why in the world does this child read other people’s minds all the time. She’s like a mountain witch. I wonder if people will come to dislike her like a mountain witch” (197). The narrator in the Japanese original text makes it clear that these are the

words that the *yamamba*'s mother would often say, and the young *yamamba* is merely repeating what she has heard before (Ōba, "Yamamba" 340).[94] The mother, then, has literally put these thoughts into her daughter's head, in other words. The *yamamba* daughter has internalized her mother's thoughts. As she reaches puberty, she begins to feel that she wants to be freed from her mother, because she has long known that "she was a burden to her mother" ("The Smile" 198). More than five decades later, the mother *yamamba* reads her daughter's mind that says the mother is a burden to her daughter and that the daughter wants to be freed from the mother. The *yamamba* is reading in her daughter the very same thoughts that she herself has once felt long ago toward her mother.

In my chapter on transience, I emphasized that as the mother remembers her own mother through being a mother herself, she is identifying both with her mother and her child, because she is literally playing the part of her mother who is mothering her as well as the part of her child who is being mothered by her mother, the parts that is also being played by her. In other words, the mother is making reparation to her child and to her own mother, while actually receiving reparation from her own mother, the part that is also being played by herself. In "The Smile," the mother *yamamba*'s face overlaps not only with the *yamamba*'s mother's face but also with the *yamamba*'s daughter's—who is also a *yamamba*—face. Ōba's fictional *yamamba* is an embodiment of her frequent motif, a bodily as well as bloody—"prolong the blood you gave me" (205)—circle of life and reproduction.

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[94] "もちろん、そういうことを、母親が常日頃述懐していたので、彼女は単に復誦しただけのことなのである" (Ōba, "Yamamba" 340).

In imagining the *yamamba*'s life from her babyhood to its old age, the narrator matter-of-factly equates the baby *yamamba*'s fresh body with the mature *yamamba*'s erotic body, both as a voluptuous, bodily being:

> At one time they must have been babies with skin like freshly pounded rice cakes and the faint, sweet-sour odor peculiar to the newborn. They must have been maidens seducing men with their moist glossy complexions of polished silk. Their shining nails of tiny pink shells must have dug into the shoulders of men who suffocated in ecstasy between their lovers' plump breasts. (195)

Even after the aged *yamamba* dies, the narrator refers to "the beauty of [her] naked body" (205). In fact, the narrator begins the story of the present day *yamamba* with a description of her naked body: "At sixty-two [. . .] her skin was bright and juvenescent like the wax figure of a goddess. Her hair was half-white, and on the mound at the end of her gently sloping belly were a few strands of silver" (196).

Furthermore, the spring water reflection scene discussed above, the fusion of the erotic caress and the maternal embrace, affirms what a Lacanian feminist psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray calls "bodily encounter with the mother." Ōba's text goes a whole step further than Irigaray's discussion of the "archaic relationship with the body of the mother" (Irigaray 38), the relationship that is traced back to our first bodily encounter which is with the mother's body. Exploring such a relationship with the body of the mother despite its alleged "danger of fusion, of death, of the sleep of death [. . .] the danger of going back to the primal womb" (Irigaray 39-40), Ōba's narrative speaks both of the desire for the mother and the desire of the mother as an indistinguishable, fluid

desire. Ōba's narrative does not allow us to interpret the monstrous, devouring *yamamba* simply as the projection of erotically charged fantasy onto the maternal body. The devouring fantasy is mutual between the potential devourer and devoured. In "The Smile," the mother fantasizes devouring; she is not just the object of the other's fantasy. The narrator describes the babyhood *yamamba* as if they were edible: "they must have been babies with skin like freshly pounded rice cakes and the faint, sweet-sour odor peculiar to the newborn" (195). And these bodily and voluptuous babies grow into mothers who are just as bodily and voluptuous, and utter to their own babies who have "skin like freshly pounded rice cakes and the faint, sweet-sour odor," "You're so dear to me I could eat you up!"

Ōba presents *yamamba* both as mother and as daughter. By fusing the maternal and daughterly subjectivities, the text defies the very attempt to extricate the maternal subjectivity, as if to say that there is no such thing as a mother; there is only a mother and her mother, which makes the mother also a daughter. Portraying the mother-daughter dynamics in which both mother and daughter objectify each other and identify with each other, Ōba's narrative unsettles maternal subjectivity and daughterly subjectivity as constantly oscillating flux. As the *yamamba*'s part quickly alternates—now she is the mother, now she is the daughter—so does the place of "the mother": now she is the subject, now she is the object.

CONCLUSION

The question that this dissertation addressed is not "what do mothers want?" Such a question has been asked many times and answered in some variations of "I want one hour of peace and quiet!" (Cowan and Cowan 224), which did not interest me. Instead, I set out to explore the maternal fantasy in the contemporary retellings of the *yamamba* (mountain witch) legend by Japanese female authors. My intention was to see *yamamba,* a Japanese version of what Barbara Creed calls monstrous-feminine, not just as a manifestation of men's infantile fear and longing but also as the mother's own fantasy, whether it is retold as a maternal goddess, mysterious witch, sensual whore, or sweet death. Drawing on the psychoanalytic literature on motherhood, I argued that there is no maternal subjectivity independent of her daughterly subjectivity as a daughter of her own mother, real or imagined, because mothers are not just daughters first but daughters always. My readings of a series of contemporary adaptations of the *yamamba* legend disagreed with the dominant feminist readings that celebrate *yamamba* as the earth-goddess mother as the subject.

The contemporary versions of *yamamba* have, indeed, problematized the notion of separation, autonomy, and dependency, but to see the *yamamba* as the subject is to admit that the fantasy of the devouring mother indicates, not just the child's struggle with separation, autonomy, and dependency, but the mother's. It is the mothers who want to believe that they are the most important person in their children's lives; it is the mothers who idealize the early physical connection with their infants; it is the mothers who sanctify motherhood as "natural," powerful, and empowering; it is the mothers who cannot but hold on to their children because, alas, they are the most important thing in

their lives. If mothers are not getting "one hour of peace and quit," they are getting exactly what they are asking.

The notion that the mother is the most important person in a child's life is so pervasive that it is hard to dissuade even Euro-American feminist mothers from it; the task seems even more daunting when I turn to the contemporary Japanese mothers. Throughout my work on this dissertation, despite my initial intention, I found myself asking that very question, "what do mothers want?" more specifically, "what, then, do Japanese mothers want?" because everywhere I turn among the Japanese discourses on motherhood, I notice the disturbing alliances between the conservative, idealized fantasy of motherhood and allegedly feminist celebration of the female body, together constructing "sacred" maternity, often manifesting their affinity to "return to nature" ideology. Arguments to separate mothers from the regressive, anachronistic idealization of motherhood felt like a wasted effort when mothers themselves fanatically hold on to such a fantasy of maternal omnipotence. As Margherita Long in her study of Japanese literature suggests, "the 'maternity' of this society [Japan] is both a political and a psychic liability":

> In Japan, debates among psychologists, ethnographers, sociologists, Marxists, and even Deleuzeans have gathered momentum at regular intervals during the last half-century, intent on characterizing the nation as a *bosei shakai* or "maternal society." As Tomiko Yoda has shown, however, claims that Japanese society promotes cozy mother-child dynamics such as intimacy, indulgence, and protection are always

> accompanied by claims that the same dynamics make Japanese society infantile, suffocating, and pathological. (10)

Whereas the work of deconstructing the fantasy of motherhood has arguably already been complete decades ago in North America, it is still long overdue in Japan.

More than twenty years ago, literary scholar Susan Suleiman summarized the problem with the psychoanalytic theories on child development and mothering as follows:

> Whether of the strictly Freudian or the object-relations variety, all of the theories I have mentioned assume that the "unique love-object," as well as the single most powerful and important figure in the life of the infant and small child—and consequently, according to these theories, in the life of the adult the child will become—is her or his mother. They also assume, by and large, that that is the natural and necessary way things should be. (Suleiman 41)

Suleiman refers to Nancy Chodorow and Susan Contratto's analysis of this fantasy of the maternal omnipotence and replaces the term "omnipotence," which may not best describe this fantasy because mothers often feel powerless rather than omnipotent, with "absolute responsibility" or "ultimate responsibility" to "suggest the hyperbolic nature of what is involved": "the feeling that what happens to the child is ultimately attributable to the mother" (43). Suleiman, like Chodorow and Contratto, suggests, "dominant analytic and cultural discourse about mothers and their children [. . .] continues to emphasize the mother's crucial, determining role in the development and continuing welfare of the child" (41-42), even though "in reality the mother is neither all-powerful in relation to the

child nor absolutely (exclusively) responsible for the child's fate" (Suleiman 43). And this "'cultural ideology' of 'blame and idealization of mothers' [. . .] has been internalized by so many women" (Suleiman 42).

Agreeing with Chodorow and Contratto that we, collectively, need to get out of this vicious circle of the infantile fantasy and the cultural ideology of motherhood, Suleiman calls for different ways of thinking about child development and motherhood in which a mother can safely "relinquish her fantasy of ultimate responsibility" (52). While Suleiman says "Intellectually, I find myself very attracted to this conclusion" (42) and that such change would be "more healthy for mothers" (44), she also expresses her concern in a question: "Can we choose or discard at will our most deep-seated fantasies and self-representations? Do we dare [. . .] give up our sense of an absolutely privileged relationship with our children?" (44). Personally, being in the midst of this "absolutely privileged relationship" with my young daughter, I, too, have a hard time imagining giving up this privilege. However, even if a mother refuses to give up her absolutely privileged relationship with her children, she will be disillusioned in the end because children eventually grow up and leave. The problem is not that mothers do not know that the absolute, ultimate maternal responsibility is a fantasy; they know, and they hold on to it anyway.

What Suleiman said twenty years ago about American mothers is still pertinent for Japanese mothers today:

> if mothers cannot feel secure in their attempt to pursue full and integrated personal lives and remain mothers, if they feel or fear that society [. . .] punish them [. . .] any time they stray from the traditional, constraining

> path of "true mother-and-wife," then it makes a certain practical and logical sense for them to hold on to one thing they can affirm with certainty: that they have a natural, biological bond and right, as mothers, to their children. (Suleiman 53)

While Suleiman ascribes the threat that the American mothers feel to the legal system that can deprive them of their children, for Japanese mothers, the threat of being robbed of their children came in the form of the traditional patriarchal family system. Although the legal *ie* (household) system, a "genealogical and functional domestic institution" of family system (Lebra, *Japanese Women* 20), of the pre-World War II Japan was abolished after the war, we still see the psychological and institutional remnant of this patriarchal practice in everyday life.[95] Under this pre-war family system, children were indeed considered to belong to the *ie*, not to the mother. Sympathizing with the mother's resentment at having her voice repressed as the lowest rank member within the family of her husband in which "[h]er primary function was to produce heirs, and she was expected to learn the ways of her new household under the tutelage of her mother-in-law" (Imamura 1) who represents the patriarchal family, I can imagine that the contemporary family practice in which the mother is bestowed the long-awaited ultimate responsibility

[95] Japan still maintains the family registry (*koseki*) as the main form of identification. The family registration system (*koseki* system) "affects all Japanese at every turn of their lives, functioning as an often invisible, but highly effective, way of maintaining patriarchal order" (Sugimoto 153). Family registry is filed at the local municipal office, it uses the household as the unit, has each family member's personal details, such as birth, death, marriage and divorce, gender, birthplace, parents' names, and orders of births among siblings. Japanese citizens must show it when an official proof of identification is required, for instance when applying for a passport or a driver's license.

in raising her children may seem, to the mothers, like a triumph that is hard to let go. Will the Japanese mothers continue to "cling to the fantasy of ultimate responsibility," reaffirming "the biological bonding between mother and child and to claim that the mother is the child's 'natural' guardian" (Suleiman 53)? As Suleiman suggests, such is "an ideologically and psychologically regressive move (one that overlooks, furthermore, the rights of adoptive mothers), but it is also a self-protective move, as regression often is," when mothers feel that they cannot "safely pursue both their desire for self-creation and their desire to mother" (53). But even if Japanese mothers still "cannot feel secure in their attempt to pursue full and integrated personal lives and remain mothers" (Suleiman 53), clinging on to the illusion does mothers no good, because they will eventually be disillusioned when the children grow up, only after the mothers have already forgone their pursuit of self-creation, which also takes commitment, and was forgone for that very reason.

My analysis of Okamoto Kanoko's "Sushi," Kanai Mieko's "Yamamba," and Ōba Minako's "The Smile of a Mountain Witch" in this dissertation shows the grotesqueness of such maternal fantasy. In "The Smile," Ōba presents a woman who has lived her entire life, from her childhood to motherhood to old age, always "reading" others' mind, as some versions of the legendary *yamamba* do, and trying to please people because she "wanted to be liked." She is a grotesque exaggeration of a self-sacrificial woman who selflessly devoted her life to make others happy, first as an obedient child, and later as a dedicated wife and mother. Like the Japanese mothers whom Japanese psychoanalyst Kitayama Osamu described in his work on overly-devoted and guilt-inducing mothers,

the protagonist becomes a self-sacrificing mother who always puts the others' needs and wishes first and represses her own.

In his "The Wounded Caretaker and Guilt," Kitayama argues that the superficially selfless self-sacrificing behavior of the caretaker (mother) cloaks a coercive masochism, intended to force the other to feel guilty and "force the other to love the subject": "the self-sacrificing mother who tends to kill or hurt herself" forces a guilt feeling into the child ("The Wounded Caretaker" 230). The mother satisfies herself as well as "putting the other in the wrong" and generating "an unjustified sense of false accusation" with her masochistic behavior: "She cannot stop it for 'killing herself' can be amusing as well as exhausting. She is usually conscious and even proud of this self-injuring behaviour or self-devaluation and its underlying masochistic fantasy, which she may hide from those whom she takes care of" (Kitayama, "The Wounded Caretaker" 230). The mother obtains great narcissistic gratification from her glorified masochism as she idealizes an exalted sacrificial image of the self. Her self-sacrifice is a demand for love. Her conscious or unconscious expectation is that when she is so "giving" that she hurts herself for the well-being of others, they will feel guilt if they do not love her or care for her in return.

In "The Smile," Ōba critically reveals the mother's core fantasy underlying her self-sacrifice. The mother in her old age is left disillusioned for she realizes that her grown-up children regard her as a burden and that they are not going to return to her what they now consider to be her "unwanted kindness." It is a sad realization, and it is not her fault that she had believed in such a culturally endorsed fantasy. Many of us, like

Kitayama shows, hold onto the image of the selfless mother, perpetuating the cycle of illusion and guilt.

Kanai Mieko's "Yamamba" also disillusions us from a maternal fantasy. The fantasy that Kanai is addressing is not about the selfless mother we saw in Ōba's work, but about an archetypal earth-mother goddess who allegedly gives and takes life. Kanai's presentation of *yamamba* disagrees with the Japanese feminist literary critics who offer enthusiastic readings of *yamamba* as the figure of female resistance.[96] Celebrating *yamamba* as the earth-mother goddess, such critics may easily slip into exaltation of that which is maternal, which, in and of itself, is just another version of the ideal woman. In Kanai's version, *yamamba*'s devouring is not the act of aggression against men's will but an actualization of their fantasy.

By citing a passage from Okamoto Kanoko's "Sushi" as an epigraph to her "Yamamba," Kanai announces that her "Yamamba" is a reinterpretation and response to Okamoto's "Sushi." In Okamoto's "Sushi," the mother nurtures the young boy; later as he gets old, the memory of the mother pulls him towards death. The "mother" seems to be behind the circle of life and death, turning the wheel. Kanai's text not only caricatures such "sacred" association between the mother and the circle of life and death, but she also unmistakably presents this "mother" as an illusion. Her *yamamba* is the non-existent mother in the child's fantasy. What is behind the wheel is an illusion. In magnifying the

[96] The collected essays in Mizuta Noriko and Kitada Sachie, eds., *Yamambatachi no monogatari: josei no genkei to katarinaoshi* [Mountain witches' stories: retelling the archetype of women] (Tokyo: Gakugei Shorin, 2002), are the examples of this type of reading.

fantasy of the mother goddess to the point of grotesqueness and thus offering disillusionment, Kanai distances herself from the narcissistic inflation of the mother.

On the other hand, Okamoto's text may have been narcissistically subsumed under her own illusion of motherhood. Many critics have suggested that Okamoto considered herself to be the goddess earth-mother. For instance, a scholar of Japanese literature, Maryellen Mori, elaborates on Okamoto Kanoko's "self-deification" as follows:

> Her self-exaltation was fueled and sustained by the worshipers, mostly male, with whom she surrounded herself. [. . .] Ippei [her husband] encouraged Kanoko's inclination to regard herself as not only 'special' but as a goddess. [. . .] Kanoko acted out her personal version of the 'eternal feminine', a combination of wanton nymph and earth-mother deity. (92)

A Japanese critic, Okuno Takeo, calls Okamoto an "early-Neolithic earth-mother goddess" (19-20). Another Japanese critic, Tsuji Kunio, also associates the "maternal" Okamoto with the earth and the sun (4, 7). Such exaltation of the "mother" and of herself as the mother-goddess is an attempt, on Okamoto's part, to fulfill the fantasy of the ideal woman. Kanai's allegorical narrative reminds us of the impossibility of fulfilling such a fantasy.

Kanai's "Yamamba" also responds, more subtly than to Okamoto's fantasy of the mother, to another type of Okamoto's stock characters, that of a seemingly free-spirited and strong girl. After transforming a scene from Okamoto's *Nyotai kaiken* [Female Body Revealed][97] of a glass with Nanako's lipstick stain, which Kanai praised as "one of the

[97] The title is translated as "Becoming a Woman" in Mori 77.

most exquisite and erotic in Kanako's oeuvre" (Kanai, "Okamoto" 8),[98] into one of the blood images in the boy's daydreams in "Yamamba," Kanai depicts the boy fantasizing Sayuri's death. Sayuri, the object of the boy's crush in Kanai's "Yamamba," can be read as a remake of Okamoto's heroine girl, Nanako, from her *Nyotai kaiken*, a novel about a girl's coming of age. One may wish to read Okamoto's Nanako as a free-spirited, strong girl who defies the stereotypical female role of passivity and submissiveness. Kanai's text deflates such a wish by presenting Sayuri, who is neither passive nor submissive, and yet remains an object of the other's fantasy. Okamoto may have presented free-spirited Nanako in the image of a wanton nymph, but such an image, too, is a construct of fantasy. A free-spirited wanton nymph may not be a passive submissive stereotype, but she is nonetheless yet another version of the ideal woman and an object of the other's desire just the same.

My reading of these stories builds on the reexamination of psychoanalytic theories on motherhood, mother's fantasies, and fantasies about the mother, which also inform my reconsiderations of the culturally specific observations by two Japanese psychoanalysts, Doi Takeo and Kitayama Osamu. Drawing on a term commonly used in Japanese aesthetics and Japanese literary studies, "transience," Kitayama argues that transience is the essence of both the mother-child relationships and the adult erotic relationships ("Prohibition and Transience" 252-253). Kitayama's insights accentuate the close link between mother-child relationship and adult erotic relationships, both tinged with the bittersweet recognition of impermanence and the pain of separation.

[98] Cited and translated in Mori 79.

Building on Kitayama's configuration of the guilt-ridden child and the transient mother, which assumes the perspective of the child, I complemented it by taking the mother's perspective. That is, I proposed that the child is not only the mother's transitional object as Elizabeth Loewald suggests, but also the transient object. I argued that for a mother to recognize the transience of her child's childhood, perhaps sentimentally, may be one of the ways for the mother to, in Winnicott's words, "hate her baby appropriately" ("Hate" 74) and thus render her maternal ambivalence manageable. While Winnicott's use of the word "hate" may sound uncomfortably and inappropriately harsh in referring to what a mother may feel toward her baby, in any intense loving relationships, where there is love, there can also be hate, as manifest in a statement by anyone in love: "I love him, but I hate him! He drives me nuts!" A mother may not admit that she "hates" her baby, but she may use a word "annoyed" instead, especially when the baby does the fifteenth item on Winnicott's list of the reasons "why a mother hates her baby" (there are eighteen items in total on his list): "He [the baby] is suspicious, refuses her good food, and makes her doubt herself, but eats well with his aunt" ("Hate" 74).

Winnicott, drawing an analogy between the mother's hate for her baby and the analyst's hate for his/her patient, says that "as an analyst I have ways of expressing hate. Hate is expressed by the existence of the end of the 'hour' [. . .] even when there is no difficulty whatever, and when the patient is pleased to go" ("Hate" 71). To borrow this analogy, a mother, too, has ways of expressing hate. Hate is expressed by the fact that her child's childhood is transient, that her child does not stay a child forever. Just as there is an "end" to the analytic sessions for Winnicott, there is an "end" to the child's

childhood. The existence of time limits also indicates the existence of limits in the relationships.

The awareness of transience is a familiar part of mother's everyday experiences such as hearing amiable comments from her friends and relatives about her baby's "growing up so fast!," or looking at her toddler's babyhood pictures taken a year ago and realizing that her baby is no longer a baby, or being told by other mothers with older children that her child will be "leaving for college before you know it!" I still remember a comment by a mother of a pre-schooler who offered to baby-sit my then eight-month-old daughter, "I am mourning the end of my child's babyhood." Two years later, I found myself saying exactly the same. Knowing that her child's childhood is transient, a mother sentimentally savors the bittersweet foretaste of separation, just as the aesthetic appreciation of transience enhances beauty.

Picking up where Winnicott left off in his comment on a lullaby, "Rock-a-by-Baby,"[99] that through this lullaby a mother is expressing hate, I questioned his statement that "This is not a sentimental rhyme. Sentimentality is useless for parents, as it contains a denial of hate, and sentimentality in a mother is no good at all from the infant's point of view" ("Hate" 74). While this lullaby itself is surely unsentimental, it seems to me that these unsentimental words are likely to make the mother sentimental with the thought of her baby's potential death. In addition, guilt may result from having put her baby in danger in her fantasy. And then she may feel gratitude because her baby is not in danger in actuality despite her fantasy. This emotional process is similar to the way in which

[99] Rockabye Baby, on the tree top / When the wind blows the cradle will rock / When the bough breaks the cradle will fall / Down will come baby, cradle and all.

parents are drawn to news and stories about children in danger such as abuses, accidents, and deadly illnesses. Again, what is involved in this imaginary loss of the child is a recognition and appreciation of transience. The fact of transience itself is unsentimental, just like this lullaby, but recognition and appreciation of transience is sentimental, for it involves such feelings as guilt and mourning. A mother can negotiate her maternal ambivalence through this lullaby that is about the transience of the baby. I argued, therefore, that sentimentality actually *helps* the mother "hate appropriately" her baby. Sentimentality is not a denial of hate as Winnicott suggests, but a management of hate.

If the appreciation of transience as theorized by Kitayama is a defensive attempt to ease the pain of inevitable impermanence of the mother-child relationship, it parallels Doi's interpretation of *amae* as "the desire to deny the fact of separation that is an inevitable part of human existence, and to obliterate the pain that this separation involves" (*The Anatomy of Dependence* 167). But the parallel ends quickly because while appreciation of transience and *amae* may both be defenses against the pain of separation, they manifest, at the first glance, as opposite reactions. Faced with the painful reality of impermanence and separation, the one with appreciation of transience would claim, "No, this aching is not bad; in fact, I like it. I am nostalgically enjoying this bittersweet pain. Sadness is beauty," while the other with the *amae* mentality may pretend that the transitory figure in question is not really gone. But *amae* and transience are more closely related than this quick parallel may suggest. I proposed, in my analysis of Okamoto's "Sushi," that behind masochistic appreciation of transience also lies *amae*, as an implicit claim of self-surrender and helplessness.

I argued that what Doi attempted to explain using the everyday Japanese word, *amae*, a wish to "depend and presume upon another's love or bask in another's indulgence" ("The Concept of *Amae*" 349), relies on the maternal fantasy, more specifically the idealized mother-infant pre-verbal sensual bond. Doi, like others before him, takes the womb as the foundational image of blissful wholeness. And, like others before him, he builds his theory on the human infants' dependency on its mother. But unlike most Western psychoanalytic theories, or so Doi claims, that assume separation from the mother and denial of dependency as necessary developmental stages, *amae* is, "ultimately, an attempt psychologically to deny the fact of separation from the mother" (*Anatomy* 75). But what *amae* ultimately seeks—the infant's blissful wholeness with the mother—is a fantasy.

I agreed with Japanese literary scholar Yoda Tomiko's critical remark at the end of her historicist study that examines the powerful cliché or the "notion that Japan is a maternal society (*bosei shakai*)" (Yoda 865): "The 'Maternal Japan'' has not given us "much cause for simple celebration" (898). I also agreed with her observation that "The sociality of *amae* as described by Doi, therefore, is far from being a 'pre-repressive' utopia—a regression to the pre-Oedipal state of unrestrained dependency on the maternal indulgence" (876), not just because "it [the sociality of *amae*] is a complex social structure involving multiple subjects who consent to and uphold rules regulating the distribution of status, privileges, and power among its members" (Yoda 877), which is a very apt description of Japanese society, but because such regression itself is founded on the "repressive" fantasy of the idealized, omnipotent, all-embracing mother, which both fanatically exalts and constrains mothers. My psychoanalytic investigations into *amae*,

particularly in understanding *amae* as a masochistic attempt at pleading one's vulnerability in order to passively manipulate the other, complement, rather than oppose, Yoda's historical approach that frames the question of the "maternal" in relation to "the organization of gender identity and gender division of labor under the postwar capitalist regime in Japan" (Yoda 867).

The grotesque representations of maternal fantasy in fiction as analyzed in this dissertation may make readers uncomfortable. But if a piece of fiction helps disillusion the reader from maternal fantasy, it is worth its discomfort. Maternal fantasy, whether of ultimate responsibility or a prehistoric earth-goddess or self-sacrifice, is not only constraining and unhealthy for mothers, but also dangerous. My argument against the celebratory rhetoric of the earth-mother goddess fantasy is motivated by my confession that in the past I, too, was guilty of buying into the notion of empowered and empowering maternity that exalts such an earth-mother image into its spokesperson, putting words into her mouth. I, too, once naively thought of a shift from reason (logos) to the body (eros), celebrating the romanticized "nature" that is a convenient construction and nostalgic projection. Yet, browsing through the Japanese media on mothering during the course of this study, I was appalled by the cult-like rhetoric used by the advocates of "natural" mothering, particularly of "natural childbirth," in books, TV programs and popular magazines, which were outside of the scope of this dissertation. These media exalt motherhood in general and childbirth in particular, agitating women for "natural" childbirth, consecrating childbirth, treating it as if it were the single most important event in a woman's life that she must enjoy. They use unfounded, catchy, highly suspect phrases such as "natural power in women," "mystery of life," and "listen to the voice of

your body." Featuring celebrity mothers who chose to deliver their babies at home, the media irresponsibly sings an ode to "mysterious" "nature," "life," and "universe," without reporting the risks involved in at-home-delivery. Unchecked by the mainstream medical institutions, some midwives in private practice, in their persistence to avoid all modern medications, substitute necessary and standard medications with questionable substances such as homeopathic remedies, which, they claim, promotes our body's "natural capacity to heal." Committed and diligent mothers are particularly prone to such nature propaganda that exploits mothers' simple intentions to do what is healthy for themselves and for their children.

I suggest, for a future research, an investigation into the rhetoric of such nature propaganda in relation to maternity, manifest in the writings by, for example, Yoshimura Tadashi,[100] a Japanese obstetrician famous for his extreme adherence to "natural" childbirth and who has a number of staunch followers among midwives in private practice as well as his former and prospective patients. His concluding remark in his explanation about his Yoshimura Clinic The House of Birth sounds strikingly genuine but oddly cultist: "I cannot help but feel a spiritual and absolute power in women who live on producing the continuous chain of life. Men can only kneel down before them" ("About"). He describes his Yoshimura Clinic The House of Birth as follows:

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[100] 吉村正. He has a private practice in Aichi prefecture in Japan. His clinic, "Yoshimura Clinic, The House of Birth" (吉村医院.・お産の家), is well known throughout Japan among his worshippers and critics alike. The website of his clinic is available: <http://www.ubushiro.jp/freepage_17_1.html> 13 Aug. 2010.

> At Yoshimura Clinic, an Edo period house has been reconstructed where we encourage the mothers to perform traditional housework in which they use their bodies, eat traditional Japanese food, walk and move their bodies everyday. And this is how we realize completely natural childbirth. I would like to introduce to the western world our practices at Yoshimura Clinic which has brought in Japanese culture to obstetrics. ("Dr. Yoshimura's"; sic)

Whatever the reason is for his choosing the Edo period (1603-1868) in particular, of all the past periods in Japanese history, that the place is "all natural" and "traditional Japanese style" seems crucial for him: "It is built in the traditional Japanese style using only natural material. [. . .] The lumber used is all natural. No new building materials like plywood or aluminum sashes are used" (Yoshimura "House of Birth"). He explains the reason why he makes the expecting mothers nearing their due date camp in his clinic and chop firewood as follows:

> Another unique feature at Yoshimura's clinic is the prenatal exercises. A traditional Japanese house which is three-hundred-and-fifty years old has been reconstructed on the premises and expectant mothers are encouraged to split firewood, perform sawing and water drawing just like in the old days. By performing these traditional practices, the women can acquire both physical and mental strength, thus preparing themselves for a natural birth. ("About")

The expecting mothers, in all their seriousness, chop woods at his clinic, probably for the first time in their lives, and are happily photographed or filmed to appear in the media.

Incidentally, Japanese film director Kawase Naomi's (b. 1969) recent documentary film titled *Genpin* (2010) features the childbirths at Yoshimura Clinic in the most glorifying way. The title, *Genpin*,[101] according to the film's official website,[102] comes from an ancient Chinese writing: "The Goddess of the Valley never dies. Her name is the 'Dark Woman.'"[103] This is taken from the Sixth Chapter of ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* [The Book about the Way of Virtue] (around 6 B.C.), the foundational book on Taoist philosophy. "Genpin" corresponds, in the English translation above, to "Dark Woman." Explaining the title, the film's website states that "the valley goddess at the source of a big river never ceases to produce life. Women (female organ) are the source of life just like this valley goddess, and they never cease. Lao Tzu calls it 'Genpin,' that is, 'Sacred Maternity.'"[104] Kawase is affirming the image of woman as the source of life which "never ceases to produce life"—limitless motherhood. For her previous documentary film, *Tarachime*[105] (2006), Kawase filmed her own childbirth scene, and announced later that she ate her freshly post-natal placenta,[106] another strange trend among the natural childbirth worshippers. The winner

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[101] 玄牝

[102] <http://genpin.net/introduction.html> 13 Aug. 2010.

[103] The original reads "谷神不死。是謂玄牝." The English translation is from Schipper 127.

[104] <http://genpin.net/introduction.html>. Translation mine. In the Japanese original, "sacred maternity" is "神秘なる母性," which literally means "mysterious motherhood."

[105] The title is written as "垂乳女," literally "women with sagging breasts," and is accompanied by an English title, *Tarachime birth/mother*, in the film pamphlet.

[106] Her remarks were broadcasted at the interview conference in Japan after her 2007 Cannes Film Festival Grand Prix: <http://www.news.janjan.jp/culture/0706/0706120148/1.php> 15 Aug. 2010. This

of the second-most prestigious Grand Prix at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival, Kawase is one of the most prominent young female film directors in Japan. Yoshimoto Banana, again one of the most popular female novelists in Japan today, gave the words of endorsement to Kawase's *Genpin*, which are shown in the trailer. The film started showing in November 2010, and its propaganda effects on "natural" childbirth may be significant.

These trends are disturbing, but they also offer excellent opportunities for future research to highlight and problematize the alliances between the conservative, idealized fantasy of motherhood and allegedly feminist celebration of the female body. Why, for instance, does Kawase portray women in the image of the earth-mother goddess? What makes her claim that motherhood is limitless? It is one thing for Yoshimura to worship motherhood and "kneel down" before the mother-goddess. Psychoanalysis can explain it away as a classic case of infantile fear of women's reproductive capacities and longing for the mother. His insistence on things "traditionally Japanese" and "natural" adds another layer to the analysis, but it is just a typical manifestation of nostalgic obsession to the idealized past. But why do the mothers themselves hold onto the image of childbirth as somehow sacred and mysterious, after the decades of feminists' effort to demystify it? Again, it is one thing if the mothers who do not have any other pursuit in which they can realize their creativity claim maternity as their only creative mission. But the mothers like Yoshimoto Banana and Kawase Naomi who have extremely successful, creative

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news website is currently out of date (14 March 2011), but Kawase's comment about her eating the placenta can be found in other sources including her own blog <http://kawasenao.exblog.jp/6411319> 14 March 2011 and others: <http://jyosanin.blog78.fc2.com/blog-entry-408.html> 14 March 2011; <http://www.outofplace.jp/G.OoP/8AE1DF3B-C948-49B5-9409-F34062BF8A8C.html> 14 March 2011.

careers as a novelist and a film director, respectively, also join and lead the league. It is not as if they hold onto sacred maternity because motherhood is the only thing they can claim with certainty. Or, despite their successful and creative careers, is it? And, unlike the mothers about whom Suleiman was concerned twenty years ago, what they are holding onto is not the children. They are not necessarily holding on to the fantasy of maternal "ultimate responsibility." Their obsession with maternity is condensed into re-mystification of childbirth. The ways in which they do so will be the topic of a future research. This dissertation, by examining the literary expressions of the mother goddess fantasy and reading them along with the psychoanalytic understandings of the mother's own fantasies, offers a means to approach such a topic critically.

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