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Embodied Rhetoric and the Culture of Fear: Terror in the Art of Noh

Gerry Yokota

Introduction

Recent research in online discourse calls attention to a rapid rise in the trend toward hostile polarization (Bail, 2021; Klein, 2023; Ressa, 2022). Analysts identify a phenomenon they have come to call a “culture of fear,” with online discourse communities increasingly troubled by extremists who dominate a wide range of spaces, posting divisive rants that drown out and drive out moderate voices (Linke and Smith, 2009). How might attention to the power of embodied rhetoric serve as an antidote to this escalating alienation, disempowerment, and despair?

To explore this question, in this study I examine a selection of plays from the fifth category of Noh drama. I choose to focus on this dramatic genre due to its characteristic art of embodiment of psychological states such as fear. I choose to focus on English translations of Japanese literature in the hope that the bilingual juxtaposition may not only shed some light on cultural differences in the use of embodied rhetoric but also challenge the xenophobic toxicity that comes from monocultural education, experience, and values. This group of some fifty plays commonly features the conquest of terrifying demons. As a traditional performing art that has been regularly performed for over six centuries, Noh is a precious source of perennial wisdom for dealing effectively with the universal emotion of fear of the Other.

The Social Context

As a scholar with privileged access to academic resources, I believe in the potential of applied cognitive linguistics as a powerful tool to aid in the development of effective rhetorical strategies for discursive intervention in contemporary social issues. Currently, I am particularly concerned about rising xenophobia around the world, such as the violent overreach of ICE in the U.S. (Ray and Sanchez, 2026) and hate speech and violent acts against immigrants and minorities in Japan, such as arson in the Utoro community of ethnic Koreans in Kyoto (Goto, 2025; Tomita, 2026). Over the years, I have found the art of Noh to offer deep insight into issues such as the representation of gender, and poetic language that has the power to move hardened hearts. And so, I have been prompted once again to take an interdisciplinary approach to Noh as I seek to formulate a response to news about issues such as racism and nationalism, a response that might promote more mindful, nonviolent communication about this disturbing issue.

Analytical Approach

Because cognitive overload is a prime factor in the desensitization that leads to dehumanization and xenophobia, I have high expectations for the application of the concept of embodied rhetoric. *Philosophy in the Flesh* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson was published in 1999, but is still for me the fundamental classic in the field, and I believe it is worth revisiting in order to refresh our grasp of its paradigm-shifting premise, definitively disproving even the slightest possibility of a Cartesian split in the workings of the human mind.

Philosophy in the Flesh opens by declaring three major findings of cognitive science.

- The mind is inherently embodied.
- Thought is mostly unconscious.
- Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 3)

Even the simplest primary metaphors are clearly based on embodied categorization. As Lakoff and Johnson remind us, “Even the amoeba categorizes the things it encounters into food or non-food, what it moves toward or moves away from. The amoeba cannot choose whether to categorize. It just does” (p. 17).

Because the act of categorization is also closely related to dehumanization and xenophobia, as we sort our fellow human beings into who belongs on the inside and who belongs on the outside, I find the art of Noh to be a promising source of wisdom precisely because it brings centuries of tradition to bear on patterns in our

perception of others and our treatment of them. As Naomi Klein writes in her 2023 book *Doppelganger*, “Performing and partitioning and projecting are the individual steps that make up the dance of avoidance” (p. 323).

The Basic Corpus

The classical repertoire of Noh is traditionally divided into five categories, generally based on the nature of the main character. The five main character types are deities, warrior ghosts, women, real-life conflicts, and demons. The demon plays of the fifth category are traditionally divided further into five subcategories according to the type of dance performed by the main character. The major trends in each of those subcategories are first summarized here.

The 23 plays in the *hataraki* group feature dynamic mimetic action such as warriors battling with monsters.

The 18 plays in the *semi-hataraki* group feature relatively less dynamic, though no less intense, mimetic action such as Buddhist priests overcoming demons with prayer.

The seven plays in the *haya-mai* group feature concentrated expressions of human nobility.

The two plays in the *taiko chūnomai* group feature light-hearted actions of benevolent spirits.

The three other unclassified plays feature benevolent supernatural spirits.

Limitations of space prevent me from treating the full fifth-category corpus of 53 plays, and so I have narrowed it down to a group of 12 significant plays based on two criteria. The first criterion is the incidence of the common disembodied noun *osore* (fear), verb *osoruru* (fear), or adjective *osoroshi* (fearsome). These expressions occur in 26 plays. I further confine my attention to those plays that are available in English translation, with the rationale that analysis of the choices in translation of significant terms may lead to some additional insights about multicultural expressions of fear in intercultural communication. Here I give brief summaries of each of the 12 plays in the resulting corpus. The plays are ordered and initially treated according to the dance subcategory, in alphabetical order within each subcategory, as they are introduced in Komparu (1983). There are five *hataraki* plays, five *semi-hataraki* plays, one *haya-mai* play, and one unclassified play. Quotes from the original Japanese are based on the online database *UTAH: Digital Corpus of Noh Plays*, edited by Takahashi Yasumitsu.

Summaries of the Five Hataraki Plays

Act I of *Ikarikazuki* opens with a traveling priest come to Dannoura, where he meets a boatman who tells him about the exploits performed by Taira Noritsune at the Battle of Dannoura. In Act II, the ghost of Taira Tomomori, the elder brother of Noritsune, appears together with the ghosts of Niidono, grandmother to the child emperor Antoku, and her lady-in-waiting. Together, they tell the tale of how Niidono took the life of Antoku together with her own, as advised by Tomomori when the Taira clan lost the battle. The ghost of Tomomori then recounts his own suicide by drowning with an anchor.

Act I of *Kokaji* opens with an imperial envoy who calls on the swordsmith Munechika to commission him to make a sword for the emperor. After Munechika prays at a local shrine to the fox deity, a mysterious youth appears and promises aid. Act II opens with Munechika preparing his forge, whereupon the fox deity appears and helps him make the blade.

Act I of *Ōeyama* opens with Minamoto Raikō and his companions disguising themselves as *yamabushi* priests for an imperial mission to Ōeyama to conquer a demon that is terrorizing the capital. The demon first appears to them in the daytime in the form of a child, but in Act II, the warriors surprise him at night, when he appears in demonic form, and slay him.

Act I of *Shōkun* opens with an old Chinese couple lamenting the loss of their daughter Shōkun, an imperial concubine, who has been presented to a barbarian king in a diplomatic exchange. In Act II, the mirror they have set up in front of a willow tree she planted in their garden as a memento at parting magically reveals the images of Shōkun and the king, who bemoans the demonic appearance of his reflection.

Act I of *Tsuchigumo* opens with Raikō on his sickbed, visited and then attacked by a priest who turns out to be a demon in disguise. Raikō defends himself with his sword and the demon retreats, leaving a trail of blood. In Act II, Raiko's followers track down the assailant and kill it.

Summaries of the Five Semi-hataraki Plays

In Act I of *Kumasaka*, a traveling priest meets a local priest who offers him lodging for the night. The host turns out to be a ghost in disguise, the spirit of Kumasaka, a violent robber who was slain by the young Minamoto Yoshitsune when he attacked the party Yoshitsune was traveling with. In Act II, the spirit confesses his sins and begs for the priest's prayers.

In Act I of *Kurozuka* (also known as *Adachigahara*), priests traveling through Adachigahara beg shelter for a night of a local woman. She lets them in, and then after responding to their request to show how her spinning wheel works, says she will go to gather firewood as the night is cold. She asks them not to look in the back room, but their servant ignores her and discovers it is filled with corpses. As they try to flee, she returns, transformed by rage at their transgression, but is finally overcome by their prayers in Act II.

In Act I of *Nomori*, a traveling priest meets a field watchman and asks about a nearby pool of water. The watchman replies that it is also known as the watchman's mirror due to its reflection, and that a local watchman once used it to help an emperor on a hunting expedition recover his lost hawk. The man also explains the legend of another mirror that is actually used by a demon who appears as a watchman by day and a demon by night. In Act II, the demon appears with the mirror, which reflects all corners of the cosmos, from heaven to hell.

In Act I of *Nue*, a mysterious boatman tells a traveling priest about the legendary monster that once haunted an emperor until it was slain by the famed archer Minamoto Yorimasa. In Act II, the spirit of the creature appears and re-enacts the agony of its death.

In Act I of *Sesshōseki*, a traveling priest is warned not to approach a rock that emits toxic fumes. The woman who warns him tells him that the rock is haunted by an evil spirit who once took on human disguise to attack an emperor. In Act II, when the priest says prayers for the evil spirit, the rock splits in two and the demon appears. Pacified by the priest's prayers, the demon promises to do no more harm.

Summary of the Haya-mai Play

Act I of *Matsuyama Tengu* opens with the poet-priest Saigyō, who has traveled to Matsuyama to pay his respects at the tomb of the Retired Emperor Sutoku, offering a poem in consolation. When he asks a local man about Sutoku's final days, the man mentions that the exiled emperor frequently fell into a rage at the injustice of his punishment, and those fits of rage attracted goblins called *tengu*. In Act II, Sutoku's ghost appears to express his pleasure at Saigyō's poem but then is again possessed with rage, until a host of *tengu* appears to comfort him.

Summary of the Unclassified Play

Act I of *Yamamba* opens with a dancer on a pilgrimage. When night suddenly falls, the dancer is offered shelter by a woman who asks her to sing a song about a mountain crone, the performance for which the dancer became famous. In Act II, the real Yamamba appears and performs a dance demonstrating her life in the mountains.

In the next section, I will trace the incidence of a primary keyword related to the theme of fear and begin tracing its varying function and significance in this small but diverse corpus.

Primary Keywords in Context

For the initial categorization of the incidence of the primary keyword cluster (*osore*, *osoruru*, and *osoroshi*) in each of these 12 plays, in this section I provide the context for each instance, to be followed by an analysis of trends.

Fear in the Five Hataraki Plays

In *Ikarikazuki*, the adjective *osoroshi* is used twice. It is first used in Act I by the boatman to describe the dangers of the local sea (*osoroshiki tokoro*). It is then used by Niidono in Act II to describe the fear she sensed in the child Emperor (*sasuga osoroshi to oboshikeru ka*).

In *Kokaji*, the verb *osoruru* is used once, by the youth in Act I who appears to encourage Munechika by recounting legends of famous demon-quelling swords (*mōryō kishin ni itaru made tsurugi no yaiba no hikari ni osorete*).

In *Ōeyama*, the verb is used once, and the adjective is used once, both in Act I. The verb is used by the chorus, speaking for the demon asking his guests not to fear it (*osoretamawade ware ni nare*). The adjective is used in the following line as the demon tries to further disarm his guests by saying he was afraid of them at first, too (*osoroshige naredo narete tsuboi wa yamabushi*).

Shōkun contains the highest number of incidences of the primary keyword, a total of six times. The adjective is used four times and the verb twice, all in Act II. The first three incidences of the adjective are exclamations by Shōkun's mother at the sight of the king, who she fears is a demon (*osoroshiya oni to ya iwan omokage; meido no oni ka osoroshiya; sugata o miru mo osoroshiya*). The next two incidences, both verbs, are spoken by the apparition of the king, who expresses sympathy for the mother's fear (*somo osoruru beki; osoretamau mo ara dōri ya*). The last incidence, an adjective, is chanted by the chorus for the king, when he looks at his own reflection in the mirror and acknowledges how frightful it is (*osoroshikarikeru kaotsuki kana*).

In *Tsuchigumo*, the verb *osoruru* is used once, in Act II, to narrate how the warriors succeeded in slaying the demon by catching it in a moment of weakness, its fear at the flashing blade of the warrior's sword (*tsurugi no hikari ni sukoshi osoruru keshiki o bin ni kirifuse*).

Fear in the Five Semi-hataraki Plays

In *Kumasaka*, the verb *osoruru* appears once, in Act II, when the chorus narrates how Yoshitsune showed no fear (*sukoshi mo osoruru keshiki naku*).

In *Kurozuka*, the adjective appears twice, in Act II. In the first instance, Yūkei's companion laments having met such a plight (*osoroshiya kakaru ukime o michinoku no*). In the second instance, the chorus narrates the horror of the sight of the demon waving its iron rod (*atari o haratte osoroshiya*).

In *Nomori*, the verb is used once and the adjective is used once. The chorus uses the verb in speaking for the watchman at the very end of Act I, refusing the priest's request to see the mirror, claiming he would be too frightened (*mite wa osore ya shitamawan*). The priest uses the adjective at the beginning of Act II. When the demon appears with the mirror, the priest expresses his terror at the way the mirror reflects the demon's eyes (*osoroshiya uchibi kagayaku kagami no omote ni utsuru kishin no me no hikari*).

In *Nue*, the adjective is used three times. At the end of Act I, it is used twice by the chorus in the narration of the legend of how the corpse of the slain Nue was placed in a dugout boat and set into the river to float out to sea (*osoroshi nandomo orokanaru katachi narikeri; osoroshiya susamashiya*). It is used by the priest at the beginning of Act II to describe the terrible sight of the apparition (*osoroshi no arisama yana*).

In *Sesshōseki*, the adjective is used twice and the verb once. In Act I, the woman first uses the adjective to describe the stone (*kaku osoroshiki sesshōseki to mo*). The chorus then uses it at the end of Act I to speak for the woman, telling the priest to wait for a vision after night falls and not be afraid (*osoretamawade machitamae*). The adjective is used by the chorus at the beginning of Act II to express horror at the appearance of the demon from the split stone (*sekkon tachimachi arawareidetari osoroshiya*).

Fear in the Haya-mai Play

In *Matsuyama Tengu*, the adjective is used by the chorus as a collective exclamation at the sight of the angry ghost of Sutoku (*gekirin no onsugata atari o haratte osoroshiya*).

Fear in the Unclassified Play

Yamamba includes the second highest incidence of the primary keyword, a total of five times: the adjective is used three times and the verb twice. There is only one instance, an adjective, in Act I; the four other instances appear in Act II. The adjective used at the end of Act I by the dancer is an exclamation of fright, when the mysterious woman insistently asks her to sing and the dancer has an anxious foreboding of what may happen if she refuses (*kono ue wa tokaku ji shinaba osoroshiya*). Act II includes a complex mix. The dancer first uses the adjective as an exclamation of fright at the appearance of Yamamba out of the dark (*osoroshiya tsuki mo ki fukaki yamakage yori sono sama ayashitaru kaobase wa*). Yamamba then uses the verb to ask the dancer not to fear her (*ware ni na osoretamai so to yo*). The dancer then uses the verb to express how she still fears Yamamba despite the reassurance (*kono ue wa osororinagara*). Finally, the chorus uses the adjective to speak for the dancer as she recalls a frightening old ghost story about a woman who was eaten by a demon (*oni hitokuchi no amenoyo ni kaminari narisawagi osoroshiki*).

Trends in the Use of Primary Keywords

Significant trends in these 29 instances of the primary keyword across the 12 focus plays may be summarized as follows, in groupings where they have been found to share significant similarities. I begin with the simpler examples and proceed in the direction of increasing psychological complexity.

Direct expressions of fear

There are actually only five plays where the primary keyword is used by a character to directly express their own feelings of fear, for a total of ten instances.

The mother in the *hataraki* play *Shōkun* uses it three times to express her fright at the sight of the ghost of the foreign king who took her daughter in marriage as part of a diplomatic exchange.

1. Oh, I am afraid! It is a demon!
2. You resemble a demon out of hell. You frighten me!
3. It frightens me just to look at you! (Sesar, 1970)

In the *hataraki* play *Kurozuka*, the priests express their fright first at the sight of the bloody chamber, and then at the sight of the demon waving her iron rod.

4. Oh, how terrible!
5. Oh, how terrible! (Shimazaki, 2012)

In the *semi-hataraki* play *Nomori*, the priest expresses his terror when the watchman appears in his demonic form.

6. Oh, terror! (Tyler, 2013)

In the *semi-hataraki* play *Nue*, fear is expressed both by the chorus as a collective voice to the witness of the slaying and disposal of the Nue, and by the priest when the spirit of the ghost of the slain Nue returns from the dead.

7. Far, far beyond what “terrible” could express.
8. How horrible! How very terrifying!
9. Oh, what a terrible sight! (Shimazaki, 2012)

In the *semi-hataraki* play *Sesshōseki*, the chorus expresses the collective fear of the witnesses to the breaking open of the death-stone.

10. Oh, horror! (Chamberlain, 1888)

Reassurance, praise, and awe

The majority of instances are actually indirect metadiscourse *about* fear rather than direct expressions of a character's feelings. I begin with the more positive examples. First, there are five instances where the rhetoric of fear is used to offer reassurance or praise, or to express awe.

In the *hataraki* play *Kokaji*, the youth in Act I encourages the hesitant Munechika by recounting tales of famous swords that have effectively quelled demons.

11. And all the ghosts and devils feared the flashing blade. (Sadler, 2010)

In the *hataraki* play *Tsuchigumo*, fear is mentioned in the choral praise for the skill of the warriors in conquering the demon spider.

12. The chance they took that the spider feared the flashing of the sword. (Suzuki, 1922)

In the *semi-hataraki* play *Kumasaka*, the chorus tells the tale of Kumasaka's death at the hand of Yoshitsune while the ghost re-enacts the scene in a mimetic dance.

13. Master Ushiwaka, without betraying the slightest air of fear, draws his small sword and brandishing it, fights with them. (Shimazaki, 2012)

In the *haya-mai* play *Matsuyama Tengu*, the chorus chants a collective expression of awe when the ghost of the exiled former emperor flies into a rage as he relives the injustice he felt at his exile.

14. The royal figure in fierce anger strikes those in his presence with terrifying awe.
(Shimazaki, 2012)

In the unclassified play, *Yamamba*, Yamamba reassures the anxious dancer.

15. Do not be afraid! (Tyler, 1992)

Expressions of concern for fearful others

Next, there are five examples of the rhetoric of fear being used in expressions of concern for fearful others.

In the *hataraki* play *Ikarikazuki*, Niidono talks about the fearful look on Antoku's face in an expression of her concern for him.

16. As might be imagined, the Emperor was frightened. (Gabriel, 1988)

In the *hataraki* play *Shōkun*, the foreign king first asks her mother why she is afraid, not understanding the reason. Then after he looks into the mirror and sees himself, he acknowledges her fear.

17. But why should I frighten you so?
18. Truly a fearsome sight!
19. I understand your fright.
20. What a frightful visage! (Sesar, 1970)

Foreshadowing

There is one example, in the *hataraki* play *Ikarikazuki*, where reference to a dangerous location serves as foreshadowing of the identity of the character in disguise and the vision of the fateful battle soon to be revealed.

21. This frightful place, between Moji and Akama, where sea and wind are rough. (Gabriel, 2013)

Ambivalence

The next four instances are all from the unclassified play *Yamamba*, and are part of a complex description of an uneven process of struggling with ambivalence. The first two instances occur before Yamamba tries to reassure the dancer. The dancer first expresses anxiety about the future, and then she expresses her terror at her first sight of Yamamba. Yamamba then encourages the dancer not to be afraid and she tries, but still hesitates, and continues to be tormented by the recollection of a ghost story about a man-eating demon.

22. I tremble to think what horrors might assail me.
23. O terror! Moon-hidden deeps of mountain gloom now yield a shape alien to see!
24. Come, then, though I tremble still...
25. A demon in one gulp, that stormy night, swallowed a cowering girl as thunder roared – ah, terrifying! (Tyler, 1992)

Deception, deflection, and dissociation

There are four instances across three plays where the idea of fear seems to be being explicitly invoked for deceptive purposes. But there is also a strong suggestion that the explanation may not be so simple.

In the *hataraki* play *Ōeyama*, for example, there is an intriguingly ambiguous scene where the demon in human disguise asks his guests, likewise in disguise, not to be afraid of him. He further claims that *he* is afraid of *them* in a manner that suggests that he is seeking to disarm them. The spectator who knows he is a demon in disguise may jump to the conclusion that this is an act of deception. But if he is in such a disarming youthful guise, why should he think they are afraid of him? Might the first line not rather be a hint of revelation? If so, why? Likewise for the second line. Demons are known to be afraid of yamabushi priests due to their powers of exorcism. By confessing his fear, could the demon not again be hinting at his identity, and again, if so, why?

26. If you could come but know me and not be so afraid...
27. I too was filled with fear when I first set eyes on you. (Horton, 1988)

In the *semi-hataraki* play *Nomori*, the watchman in human form seems to be using fear as an excuse to deflect the priest's request to see the demon's mirror. Or could there be some other reason for his avoidance?

28. Looking in a demon's mirror would only terrify you. (Tyler, 2013)

In the *semi-hataraki* play *Sesshōseki*, the woman in Act I speaks of the death-stone as if she has nothing to do with it, though she later reveals that she herself is the haunting demon in disguise. Is she engaging in deception as part of a plot to stage another attack, or is she warning the traveler as an act of good will?

29. What! hast thou not heard tell of [the terrible] Death-Stone and its fatal spell?
(Chamberlain, 1880; edit by author to supplement untranslated keyword)

In the next section, we will proceed to observe the interplay of this disembodied rhetoric with other rhetorical features.

Other Examples of Embodied, Disembodied, and Semi-Embodied Rhetoric

In the previous section, we observed how the 29 instances of the primary keyword could be grouped into six types of expression:

- direct expressions of fear;
- reassurances to comfort fearful others, praise for fearlessness, and awe at fearsomeness;
- expressions of concern for fearful others;
- foreshadowing of terrible events to come;
- ambivalence between fear and trust; and
- deception, deflection, and dissociation.

Next we will examine how this disembodied rhetoric is interwoven with embodied rhetoric, as well as with two significant instances of semi-embodied rhetoric.

The two verbs used in similar fashion to *osoruru* that I identify as semi-embodied rhetoric are *midaruru* (to lose control) and *sawagu* (to clamor). Though incidence is low, they merit mention because they might best be viewed as lying on a spectrum between disembodied and embodied rhetoric, being similarly abstract but often strongly evocative of a physical action or reaction. They occur in three *hataraki* plays and two *semi-hataraki* plays, which include the most vigorous mimetic dances, for a total of seven instances.

The *hataraki* play *Kokaji* includes one instance each of the transitive and intransitive *midaruru*/*midasu*. The first instance is chanted by the chorus in Act I to express Munechika's inner feeling of vacillation. The second instance is chanted by the chorus in Act II as it narrates the joint action of the fox deity and Munechika as they forge the blade.

1. *midaruru kokoro*, translated as "with mind uncertain"
2. *yaiba wa kumo o midashi*, translated as "in the form of clouds is the [uneven] pattern on the edge" (Sadler, 2010) (edit by author to supplement untranslated keyword)

The *hataraki* play *Shōkun* includes one instance of *midaruru*, spoken by Shōkun's parents.

3. *itoyanagi no omoi midaruru*, translated as "the memory tangles our hearts in sorrow like a willow in the wind" (Sesar, 1970)

The *hataraki* play *Tsuchigumo* includes one instance of *midaruru*, where the chorus narrates the actions of the warriors who attack the demon spider.

4. *midarekakarikereba*, translated as "the soldiers the spider [madly] surrounded and jumped upon it" (Suzuki, 1922) (edit by author for emphasis)

The *semi-hataraki* play *Kumasaka* includes one instance of *sawagu* and one instance of the Sinified pronunciation of *midaruru* (*ran*). *Sawagu* occurs in the choral amplification of the lines spoken by the ghost when he makes his entrance in Act II, evoking rising winds, restless clouds, and darkness. *Ran* occurs in the later choral narration of the ghost's re-enactment of his battle with Yoshitsune.

5. *shishi funjin ko rannyū*, translated as "a lion jumping up, a [wildly] rushing tiger" (edit by author for clarity)
6. *kozue konoma ya sawagu ran*, translated as "treetops and branches rustle aloud" (Shimazaki, 2012)

The *semi-hataraki* play *Sesshōseki* includes one instance of *sawagu*, describing the guests' behavior at the imperial feast in the capital when the demon, disguised as a concubine, attacked the emperor.

7. *kumo no uebito tachisawagi, shōmei toku to*, translated as "A light! a light! cry all the courtiers in tumultuous fright" (Chamberlain, 1888)

There are also limited (eight) occurrences of two additional disembodied adjectives for describing frightfulness, concentrated in just four plays. *Sugoshi* appears once in the *semi-hataraki* play *Sesshōseki* and twice in the unclassified play *Yamamba*. *Susamashi* appears once each in the *semi-hataraki* plays *Nue* and *Sesshōseki* and twice in the *semi-hataraki* play *Kurozuka*. It should be noted that, in the first six cases, the same character, 凄, is used for both *sugoshi* and *susamashi*, but the character 冷 is used for the last two instances of *susamashi*, accentuating the association between fear and chill or cold. This association also appears in the translation of *susamashi* in the fifth quote, even though the character used is 凄, not 冷.

1. *monosugoki aki no yūbe*, "the [dreadful] autumn light declines" (*Sesshōseki* in Chamberlain, 1888; edited by author to supplement untranslated keyword)
2. *ara monosugo no fukaya yana*, "Awesome they are, the plunging chasms" (*Yamamba* in Tyler, 1992)
3. *yobukodori no koe sugoki oriori ni*, "a little bird calls mournfully" (*Yamamba* in Tyler, 1992)

4. *susamashi ya*, “How very terrifying” (*Nue* in Shimazaki, 2012)
5. *monosusamashiki akikaze*, “Chill blows the blast” (*Sesshōseki* in Chamberlain, 1888; more literally, terrible autumn wind [author])
6. *kumo no keshiki susamashiku*, “The heav’nly plains are wrapp’d in clouds and darkness” (*Sesshōseki* in Chamberlain, 1888; more literally, “the view of the clouds is terrifying” [author])
7. *iu koe wa nao monosusamashiku*, “The fiendish voice shouting thus, sounds so horrifying” (*Adachigahara* in Shimazaki, 2012)
8. *iu koe wa nao susamashiki*, “The fiendish voice shouting thus, so horrifying” (*Adachigahara* in Shimazaki, 2012)

If we locate *osoruru/osoroshi*, *sugoshi*, and *susamashi* at the disembodied end of the rhetorical spectrum and *midaruru* and *sawagu* more centrally as semi-embodied, the most prominent embodied expressions of fear that appear at the opposite end of the spectrum are the base nouns *mune* (breast) and *kimo* (liver). They appear in four plays: one *hataraki*, two *semi-hataraki*, and one *haya-mai*. There are three instances of *mune* and four examples of *kimo*. But two of the instances of *mune* seem to have little to do with fear, so for the purposes of this study I will exclude them. Let me simply note that the two exceptions are both from *Kurozuka*. The first instance is used by the lonely woman in Act I, as she laments, “Not a moment of solace finds the weary mind” (Shimazaki, 2012), which does not directly translate the *n mune o yasumuru koto mo naku*. The second instance is spoken after the woman’s transformation into a demon and is used to express rage: “Heart-scorching anger blazes in flames” (Shimazaki, 2012), where *mune* is translated with the embodied rhetoric “heart.” It is intriguing to note how challenging these concrete nouns are to translate.

Here are the other five instances of *mune* and *kimo*.

In the *hataraki* play *Tsuchigumo*, Raikō uses the expression *mune* in the first act when he narrates his inner state as he lies on his sickbed in Act I.

1. *omoishizumu mi no mune o kurushimuru kokoro*, translated as “body and mind are full of pain” (Suzuki, 1922). (For the purposes of this study, perhaps more closely translated as “My heavy thoughts weigh down my body, and my heart tortures my breast.” *Mune* appears in addition to *mi* [body], not as an approximation.)

In the *semi-hataraki* play *Kurozuka*, *kimo* is used to express the terror of the priests discovering the bloody chamber. It could be translated as “gutted” to retain the original sense of an internal organ more closely.

2. *kokoro mo madoi, kimo o keshi*, translated as “Their minds in confusion, and stricken with terror” (Shimazaki, 2012)

Kimo (in its Sinitified form, *kan*) is also not directly translated in the passage from the *semi-hataraki* play *Nomori*, where the priest devotes himself to intense prayer for a vision of the demon’s mirror at the beginning of Act II. Here, it could be alternatively translated as “from the depths of my bowels” should closer adherence to the visceral language of the original be desired.

3. *kantan o kudaki inorikeri*, translated as “I shall pray with all the fierce faith at my command” (Tyler, 2013)

The original version of the *haya-mai* play *Matsuyama Tengu* included two instances of *kimo*, but the English translation is based on a later version, and so translations of these two instances are provided by the author as points of reference for the purpose of documenting embodied rhetoric in Japanese, but with the caveat that they should be excluded from consideration of how published English translations in circulation may indicate cultural differences in the use of embodied rhetoric.

4. At the end of Act I, the old man uses the expression *kimo ni meijite* (literally, impressed upon my liver) to say how deeply he is moved by the poem Saigyō offers at Sutoku’s tomb.
5. At the beginning of Act II, the ghost of Sutoku uses the same expression to convey how deeply he is moved by Saigyō’s poem.

I place these two embodiments at the far end of the spectrum because they are body parts, but there are other expressions that are not as wholly corporeal, namely the noun *namida* (tears) and the concomitant verb *naku* (cry), but would seem to warrant consideration as embodied rather than semi-embodied.

Tears may generally be more strongly associated with sadness than with fear, but given the context of this corpus, it may be assumed that most of the incidences here are mixtures of the two emotions. I note just two exceptions: the human watchman in *Nomori* recalling with nostalgia his memory of serving the emperor, and Saigyō praying at Sutoku's tomb in *Matsuyama Tengu*. Excluding those two cases, we can find six examples occurring in three plays.

The *hataraki* play *Ikarikazuki* contains two instances of *namida* that would be conventionally viewed as expressing not only sadness but also fear and/or awe, considering the context. The first comes in the telling of the tale of Tomomori advising Niidono to accompany the child emperor Antoku to his death, promising that he would also join them. The second describes Antoku's expression upon receiving this news. Incidentally, speaking of embodied rhetoric, it is interesting to note that the taboo against referring literally to any body part of a sovereign meant there was a whole separate vocabulary based on the image of a divine dragon taken from the Chinese rhetorical tradition, hence the expression *ryūgan*, literally "dragon face," instead of simply saying *kao*.

1. *namida o osaete notamaeba*, "Holding back tears, he spoke"
2. *ryūgan ni on-namida o ukamesasetamaite*, "Tears streamed down his face" (Gabriel, 1988)

Another *hataraki* play, *Shōkun*, also contains three instances of *namida* expressing mixed emotions, all on the part of the parents. The first is spoken by the mother; the other two are chanted by the chorus for both parents. They occur in Act I, before the mother's concentrated expressions of fear of the foreign king, so that fear would not seem to be connected, with the sadness rather at the loss of their daughter. But the context strongly implies another fear, the fear of dying before they ever get to see their daughter again. They speak extensively of old age, saying their lives as slender as a spider's thread. Their lines are full of images such as the setting sun, the tolling of the evening bell, the cold night wind, deep piles of fallen leaves, culminating with the idea of being "as the dust."

3. *namida no sode no tamadasuki*, "Our sleeves wet with tears"
4. *namida no kazu ya tsumoru ran*, "Tears still gather like dew upon our sleeves"
5. *namida no tsuyu no tsuki no kage*, "The moonlight glitters in our tears" (Sesar, 1970)

The context of the *semi-hataraki* play *Nue* also makes it clear that the tears of which the boatman speaks in Act I are at least as much from fear as from sadness.

6. *ukishizumu namida no nami no utsuhobune*, "Floating and sinking in tears that beat in waves, the dugout log" (Shimazaki, 2012)

Verbs for crying, being a physical action, should also be placed close to *mune*, *kimo*, and *namida* on the embodiment spectrum. In some rhetorical studies, it may be deemed necessary to distinguish between the homophones for human crying (泣く) and animal cries (鳴く), both pronounced *naku*. But for this study, where the monsters of the fifth category are often themselves viewed as embodiments of fear, and where there is a strong recurring theme of plants and animals viewed as sentient beings, I included both in my survey. I found only five instances of *naku* occurring in four plays, two human and three animal, and only two arguably included a mixture of fear: one human and one animal.

The instance of human weeping is by Niidono in the *hataraki* play *Ikarikazuki*. It occurs in a description of her appearance as she explained to the child emperor that they would be diving into the sea together to travel to the wonderful Dragon Palace.

1. *naku naku sōshitamaeba*, "Tear after tear trickled down her face as she spoke" (Gabriel, 1988)

The instance of an animal cry is from the *semi-hataraki* play *Nue*, where the chorus tells the tale of the slaying of the Nue. The fact that the English verb "cry" is commonly used to refer to both human weeping and animal cries facilitates the communication of the pathetic fallacy that characterizes the drama, blurring the distinction

as to whether the Nue caused fear and/or felt it.

2. *naku koe nue ni nitarikeri*, “It cried in a voice that resembled a nue” (Shimazaki, 2012)

As a point of reference, there is mention in the *haya-mai* play *Matsuyama Tengu* of a bird’s cry in a manner that fits the conventional theme of “man’s inhumanity to man,” a theme that is often rhetorically accentuated with pathetic fallacy. The instance in *Matsuyama Tengu* fits this pattern, as the choral narrative speaks of the warbler’s song moving one to a feeling of deep pathos. The inhumanity that forms the subtext of this play is the perceived injustice of the exile of Sutoku, who is considered one of the three great *onryō* or angry spirits of Japanese history, together with Taira Masakado and Sugawara Michizane.

The unexpected dearth of instances of the verb *naku* prompted me to consider what other embodied expressions might be being used, and so I pursued one more lead: the noun *koe* (voice), which might also fall on the embodied end of the spectrum, being produced as it is by physical movement. This search yielded 22 results, of which a full 17 were found to be associated with fear: not so much expressions of subjective fear, but often rather perception or responses to the fears of others. The 17 instances associated with fear were found over a range of seven plays: two of the five *hataraki* plays, three of the five *semi-hataraki* plays, the *haya-mai* play, and the unclassified play.

The two *hataraki* plays including instances of *koe* associated with fear are *Ikarikazuki* and *Tsuchigumo*. In *Ikarikazuki*, the chorus intones that the chorus uses it to describe how a war-cry pierced the air just as Niidono leapt overboard with the child emperor. The war-cry is not of itself an expression of fear, but rather a behavior for dealing with fear. Of the two instances in *Tsuchigumo*, the first occurs when the Peerless Warrior rushed to his master’s aid when he heard him cry out; here, the master’s voice is an expression of fear, a cry for help. The second occurs when the warriors are united in their mission by their leader’s battle-cry; like the war-cry in *Ikarikazuki*, this instance is an example of a behavior for dealing with fear.

1. *kokū ni toki no koe kikoyu*, “A war-cry pierces the air” (*Ikarikazuki* in Gabriel, 1988)
2. *on-koe no takaku kikoesōrō*, “As I heard your loud cry I have come”
3. *yobawarisakebu sono koe ni chikara o etaru*, “From his great cry, their courage all renewed” (*Tsuchigumo* in Suzuki, 1922)

The three *semi-hataraki* plays containing instances of *koe* associated with fear are *Kumasaka*, *Kurozuka*, and *Nue*: one instance in *Kumasaka*, one instance in *Kurozuka*, and three instances in *Nue*. The priest’s prayer in *Kumasaka* may conventionally be understood to include a mixture of emotions including fear as well as piety, especially since he has just been shown a frightening vision of a room full of weapons used by highway robbers in the area. The line from *Kurozuka* is self-explanatory. The association of the first line from *Nue* has already been discussed above as it also includes *naku*, and the same rationale applies to the second line from *Nue*. The third line from *Nue* functions in a similar way to the line from *Kumasaka*, as the priest relies on the sutra chanting for courage to deal with fear after hearing the terrifying legend.

4. *koebutsuji o ya nashinu ran*, “I chant aloud prayers for the departed soul” (*Kumasaka* in Shimazaki, 2012)
5. *iu koe wa nao monosusamajiku*, “The fiendish voice, shouting thus, sounds so horrifying” (*Kurozuka* in Shimazaki, 2012)
6. *naku koe nue ni nitarikeri*, “It cried in a voice that resembled a nue”
7. *ikue ni kiku wa nue no koe*, “Again and again one hears Nue’s shrill voice”
8. *minori no koe mo uranami mo*, “The voice of Sacred Law and the sound of sea waves” (*Nue* in Shimazaki, 2012)

The line from the *haya-mai* play *Matsuyama Tengu* also includes both *naku* and *koe*. Whereas *naku* carries a stronger connotation of emphasis on the transmitter, *koe* carries a stronger connotation of the effect on the receiver. So, while *naku* associates more strongly with the pathetic fallacy that the bird itself is making an appeal to humanity, *koe* associates more strongly with the listener’s hope that perpetrators of injustice will mend their ways, a desire for freedom mixed with fear that the world will never change. The quest for justice is a subtext that runs through many of these plays, but it is perhaps most salient in *Matsuyama Tengu* due to the exiled Sutoku’s fame as one of the three great *onryō*, as discussed above.

9. *naku uguisu no koe made mo tokoro kara aware o moyōsu*, “Even the voice of a bush warbler, singing at a place like this moves one to a feeling of great pathos” (Shimazaki, 2012)

Yamamba, the unclassified play, includes eight instances of *koe* associated with fear, and the subtext of a quest for justice strongly underlies all of them. The entire pretext for *Yamamba* revealing herself to the dancer is to complain about the dancer’s unfair appropriation of her story without giving her credit.

In the first quote, *Yamamba* declares that she might not have gotten so offended if the dancer had at least said some prayers aloud for her. The second is one of several examples of pathetic fallacy, as she suggests that creatures cry out in unison to be heard. This is an evocation of the common theme in Noh of voicelessness as an expression of suffering injustice, which is echoed in the third instance about the voice of the empty valley. The fourth and fifth instances likewise refer to the idea of listening to the voiceless, while the sixth instance evokes the image of a small bird with a disproportionately affective voice. The last two instances refer to the Chinese legend of the beating of a fulling block to express love, which was adapted in another Noh play to express resentment at perceived injustice. All relate to fear as examples of coping with the fear of powerlessness and victimization.

10. *koebutsuji o mo nashitamawaba*, “Had you commended me to all the Buddhas”
11. *yama no chōjū mo nakisoete koe o agero*, “Bird and beast cries rise”
12. *ichidō munashiki tani no koe*, “Awesome they are, the plunging chasms”
13. *museion o kiku tayori nari*, “Till through sound the ear hears silence”
14. *koe ni hibikanu tani mogana*, “Calls from the valley, wholly empty”
15. *yobukodori no koe sugoki*, “A little bird calls mournfully”
16. *sengoe mangoe*, “Thousand, million-voiced”
17. *kinuta ni koe*, “The fulling blocks beat as before” (Tyler, 1992)

It should also be noted that there are three cases where stage directions indicate the dramatic use of a disembodied voice. In the two *semi-hataraki* plays *Kumasaka* and *Sesshōseki* and in the unclassified play *Yamamba*, the main character starts addressing the traveler from behind the curtain at the end of the bridgeway in a performance technique called *yobikake* (hailing).

The Interplay of Embodied, Semi-embodied, and Disembodied Rhetoric

I will now take the insights accumulated from the art of Noh above and consider how they might be fruitfully applied to develop effective rhetorical strategies in response to the threat of xenophobia around the world. I will begin with areas closest to my own experience, but hope the theoretical foundations will render the proposed applications adaptable to a broader range of situations. I also hope that any of the basic rhetorical strategies referred to here can be adapted to suit various media, genres, and modes of communication, both online and off.

Queries about Fear from the Five Hataraki Plays

Ikarikazuki is a dramatic presentation not only of the deaths by drowning of Taira Tomomori, Niidono, and Antoku in Act II, where most of the rhetoric of fear occurs, but also the deaths of Taira Noritsune and the two Minamoto warriors, Aki Tarō and Jirō, who Noritsune took with him into the depths of the sea, as recounted in the tale told by the boatman (the ghost of Noritsune) in Act I. The play offers a prime opportunity to consider how such embodied dramas might be effectively used to disseminate the perennial wisdom of the *Tales of the Heike* and enjoin the world to realize that all things are impermanent, what flourishes must fade; the proud do not prevail for long, the mighty too in time succumb; that all are dust before the wind. The anchor with which Tomomori drowns himself is represented on the Noh stage by a huge stage property which he pulls up from the depths after Niidono and Antoku depart from this world. What might it serve to remind us of? The heavy weight of responsibility felt by Tomomori for the child emperor and his grandmother, and indeed for the nation he sought to protect? Or something else?

The fox deity in *Kokaji* sends a gentle youth with a message of reassurance before appearing himself to aid Munechika in the formidable task of forging a sword for an emperor. Might we learn something from this embodiment of kindness about the power of mediation in building trust? Might we learn something from the

images of the sword and cloud about cutting through self-deception? Might attention to the subliminal suggestion of a connection between clouds and spiders (both pronounced *kumo*) yield additional insights? And might we also reflect on the six centuries of history since this play was first composed and consider whether humanity still needs physical weapons to maintain peace?

It is not clear whether the expressions of fear used by the demon in disguise in *Ōeyama* are honest or feigned. Could we learn something from our engagement with these ambiguous situations about discerning between skepticism and cynicism? Might this be a cautionary tale about the inevitable aporia in any attempt to deceive?

The mother in *Shōkun* displays a deeply entrenched prejudice toward the foreigner, perceiving him automatically as frightening due to his different appearance. The foreigner responds with a simple question, not accusing her of prejudice but simply asking her why she is afraid of him, and takes the extra step toward mutual understanding by acknowledging her fear. How might the symbolic image of the mirror aid us in learning to recognize the sources of our own fears? What might it mean to acknowledge that this traditional drama demonstrates that the problematization of xenophobia is not a new phenomenon?

How should we interpret the demon spider in *Tsuchigumo*? As an external enemy to be eliminated or as a projection and embodiment of Raikō's own fears? Might this play serve as an opportunity for us all to examine our own fears and the needs that lie beneath them, including our need for safety and our perception of how to secure it? How might the symbolic image of the spider's web suggest ways for us to engage with the Internet?

Queries about Fear from the Five Semi-hataraki Plays

In the world of Noh, largely populated by gods, warriors, aristocrats, and demons, the story of the robber of *Kumasaka* stands out as an unusual example of the radical democracy of Buddhism, teaching that all living beings are worthy of salvation. As with *Ikarikazuki*, Minamoto Yoshitsune is a subliminal but nonetheless powerful entity in this play, as the ghost of the robber re-enacts his death at Yoshitsune's hand in a mimetic solo dance. Among Kumasaka's final lines are the words, "If I fight with weapons, I shall never prevail." The play serves as a stark reminder that in this age, we have the power to broadcast such messages easily. What choices will we make?

Like *Tsuchigumo*, *Kurozuka* also raises the question of whether the demon and her bloody chamber are real or projections of the travelers' own fears. The plays differ in that *Kurozuka* is also a profound exploration of the issues of temptation and trust, as the servant's curiosity leads him to break his promise to his host. What might the imaginary corpses embody? Comparison with the alternative stories in folklore and Kabuki also yield intriguing insights, as the woman in some traditions is portrayed not as evil but as a victim of an oppressor who forces her to commit her murderous deeds. What might these alternative perspectives teach us about justice and trust? And while our focus on the rhetoric of fear in this study has led us to tend to focus more on Act II of these two-act plays, further exploration reveals some significant embodied rhetoric in Act I as well. The thread spun by the woman with her spinning wheel in *Kurozuka* eerily recalls the spider's web in *Tsuchigumo*.

The mirror in *Shōkun* was a mundane household item set up by Shōkun's parents in their garden in hopes that it might someone help them communicate with their daughter. The mirror in *Nomori*, on the other hand, is a monumentally huge object, befitting its capacity to reflect the entire cosmos. And yet, the pool of reflecting water known as the other watchman's mirror served in the discovery of the emperor's missing hawk. Might there be a lesson here as in *Shōkun* about the benefits of constant self-reflection and introspection? The ambiguity of the watchman in *Nomori*, human by day and demon by night, who vacillates between nostalgically shedding tears over bygone days in the daytime and terrorizing the traveling priest after dark, may also suggest insight into ways to recognize our common humanity instead of being deceived by the distorting social media prism to exaggerate the extremism we see in others while normalizing our own. The head of the Polarization Lab at Duke University and author of *Breaking the Social Media Prism* (2021), Chris Bail, uses the metaphor of the prism effectively in his research to warn us against naively expecting online social media to serve as a mirror that will realistically help us understand ourselves and each other better. He developed this metaphor to replace the popular idea of the echo chamber because his research found that getting people out of their bubbles and exposing them to people they disagree with did not make

them more tolerant but rather less; they became more prone to dig in their heels. “Partisan warfare, it seemed, is often more about status signaling and bonding than persuading others” (Bail, 2021, p. 63).

Like *Tsuchigumo* and *Kurozuka*, *Nue* is an example of a play strongly suggesting that the monster is a projection of the viewer’s own fear or possibly a scapegoat, especially due to the focus on the way the forlorn spirit returns endlessly to haunt the people who killed it and cast its corpse away. Although he is not named in the play, the emperor who was said to be haunted by it was Konoe. Konoe was installed as emperor at the age of three in an age where actual political power was exercised by retired former emperors. The crisis in the imperial lineage that occurred when Konoe died unexpectedly at the age of sixteen is what precipitated the exile of Sutoku (the story of *Matsuyama Tengu*) and his transformation into one of the three great *onryō* or angry spirits haunting the imperial court. *Nue* also fits into the thematic tradition in Noh of recognizing plants and animals as sentient beings. It should be noted that the monster in *Tsuchigumo* does not belong to this lineage but is rather an example of the dehumanizing treatment of people (namely, indigenous people) as subhuman. What might these examples of scapegoating and dehumanization tell us about our own treatment of others today?

The evil spirit who haunted the death-stone in *Sesshōseki* was also divined as having haunted the same young Emperor Konoe a few years later after the *Nue* incident, although as with *Nue*, the emperor is not named in the play. The evil spirit was said to have taken the form of an imperial concubine named Lady Tamamo. Unlike the *Nue*, this evil spirit was not killed but rather driven out of the capital, eventually hiding in the death-stone in the distant province of Shimotsuke, just as the spirit of the slain *Nue* came to haunt Osaka after having been cast into the river that flows out of Kyoto into Osaka Bay. How might these tales of exclusion offer wisdom to help us stay human in a world that too often dehumanizes people perceived as outsiders?

Queries about Fear from the Haya-mai and Unclassified Plays

Sutoku, the retired emperor who preceded Konoe in the imperial lineage, was exiled to Matsuyama, the setting of the *haya-mai* play *Matsuyama Tengu*, after Konoe’s untimely death and Sutoku’s failed rebellion against his father, the powerful retired emperor Toba. Saigyō knew both father and son when he was still active at court as a member of the imperial guard. His taking of the tonsure coincides with Sutoku’s forced abdication from the throne and may be seen as an expression of sympathy. It is a historical fact that Saigyō visited Sutoku during his detention before exile as well as visiting his grave after his death and offering the poem. This play thus falls into the traditional lineage of the pacification of angry ghosts, as Sutoku was rumored to have cursed the imperial house. As with Sugawara Michizane, a trend developed whereby if any disaster occurred, it was attributed to Sutoku, from fires to illnesses to deaths. Saigyō’s poem was viewed as an attempt at pacification, but ironically unsuccessful.

This play provides an opportunity to consider the connection between fear and awe. In Japanese, the verb *osoruru* can be written two ways, either 恐るる or 畏れる. But all incidences of the word in the Noh texts use 恐. The other character, 畏, is only used in Noh texts for the formal social expression 畏まって as an exaggerated way of showing respect. The translator has navigated this ambiguity by translating *osoroshiya* as “terrifying awe.” A major point of interest here for our purposes, I would suggest, is that the ghost of Sutoku originally seemed to be comforted by Saigyō’s poem. However, as he was led to recall his glorious past, those feelings of comfort were overcome by the old grudge, and he became enraged. It is interesting that it is the goblins who then appear to offer their comfort and more successfully restore his peace of mind. This development also has a line of precedents in Noh, as in *Aoi no Ue*, a dramatization of a scene in *The Tale of Genji* where a *miko* or shaman is first called to pray for Genji’s ailing wife, but when her prayers seem ineffective, next a Buddhist priest is called in; his prayers seem more effective, at least by the end of the Noh play. But as the audience knows, Aoi later died after giving birth.

The primary scene of interest in this play related to the theme of fear is the one where the ghost of Sutoku waves his sleeves. It begins as an expression of pleasure at Saigyō’s visit. But as the ghost indulges in his memories of past glory at court, performing a courtly dance, he is overcome with resentment; his violent waving of his voluminous sleeves is described as striking awe into the hearts of those in his presence, arousing terror, just as the demon of *Kurozuka* aroused terror when she waved her iron rod.

Could this be a cautionary tale suggesting the wisdom of treating people with justice, not only for the sake of justice but so as to prevent the traumatization of the individual as well as the socially destabilizing dissatisfaction that inevitably follows injustice? As we near the end of this survey of trends in this selected corpus, it becomes clear that the connection between fear and awe is deeper than a simple keyword survey can easily reveal. Analyses of Noh plays tend to focus on the main dramatic character, which in the fifth category is often a demon. This emphasis has the disadvantage of obscuring significant entities in the background. In the case of the current selected corpus, this means the high incidence of emperors both onstage and in the text either explicitly or implicitly: seven out of twelve. These include Antoku in *Ikarikazuki* and Ichijō, who ordered the sword from Munechika in *Kokaji*. It was also Ichijō who ordered Raikō to quell the demon in *Ōeyama*. The tale told in *Nomori* about the emperor who lost his hawk, which was found thanks to the reflecting pool called the watchman's mirror, was Emperor Shōmu. The young Emperor Konoe figures in *Nue* and *Sesshōseki*. Emperor Sutoku is the main character in *Matsuyama Tengu*, and his story implicitly includes Emperors Toba and Konoe.

Considerations on Sound and Color

Sound and color are often considered important features of embodied rhetoric, and if we were dealing with a literary text, this study would pay attention to textual aspects such as onomatopoeia. But as the Noh drama is a performing art, we must bear in mind that most of the sound and color will occur aurally and visually on stage in interplay with the verbal art. An initial textual survey did not reveal any significant onomatopoeia. But the use of color onstage does reveal some trends significant for this study on embodied rhetoric of fear.

The dominant color in the texts of these twelve plays is white, which is associated phonetically with the unknown, as in *shiranami*, white waves, evoking *shiranai*, unknowing, amplifying the theme of the fear of the unknown. The color white also has a strong traditional association with death, the ultimate unknown; this association is often linked in literature to embodied rhetoric of bones and the white smoke that arises from funeral pyres, which is sometimes also metonymically associated with white birds.

But onstage, the fifth category of Noh is dominated by the colors black and red as well as white, not so much in costuming as in the wildly disarrayed wigs. Many of the demons can be depicted in various color combinations, as summarized here. Generally speaking, black indicates a character who is younger and more earthbound, his youth embodied in the color of his hair; association with the blackness of soil is also embodied rhetoric. Red indicates raw energy and possession by powerful emotions such as anger; it is also associated with the embodied rhetoric of blood. White symbolizes purity, spirituality, age, and ancient divine wisdom and authority. Let us now proceed to observe how these colors appear not in the text but on the stage.

Color in the Five Hataraki Plays

Black is the standard color for Tomomori in *Ikarikazuki*, representing both his youth and his humanity. The fox deity in *Kokaji* may be portrayed with either black, red, or white, depending on which aspect of the character the performer wishes to emphasize. The demon in Act II of *Ōeyama* is usually depicted with red, primarily for contrast with the black used to depict it in Act I, but also because the text is not complex enough to warrant the sort of dignified interpretation possible with the fox deity of *Kokaji*. The foreign king in *Shōkun* may be depicted with either red or black, but like *Ōeyama* is not a complex enough character to warrant portrayal in white; this is similarly true for the demon spider in *Tsuchigumo*.

Color in the Five Semi-Hataraki Plays

The ghost in *Kumasaka* wears a hood, consistent with his characterization not as a demon but as a human who was acting out of human desires at the time of his death. The demon in *Kurozuka* may be portrayed in black, red, or white, depending on the interpretation of the performing artist; likewise for the spirit of the field watchman in *Nomori* who, like many of the characters of the fifth category, is human by day and demon by night. The monster in *Nue* may be depicted with red or black but not white, consistent with the story whereby it is characterized as suffering too deeply to be interpreted as having achieved spiritual transcendence. The demon in *Sesshōseki* may be depicted with any of the three colors, but if black is chosen, the wig will be straight rather than bushy, presumably to represent the feminine form the demon adopted when it attacked the emperor.

Color in the Haya-mai and Unclassified Plays

The goblins in *Matsuyama Tengu* are depicted with either red or white, presumably for contrast with Sutoku, who is depicted with black and appears onstage with them in Act II. The mountain crone in *Yamamba* is always depicted with white, a sign of her ancient wisdom and divinity.

Conclusion

This short study has only been able to treat a dozen Noh plays, but focus on the rhetoric of fear has enabled us to discern some significant trends that suggest how creative interweaving of embodied and disembodied rhetoric can lead to insights that may reduce polarization and xenophobia in our divided world. In this final section, I survey the critical perspectives that I see having the most potential for creative combination with the art of Noh to realize this goal.

In *Cultures of Fear*, Uli Linke and Danielle Taana Smith document how core terms like security, safety, protection and defense circulate to become part of “a global public discourse of fear that encourages proactive military action, legitimates war as a surgical intervention, and authorizes faraway acts of violence” (p. 2) Just as the Noh theater dramatizes people struggling with fear, they suggest ways to confront these imagined or manufactured fears to disrupt the normalization of securocratic language.

Maria Ressa applies emergent theory in her analysis of the dynamics of online behavior in her 2022 book *How to Stand Up to a Dictator*. In her analysis, the way a system behaves simply cannot be predicted from what you know about the individual parts. The system as a whole exerts pressure on the individuals, a kind of peer pressure exerted by group dynamics, which often makes people do things they wouldn’t do if they were alone. When Ressa’s work is taken together with the findings reported by Chris Bail in his 2021 book *Breaking the Social Media Prism*, it becomes obvious that as long as bonding actually seems to be more important with netizens than persuading someone to agree with them politically, and extremists at both end of the political spectrum continue to drive moderates out of the online public sphere, emergent behavior seems only too likely to tend in the direction of violent mobbing.

But both Bail and Ressa have ideas for effective interventions. For Bail, it is redesigning algorithms to reward posts that appeal to diverse audiences instead of simply triggering polarized reactions. For Ressa, it is the ten-point plan she presented to the 2022 Freedom of Expression Conference at the Nobel Peace Center together with fellow journalist Dmitri Muratov, with whom she shared the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize. The plan begins as follows.

We call for a world in which technology is built in service of humanity and where our global public square protects human rights above profits. Those in power must do their part to build a world that puts human rights, dignity, and security first, including by safeguarding scientific and journalistic methods and tested knowledge. To build that world, we must: Bring an end to the surveillance-for-profit business model; end tech discrimination and treat people everywhere equally; and rebuild independent journalism as the antidote to tyranny. (Ressa, 2022, p. 267)

Naomi Klein also uses the mirror metaphor effectively in her book *Doppelganger: A trip into the mirror world* (2023). Many of her insights resonate with the wisdom of Noh, for example, when she says, “Performing and partitioning and projecting are the individual steps that make up the dance of avoidance” (p. 323) or “One of the hardest habits of thought to shake is the reflex to look away, to not see what is in front of us, and to not know what we know” (p. 274). In her development of the idea of the doppelganger, she illustrates how world leaders construct and project their ideal images of their own nations while projecting all their dark shadows onto their opponents, and argues that we must confront our own internal darkness rather than projecting it onto the enemies we construct for our own purposes.

The philosopher Judith Butler, meanwhile, bravely engages with the problem of fear in her 2024 *Who’s Afraid of Gender?* Butler thoroughly documents and exposes how the very concept of gender has been weaponized as a scapegoat for political purposes. Butler’s analysis is a challenging reminder that the performance of fear is often associated with the performance of femininity in a way that polarizes gender, in that it is often utilized as an appeal for masculine protection. This may be as true now as it was at the time that Hyakuma was depicted as outgrowing such disempowering behavior thanks to mentoring from Yamamba.

I see all these threads being woven together in the work of Nonviolent Communication practitioner Miki Kashtan, creator of a website called *The Fearless Heart*. In her 2024 essay on that blog, “Envisioning a Nonviolent Response to War,” Kashtan writes:

For every war, there are people who identify with one side, those who identify with the other side, and those who want to find a path that works for everyone and who mourn the presence of war overall. That path is about making no exceptions to who we care about and looking for solutions that care for everyone’s needs. (p. 1)

In that spirit, I dream of an Internet Peace Corps, an online community where peacebuilders unite to break down walls of hate and build bridges of love. I note with a smile the embodied rhetoric in the expression “Peace Corps,” and wonder wanly whether it would be a violation of nonviolent principles to volunteer to become a corporal in that campaign. (Oh, no! More military metaphors!)

But just as perennial wisdom tells us that courage is not the absence of fear but rather facing it and overcoming it, so I hope that we do not simply avoid classical literature that depicts war but rather engage with it interactively and think about how we can learn from our history to transform our world.

“If we fight with weapons, we shall never prevail.” – Kumasaka

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