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The Rhetoric of Noh: Border Crossings in *Karukaya and Tadatsu no Saemon* and Beyond

Gerry Yokota

1. Introduction

Applied cognitive linguistics may take many approaches. When approaching a corpus such as the classical canon of Noh, one may take a lexical approach, as I have done in my studies of the rhetoric of shame (Yokota 2010) or the rhetoric of submission (Yokota 2011); in the latter study, I did not attempt to build a corpus of all representations of relations of domination and submission depicted in the canon of Noh, but only as they were symbolized by a single image, that of the dragon. But cognitive linguistics is concerned not only with specific dots on cognitive maps but also the larger patterns and networks connecting those dots. The present study takes that wider view of the system of classification of Noh plays. In order to elucidate the rhetoric of border crossing (including but not limited to border violations or transgressions), in this study I will focus not on single, symbolic lexical items such as literal and/or metaphorical barriers, bridges, or provincial boundaries related to the geopolitics of the world represented by the classical canon. Rather, I will focus on the border between the canonical and noncanonical, and explore how that territory may lead to a deeper awareness of the choices made at the lexical level as well.

This study is thus firmly grounded on the foundation I established in my 1997 book, *The Formation of the Canon of Noh: The Literary Tradition of Divine Authority*. In that work, I analyzed dominant criteria that appear to have determined the inclusion or exclusion of plays in the process of narrowing a corpus of some 3000 down to the current canon of some 250, and to clarify the historically contingent bases for the establishment of those criteria. Of the five categories into which the current canon is organized—deities, warrior ghosts, women, passionate individuals, and demons—I chose to focus first on the premier category of deities, because I found it to have been manipulated historically with the greatest concern for its value in terms of cultural capital. I think it is clear that these five categories are not so much a natural reflection of the supposedly characteristic Eastern perception of time as cyclical, as opposed to the Western perception of time in linear terms. It is rather a rigid vertical hierarchy, a divine order which was offered as the supreme model for the order of human society.

Focus on this particular group revealed that the larger corpus of *kami noh* current in Zeami's time featured a number of feminine deities, but that those plays gradually came to be excluded from the canon, so that the featured deities in the standard canon of what are now called *waki noh* are now about 90% masculine. To accomplish that purification, many plays featuring feminine deities were demoted either to the lowest subcategory of the first category, or to another subcategory called *jun waki noh* (subcanonical waki noh) in the third to fifth categories, or were totally excluded from the standard canon, surviving only in textual form.

The process of studying the technical means of representation of masculine and feminine deities in first-category plays led me to realize that the stage techniques Zeami and his successors eventually developed for the depiction of the human women of the third category seem to have been based on differentiation from the divine women of the first category, who were the focus of Zeami's earlier playwriting activity. These stage techniques include the dance, the costume, and the mask. This principle of differentiation is also indicated by the system of character types which Zeami developed: the *nikyoku santai*, whereby masculine and feminine deities are both represented through song and dance (the *nikyoku*), as opposed to the more mimetic techniques used in the depiction of the three main types of human characters (the *santai*)—old men, warrior ghosts, and women.

This initial focus on the first category did enable me to identify a number of important patterns and trends within the limited corpus I was treating; and it produced, I believe, a valuable point of reference for further comparison with other groupings of plays. It is particularly instructive to compare the dynamics of the dominant pattern of the masculine-feminine balance in the first and third categories. The dominant pattern

in the first category is for the *waki* to be a Shinto priest or royal courtier, always male, and always unmasked. By virtue of remaining unmasked, this intermediary strongly directs the spectator's point of view to look up to and worship the deity, who more than nine times out of ten is masculine. But what happens to this power relationship in the third category of plays predominantly featuring human women? Does the relationship become more equal, or might it be reversed? In a cynical moment, one might be tempted to dread the worst possible scenario, a pattern of morally superior Buddhist priests condescending to save the sinful, corrupt women of the mundane world. Are such fears justified? This study is an attempt to respond to such concerns, first with documentation, then with risk analysis, and finally with a proposal for intervention.

One limitation of this approach is the tendency to polarize masculine and feminine in the process of identifying deities according to their dominant gendered representation and reducing them to two rows of statistics. Such metaphysical dualism is not totally foreign to Zeami's thought, as his artistic treatises amply testify. I hope that explicitly acknowledging this risk from the start will serve to guard against that risk. Let it also be noted that there are several *kami noh* in which the gender of the featured deity is quite ambiguous. Perhaps the best-known example is *Miwa*, which is now classified as a subcanonical *waki noh* in the fourth category. Some schools perform the play so as to suggest that the deity revealed is the male suitor in the myth of the divine marriage between the serpent deity and the human woman. Others emphasize the interpretation that the revealed deity is the spirit of the mountain, traditionally feminine. In both cases, the stage representation is clearly feminine, and even in performances by the schools that focus on the male serpent, the style of representation is not that of a *miko* or female shaman, although that might seem to be the most obvious explanation for his appearance in feminine form. Another example is the subcanonical *waki noh*, *Kazuraki*. The deity in the myth of Mount Kazuraki is traditionally masculine—a powerful, ugly monster who was subjugated by the Buddhist ascetic En no Gyoja and forced to labor for him. But in the *noh* play *Kazuraki*, the deity is depicted in beautiful feminine form. The dominant interpretation is that this form is best suited to the representation of the deity's suffering. Such an interpretation also places *Miwa* in a new perspective. The *waki* in *Miwa* is a Buddhist priest—Mount Miwa having been appropriated to become a major center of Shinto-Buddhist syncretism in the medieval period.

Having begun by establishing this basic groundwork in the representation of masculinity and femininity in deity plays, and then continuing to expand that focus to include deities of ambiguous gender—a process which has also prompted me to re-examine the gap between the stage representation of the gender of a given deity and trends in conventional perceptions of its presumed “essential nature” (where such presumptions have been explicitly expressed), I am now moving from there to analyze representations of human women.

2. Border Crossings

If we narrow our focus on the representation of femininity in *Noh* from the first category of deity plays to study early third- to fourth-category plays which exhibit transitional staging techniques employed before the reification of the dominant feminine stereotypes which have come to characterize the art as a whole, what differences might we find? For this initial essay into this field, I begin with two plays representative of this early period: *Karukaya* and *Tadatsu no Saemon*. They are now classified as noncanonical (*bangaikyoku*), but both were current in Zeami's time. And both plays were revived on the *Noh* stage in the 1980s: *Karukaya* in 1986, and *Tadatsu no Saemon* in 1988.

Through a reading of these two plays, I propose to explore a number of bounded territories: not only the boundaries of time and space, and the boundaries of gender and identity, but also the boundaries of Japanese literary and dramatic genres, the boundaries of the *Noh* canon, and the boundaries of the five traditional categories within the canon. Both *Karukaya* and *Tadatsu no Saemon* are particularly appropriate for this project not simply because they have been excluded from the classical canon but because both feature, as the main action of the play, women who deliberately seek to challenge barriers erected to exclude them from the Shingon temple precincts on Mount Koya. In the face of the same barriers, the two women take two very different approaches.

2.1 *Karukaya*

There are no records of specific performances of *Karukaya*, but indirect references clearly indicate that the play was performed in Zeami's time and for some time afterwards. Zeami lists the play in *Go-on* under the older title of *Kaburo Koya*. He quotes the *sashi* preceding the *kuse* and attributes it to Kiami, a Dengaku actor who was roughly contemporary with Kan'ami. A description of costuming for the play appears in a late Muromachi stage manual, *Bugei Rikurin Shidai* (Kobayashi 1987).

In poetic terms, *Karukaya* exhibits a number of features in common with standard representations of the feminine and masculine in Noh. In the opening *sashi*, the man is likened to the wind (as was Ariwara no Yukihira in another very early Noh play, *Matsukaze*), while the woman is identified with clouds buffeted by a night storm; she later associates herself with dew and ultimately, in her death poem, with smoke. She succeeded in bringing her son all the way from Kyushu to the foot of Mount Koya, but was prohibited from joining him in the search for his father within the temple precincts on the mountain, and perished in his absence at an inn below.

In terms of staging, *Karukaya* exhibits several features common to very early Noh which are now either very rare or obsolete. One is the manner of assigning roles. The text does not indicate rigid hierarchical distinctions such as *waki*, *tsure*, or *ai*; notation is rather by character for all roles except that of the father. The play may largely be divided into three scenes. The woman is the protagonist at first; her lines are marked "mother." After the boy (marked "child") leaves her and climbs the mountain in search of his father, the focus shifts to the man he encounters, but who conceals his identity; at this stage, the man's lines are marked "shite." After the woman's death, the man continues to play the most active central role. But the dead woman continues to be represented on stage in the form of a folded robe, a technique found in other early Noh plays such as *Aoi no Ue* and *Danpu*. Clearly the play was composed to feature two characters of relatively equal dramatic importance. In this respect, *Karukaya* resembles a number of early one-act plays structured on the basis of the so-called *Go-o* model, before the perfection of the two-act phantasmal noh (*mugen fukushiki*) and the standardization of role-playing according to a system whereby the leading actor must now play the leading role in both acts, even if this entails changing characters midway. The playwright who composed *Karukaya* was under no obligation to structure the play to accommodate such artificial demands simply for the sake of maintaining troupe hierarchy. Generically speaking, the play stands as a reminder that early Noh was not as refined and ritualistic as it is today, but also encompasses the sentimental. *Karukaya* is included in a group of plays called *naki noh*, tearjerkers; and in the 1986 revival, the theater indeed practically echoed with sniffles if not sobs.

The highlight of the play is the poem the woman wrote just before her death, exhausted from her long journey.

*takanoyama, yukanu narai no, michi nareba
kemuri to narite, tachi ya noboran*

High Plain Mountain: this is a Way which custom decrees that I may not go;
and so I will turn to smoke, and thus rise to climb it.

In religious terms, there is no mention in *Karukaya* of the Five Hindrances or any reference to pollution or defilement, only a short flat statement that entrance is denied to women, and the woman makes no attempt to argue. In this respect, the play stands in contrast to the large number of Noh plays which repeatedly emphasize the essentially sinful and polluted nature of women that is the basis for their exclusion; this feature is particularly prominent in plays featuring noblewomen such as *Yugao*, *Ochiba*, and *Seiganji*. The emphasis in *Karukaya* is rather on the hypocrisy of the man, who first lied to his wife and son when he abandoned them, then lied to his son again when he met him at the temple, then tried to escape again when he was called by the innkeeper to say prayers for the deceased traveler and realized it was his own wife. Thematically speaking, the key words are *sama* and *sugata*, status and form or appearance; concepts rather than natural images. When the woman first enters, she explains that she has heard that the man has changed his status (*sama o kae*) and expresses her desire to see his changed appearance (*kawareru onsugata*). In her last letter, she enjoins her son to find his father and change his status to the same form (*onaji sugata ni*

sama o kae). And in conclusion, the chorus chants that the two change their status in accordance with the same spirit (*onaji kokoro ni sama o kae*).

Thus, in terms of formal closure, the play appears ultimately to reconfirm the status quo in ending with the woman's death and her injunction that the boy find his father and follow in his footsteps to join the priesthood. The emphasis on form and appearance gives the play an ironic edge, but resolution is finally achieved by proclaiming the transcendence of the gap between form and spirit. But what conventions guide that dominant interpretation? What conditions might stimulate different responses? *Tadatsu no Saemon* offers an intriguing clue.

2.2 *Tadatsu no Saemon*

There is extant a copy of *Tadatsu no Saemon* in Zeami's hand, dated 1424, and the available evidence also suggests that Zeami not only made the copy but himself composed the play (Kobayashi 1989). This is also indicated by the nature of the corrections to the manuscript, which resemble a composer's revisions more than a copyist's errors. The late date further supports the impression given by the content of the play that it was composed specifically as a more sophisticated version of *Karukaya*. The leading female character is not the abandoned wife but a wet nurse who is, by virtue of her class, far less inhibited by the social pressure to conform to conventions of wifely behavior. (Zeami is of course famous for noting in *Shugyoku Tokka* that well-born ladies are boring as main characters because their behavior is so constricted by the rules of conduct for their class.) The child in the woman's charge is not a son but a daughter, hence the child's recuperation into the priesthood is out of the question from the start as a possible resolution to the play, as is the woman's recuperation into matrimony.

Like *Karukaya*, role notation in the libretto for *Tadatsu no Saemon* is still based on character types and names rather than actor's ranks. The wet nurse and daughter are identified by type; only Tadatsu is identified by name. But poetically speaking, *Tadatsu no Saemon* is far more sophisticated than *Karukaya*, including quotations of court poetry as well as a number of other skillfully integrated images standard in court poetry and Noh. The dramatic potential of the characters is also fully exploited throughout the play.

The play opens in the province of Sanuki. On a pilgrimage to Zentsuji to pray for a sign, the woman learns from an itinerant priest of the whereabouts of her former master. But even before that encounter, a striking note is sounded in her opening lines.

*meguri ya au to tarachio no,
kono yo no uchi o tazunen*

Will he come around again? the nurturing father.
We seek the inner recesses of his current world.

"Nurturing father," *tarachio*, is a masculine variation on the archaic poetic epithet for a mother, *tarachine*, written with the characters dripping-milk-root; here, the character for root is changed to the character for man. Thus from the start the play begins playing with gender. *Meguru* also suggests the circumscription of temple precincts to establish a restricted zone, especially in combination with *uchi*, inner. The play is also beginning already to play with other boundaries.

Unlike the woman in *Karukaya*, the wet nurse and the daughter in *Tadatsu no Saemon* are informed before they leave Shikoku that women are not allowed to enter Mount Koya and advised to stay home and pray. But they ignore the priest's advice and set out on their long journey.

The scene shifts to Mount Koya. A temple servant reports to Tadatsu the rumor of two unruly women (*onnamonogurui*) dressed as men who are threatening to violate the prohibition. The man is depicted as incapable of resisting the women's temptation. The women are in fact singing songs which clearly ridicule the men's arrogance in identifying themselves with the moon, that is, the light of Buddhism, by claiming the heights of Mount Koya as a man's mountain. They threaten to change the situation just as the angels of

the moon cause it to wax and wane by changing their dress; they even threaten with their madness to scatter the moonlight like so many petals of the cherry blossom in the wind.

The women thus manage to push their way into the inner recesses where Tadatsu is in retreat, and immediately engage him in an argument about the meaning of the prohibition. Tadatsu bases his argument on the same dualistic logic of form and content that informed *Karukaya*: he says their appearance may be masculine, but they are in essence feminine (*otoko no sugata, onna no mi*). But the women reject that logic, arguing that femininity is not their essence but purely a construction to which they are forced to conform. Tadatsu is stunned into silence; but his servant is entranced and begs them to go on. They next chant the following poem which is clearly a variation on the woman's death poem in *Karukaya*.

*takanoyama, minu narai to wa yuukemuri,
tachi ya noboran tsui no michi*

High Plain Mountain: the decree that says we may not view it
is [as insubstantial as] evening smoke.
We will arise and climb it, the ultimate way.

And that was only a prelude; there is more. The highlight *kuri-sashi-kuse* scene is adapted from Kan'ami's deity play *Awaji*, which originally featured the primordial mother and father, Izanami and Izanagi, although it has since been revised to feature only the father. In the *kuse* narrative, the women tell the myth of the creation of the islands of Japan and the birth of the four divine offspring—the sun deity, the moon deity, the wind deity and the leech child. They conclude by affirming the identity of kami and buddhas, Kukai and Vairocana, and ultimately male and female, explicitly rejecting the doctrine of the Five Hindrances and the artificiality of the color symbolism of deep black for men and shallow white for women.

At this point, the women reveal that they have adopted the masquerade in order to search for someone, and Tadatsu reveals that he is the man they are looking for. He tells them to look at the form he has adopted (*kayou ni nareru sugata*) and expects them to leave him alone, but they persist. According to the stage instructions in Zeami's hand, Tadatsu strikes the daughter with his staff and she falls to the ground. In the 1988 stage performance, he struck her three times until the most transgressive part of her costume, her hat, was knocked off. (Aficionados of Noh may recall the scene in *Dojoji* where the *shirabyoshi* dancer knocks off her own hat with her fan before attacking the temple bell.) The wet nurse then retired to the stage assistant's position and removed her own disguise.

In the end, the daughter expresses joy at her encounter with the chastening rod. The response seems oddly discordant with her actions up until that point. But I would argue that it is that very discordance which prevents a closed reading of the play. After observing the women's strong determination to pursue their quest, their strength to withstand the physical hardship of the long journey, their planning of an effective strategy for invasion, their victory in the logical argument with the man and in winning the rapt attention of their audience, how likely is it that even the most typical spectator will unquestioningly assume that the daughter was simply recuperated into the family relation of feudal subservience? How much space does the play leave for a more open-ended reading? Enough space for the viewer to even imagine that the violence might awaken the daughter to the possible misdirection of her quest?

3. The Boundaries of Genre

The challenge of the women in *Tadatsu no Saemon* to the artificiality of the construction of gender boundaries also calls into question the boundaries of genre within the art of Noh, particularly the construction of the character of the madwoman as the dominant stereotype of the fourth category. I would argue that *Tadatsu no Saemon*, which features men and women of the *buke* class, represents not a transitional stage in the construction of that stereotype but rather stands outside that lineage. In *Tadatsu no Saemon*, as in other plays featuring characters from Mount Koya such as *Sotoba Komachi*, *kurui* refers more to unruliness, the disruption of social order rather than the disturbance of individual (primarily feminine) emotion or sanity.

The line of reification of the madwoman stereotype is more closely related to plays associated with Mount Hiei and Tendai Buddhism rather than Mount Koya and Shingon Buddhism. The main reason for this would appear to be the strong tradition of mystic asceticism at Mount Hiei and the subordination of the *miko* to the *yamabushi* within that tradition, as represented in the early Noh play *Aoi no Ue*. The conflation of the images of the *miko* and the madwoman discursively compromises the sacred power and authority of the *miko*, which in turn compromises the image of feminine divinity in early *kami noh* featuring deities in feminine form (*nyotai*).

Feminist dramatists and critics such as Jill Dolan have sought to develop and analyze techniques of composition which might effectively subvert traditional masculinist theatrical representations of the female body in spectacle. Techniques that have been explored include:

- the use of shifting time frames and voice to fracture the narrative and thus undermine the authority of any single narrative position;
- the privileging of the auditory over the visual by dissociating body and voice, so as to prevent the construction of a coherent visual space into which the spectator can be inserted;
- open-endedness to prevent reinscription into the dominant order; and
- insistence on the nature of performance as address consciously reminding the spectator of the fact that representation is always the presentation of an artificially constructed image for representation, in order to prompt the spectator to be aware of the risk of manipulation by any agent who presumes the right of representation (Dolan 1988).

All of these techniques may be said to be present in every Noh play; and yet their presence alone has not secured the art of Noh a reputation as a cultural institution that has historically contributed to the emancipation of women. The noncanonical *Karukaya* and *Tadatsu no Saemon* suggest that perhaps a significant reason for the inhibition of that emancipatory potential is the gaze of the *waki* as the overriding frame of containment.

4. The *Waki's* Gaze

In order to elucidate the degree to which the gaze of the male *waki* may contribute to the tendency to more closed readings of third- and fourth-category plays featuring women, I have conducted a survey of the types of *waki* appearing in the relevant plays of the *Kanze Hyakuban*, the core canon of the Kanze School. I choose this small corpus not to perpetuate the privileged status of that school but due to its simple utility for my purpose, in view of its dominant influential position. (Of the 250 plays included in *Yokyoku 250banshu*, the edition of Nonomura's *Yokyoku 350banshu* which is abridged by excluding *kusemai* and *bangaiyoku*, 209 are Kanze texts, including all of the plays treated here.)

For the record, here I first present two tables of those plays by category, and then further group them according to the patterns that emerge from that initial classification. Plays are listed in the order in which they appear in that collection.

Table 1. Types of *Waki* in Third-Category Plays Featuring Women in the *Kanze Hyakuban*

Play	Type of <i>Waki</i>
<i>Eguchi</i>	Buddhist priest on his way to Tennoji in Tsu
<i>Senju</i>	Warrior in the service of the shogun Minamoto Yoritomo
<i>Izutsu</i>	Buddhist priest on his way to Hatsuse in Yamato
<i>Yokihi</i>	Chinese astrologist
<i>Ohara Goko</i>	Courtier
<i>Yuya</i>	Taira no Munemori
<i>Kakitsubata</i>	Buddhist priest traveling from the capital to Mikawa
<i>Futari Shizuka</i>	Resident Shinto priest
<i>Matsukaze</i>	Buddhist priest traveling west from the capital
<i>Toboku</i>	Buddhist priest traveling west to the capital
<i>Nonomiya</i>	Buddhist priest touring the capital and surrounding area
<i>Hagoromo</i>	Fisherman
<i>Yoshino Tennin</i>	Local resident
<i>Soshiarai Komachi</i>	Heian poet Otomo no Kuronushi
<i>Kocho</i>	Buddhist priest traveling from Yoshino to the capital

Table 2. Types of *Waki* in Fourth-Category Plays Featuring Women in the *Kanze Hyakuban*

Play	Type of <i>Waki</i>
<i>Hanjo</i>	Former lover
<i>Miidera</i>	Resident priest of Buddhist temple
<i>Tamakazura</i>	Buddhist priest traveling to Hatsuse
<i>Kayoi Komachi</i>	Buddhist priest in retreat at Yase
<i>Kazuraki</i>	Buddhist priest
<i>Sumidagawa</i>	Ferryman
<i>Hanagatami</i>	Courtier
<i>Hyakuman</i>	Buddhist priest or layman
<i>Ominameshi</i>	Buddhist priest
<i>Miwa</i>	Buddhist priest
<i>Semimaru</i>	Courtier
<i>Dojoji</i>	Resident priest of Buddhist temple
<i>Aoi no Ue</i>	Buddhist priest
<i>Makiginu</i>	Court minister
<i>Kogo</i>	Courtier
<i>Kanawa</i>	Yin-yang master Abe no Seimei
<i>Hibariyama</i>	Minister of the Right
<i>Kinuta</i>	Husband

The ratio of this group of plays to the whole collection is as follows.

Table 3. Ratio of *Kanze Hyakuban* plays featuring women in third to fifth categories

Category	Number of plays featuring women included in collection	Number in entire category included in collection	Ratio within collected category
Third	15	16 (out of canonical 42)	94
Fourth	18	42 (out of canonical 86)	43

What implications might be drawn from these statistics?

Of the 15 plays featuring women in the third category included in this collection, the group of seven Buddhist priests is by far the most salient cluster, comprising nearly half. Other character types include two warriors, a Chinese astrologist, a courtier, a Shinto priest, a fisherman, a local resident, and a poet. This would suggest that the impact of the concentrated presence of the Buddhist priests likely has a significant effect in defining viewer expectations and conventional interpretation.

Of the 18 plays featuring women in the fourth category included in this collection, half (nine) are Buddhist priests, again forming the most salient cluster. Other character types include three (Japanese) courtiers, two (Japanese) court ministers, one Chinese courtier, one former lover, one husband, one villager, one ferryman, one servant, and a yin-yang master.

Next, in order to observe the power dynamics between these Buddhist priests and female characters, I have created two tables showing the main characters and conclusions of the plays in this small corpus.

Table 4. Conclusions of Third-Category Plays Featuring Buddhist Priests as *Waki* and Feminine *Shite* in the *Kanze Hyakuban*

Play and Main Character (Before/After)	Conclusion
<i>Eguchi</i> Villager / Ghost of courtesan	<i>I will leave you now, she cries, revealed as the bodhisattva Fugen, the All-Wise. (Tyler 81)</i>
<i>Izutsu</i> Villager / Ghost of faithful wife	<i>His robe and headdress conceal the woman, show me a man... there before me, and so dear! I see myself, yet still I love him! Departed lover in phantom form... the dream breaks into day. (Tyler 131-32)</i>
<i>Kakitsubata</i> Spirit of iris	<i>kakitsubata whose heart of enlightenment unfurls truly, in this moment trees, grasses and all the earth acquire with her enlightenment's fruit and with this she vanishes. (Klein 79)</i>
<i>Matsukaze</i> Ghosts of salt makers	<i>wrongful clinging brings you this, our dream. In your kindness, give us comfort! It was autumn rain you heard, but this morning see: pining wind alone lingers on. (Tyler 203-04)</i>
<i>Toboku</i> Villager / Ghost of Izumi Shikibu	<i>Though men might think The lamp-lit Hojo Hall To be the 'Burning House,' In truth it is the Lotus-Seat, Where now Lady Izumi dwells. (Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkokai 89)</i>
<i>Nonomiya</i> Villager / Spirit of Lady Rokujo, character in <i>The Tale of Genji</i>	<i>May she at long last find her way forever out the Burning Mansion's gate. (Tyler 214)</i>
<i>Kocho</i> Resident of the capital / Spirit of butterfly	<i>Drawn to the Law, one may achieve fruition. The dance of the butterfly and the dance of the bodhisattva leave their traces this spring night and as the clouds break at dawn, the butterfly's wings fade into the mist. (Author)</i>

Table 5. Conclusions of Fourth-Category Plays Featuring Buddhist Priests as *Waki* and Feminine *Shite* in the *Kanze Hyakuban*

Play and Main Character (Before/After)	Conclusion
<i>Miidera</i> Mother of lost child	<i>Oh! Blessed be the bell! Together they went home, And ever after lived together in wealth and happiness unending. Such is the reward of filial piety!</i> (<i>Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkokai Vol. 3, 74-75</i>)
<i>Tamakazura</i> Villager / Spirit of Tamakazura, character in <i>The Tale of Genji</i>	<i>Casting off the thrall of delusion, Tamakazura's soul attains the jewel of Truth, and the long dream came to an end. (Goff 124)</i>
<i>Kayoi Komachi</i> Villager / Ghosts of Ono no Komachi and Captain Fukakusa	<i>Ono no Komachi and Shosho the Captain Together have entered the Way of Buddhahood. (Kato 62)</i>
<i>Kazuraki</i> Villager / Deity of Mt. Kazuraki	<i>Oh, what shame! How mortifying! Morn approaches with its all-revealing light. Before the day dawns on Ivy-Bound Mountain... Within the rock cave the deity disappears. (Shimazaki 108)</i>
<i>Hyakuman</i> Mother of lost child	<i>How fortunate to be blessed by the power of the Law! My prayers have been answered. And so they joyfully returned to the capital. (Author)</i>
<i>Ominameshi</i> Villager / Ghosts of Yorikaze and wife	<i>Wife: The fragility of a woman's heart: it is because I left the capital yearning for one man alone that my resentful thoughts are even more profound as I hurl myself into the depths of the Life-Releasing River. (Brown 28)</i> ... <i>Husband: Cursed devils of sexual infidelity incite me, then reproach me, torturing my body... Ominameshi, upon your dewy calyx tied to the lotus flower pedestal, I beseech you: let me float up to Pure Land paradise, send my sins to the surface and deliver me from them! (Brown 28-31)</i>
<i>Miwa</i> Villager / Deity of Mt. Miwa	<i>The deities of Ise and Miwa are but one being in two forms. What is left to tell?... From sacred revelation awakening, to take unwilling leave. (Bethe 38)</i>
<i>Dojoji</i> Dancer / Demon	<i>Defeated by our prayers, behold the serpent fall! Her body burns in her own fire. She leaps into the river pool, into the waves of the River Hitaka, And there she vanishes. The priests, their prayers granted, return to the temple. (Keene 250-51)</i>
<i>Aoi no Ue</i> Spirit of Lady Rokujo, character in <i>The Tale of Genji</i>	<i>At the sound of the incantation, the demon heart is quelled; in the form of forgiveness, mercy, and compassion, the welcoming bodhisattvas descend. Salvation and spiritual release are received with deepest gratitude. (Goff 138-139)</i>

Of the seven third-category plays featuring Buddhist priests as *waki* and feminine *shite* in Table 4, four feminine figures are shown achieving enlightenment, in *Eguchi*, *Kakitsubata*, *Toboku* and *Kocho*. But it must be noted that only two of these characters are mortal women, the courtesan of *Eguchi* and Izumi Shikibu in *Toboku*. The other two feminine figures are the spirit of the iris and the spirit of the butterfly, although there is subtext suggesting human analogies for both. In the other three plays, there is no particularly strong sense of condemnation but rather self-deprecation (*Matsukaze*), positive hope (*Nonomiya*), or a strong suggestion of identification, not only between the faithful wife and her husband but between the priest and the ghost (*Izutsu*). But the woman in *Nonomiya* is a fictional character, and the historical existence of the latter three characters (together with that of the courtesan of *Eguchi*) is not much more likely. Only Izumi Shikibu is a known historical entity. (I nominally distinguish between human and nonhuman or fictional characters using the tags “ghost” and “spirit,” but it should be noted that the term

“ghost” should be interpreted broadly. It is not always clear whether the apparition is intended as the spirit of the deceased returning to the mortal world of their own volition or whether it is a figment of the *waki*’s imagination.

Of the nine fourth-category plays featuring Buddhist priests as *waki* and feminine *shite* in Table 5, again one is a historical figure, and interestingly, again she is a poet (Ono no Komachi in *Kayoi Komachi*), which is not to say that the drama is a depiction of a historical incident any more than the drama of *Toboku*. We again have two fictional characters, in *Tamakazura* and *Aoi no Ue*. The next notable feature is two feminine deities, in *Kazuraki* and *Miwa*. *Miidera* and *Hyakuman* also form a pair of mothers of lost children. The remaining two plays are less amenable to such grouping. In *Ominameshi*, as in *Kayoi Komachi*, the couple actually appears together, a very rare occurrence in Noh. The dancer in *Dojoji* bears some similarity to the mothers of *Miidera* and *Hyakuman* in that, like the mothers, it is possible that she is only adopting the pretense as a means of accomplishing a particular personal goal (revenge, a very different goal from that of the two mothers). But here again multiple interpretations are possible. Her action may not have been one of premeditated revenge. She may have been trying to follow her better instincts and sincerely rejoicing at the installation of the temple bell, but only unwillingly possessed by the spirit of jealousy. This alternative interpretation is supported by conventional readings of other similar plays such as *Adachigahara*.

Those are the primary groupings in terms of characterization. What of the power dynamics between the women and the *waki*? The connection in *Miidera* and *Hyakuman* is incidental, with no perceived need or direct appeal for spiritual salvation. But there is a hint of a power game in *Hyakuman*, as the *waki* realizes the woman is the mother of the orphaned boy but remains silent in order to continue enjoying her performance. In the end, she rebukes him for his cruelty but forgives him. In both *Kazuraki* and *Miwa*, the feminine deities represent Shinto while the *waki* represents Buddhism, but the power dynamics are different. The Buddhist ascetic is dominant in *Kazuraki*, while the deity of *Miwa* dazzles the awed priest. *Aoi no Ue* is similar to *Kayoi Komachi* in its history as an early work from the formative period of the art as well as its use of a literary figure for a basically moralistic message, while *Tamakazura* is closer to the more sophisticated Komachi plays in its exploitation of poetic metaphor to describe complex psychological states, the anguish caused by moral dilemmas being more important than the morals themselves.

Komachi is treated with a range of dizzying extremes in Noh. Treatment tends more to the sublime (*Omu Komachi*, *Sekidera Komachi*, *Sotoba Komachi*) in a sophisticated application of the Zen philosophy of *shiki soku ze kuu*, *kuu soku ze shiki* (form is ultimately emptiness, emptiness is ultimately form). In literary context, *Kayoi Komachi* is largely a relic of the early formative period of Noh, and the play is not viewed as reflective of its dominant treatment of her.

With *Ominameshi* and *Dojoji*, we would appear to be in the realm of morals. Two sets of lines from *Ominameshi* are given in Table 5 as aids in analyzing the masculine-feminine dynamic. A special point to be noted here about the relationship between the *waki* and the woman (she is technically the *shite-tsure*, companion to the *shite*, her husband), is that after the couple tells the *waki* the story of her suicide, the wife sits next to the *waki* and listens together with him as the ghost of her husband continues his tale of how he followed her in death (Bethe 280).

But while concluding lines may certainly have particular force, our goal here in exploring this small corpus is to confirm the value of rhetorical literacy, not only knowledge of dominant interpretation but awareness of the degree to which a work is open to alternative perspectives. That degree of openness is modulated by a number of factors. Some of those factors are internal to the work. But many are external and change according to the times. For example, the concept of the male gaze was first explicated by Laura Mulvey in 1975. Since then it has been critiqued by others and refined by Mulvey herself. This discussion is based on my understanding of the most useful aspects of that analytical tool, which in my view is still largely valid. Rhetorical literacy is thus particularly concerned with identifying areas open to intervention that might work toward a less literal, more open interpretation.

5. Conclusion

On the occasion of the 1988 revival of *Tadatsu no Saemon*, Noh master Otsuki Bunzo made the following statement. “History will judge the significance of our work. But it is without question we ourselves who, one by one, create that history. We must not simply await the judgment of history; rather with each opportunity to perform, and to repeat that performance, we must continue our efforts to create new Noh to suit the times. We must never forget that it is the collective accumulation of such effort and action that gives birth to history” (Otsuki 1989, cited in Yokota 1997).

There are only three plays in the *Kanze Hyakuban* that do not call for a *waki*, all battle plays: *Kosode Soga*, *Youchi Soga*, and *Hashi Benkei*. In reviving two rare plays which dispense with the *waki* and thereby removes his potentially oppressive, authoritative gaze, and which further explicitly question the boundaries of gender, Otsuki and his ensemble took a major step toward liberating the emancipatory potential of the art of Noh. Even if this survey has not led us to any particularly egregious examples of overt sexism, the awareness of the potential of the male *waki* – female *shite* power dynamic inspired by this perspective has certainly reconfirmed the value of rhetorical literacy to liberate readers and spectators from the sort of binaristic thinking based on facile heuristics which Daniel Kahneman warns of in *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.

Within a year of the revival of *Tadatsu no Saemon*, Noh master Kanze Yoshinobu, representing the troupe that performed at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. on the occasion of the Daimyo art exhibit, publicly stated his conviction that non-Japanese and Japanese are equally capable of understanding the art of Noh, suggesting that the distance in time between modern and medieval Japan is as significant as the distance in space across oceans and national borders. His statement stands as a powerful corrective to any jealous nationalistic tendency to patrol the territory of traditional Japanese culture. And Noh master Sakai Otoshige, who was the head of that ensemble, publicly takes the position that women artists will surely establish their own art fully maximizing their own potential (Sakai and Kodama 1994).

How might the dynamics of the stage, and of the art, change if the *waki* were a woman? The question of whether eclectic artists and spectators today seeking emancipatory forms of representation will find the world of Noh conducive to such projects and tastes is an open one. What is important is that these significant steps have been taken toward making the art more accessible to those who so choose.

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