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Constructing Abe no Seimei: Integrating Genre and Disparate Narratives in Yumemakura Baku's Onmyōji

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CONSTRUCTING ABE NO SEIMEI:
INTEGRATING GENRE AND DISPARATE NARRATIVES IN YUMEMAKURA
BAKU'S ONMYŌJI

A Thesis Presented

by

DEVIN RECCHIO

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ABSTRACT

CONSTRUCTING ABE NO SEIMEI: INTEGRATING GENRE AND DISPARATE
NARRATIVES IN YUMEMAKURA BAKU'S ONMYŌJI

SEPTEMBER 2014

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The *Onmyōji* series has had an incredible impact on Japanese fiction. It has created an entire genre of material called *onmyōjimonō* and sold 5 million copies counting only the novel series. Despite this, it has been woefully understudied by both Japanese and English speaking scholars. The Japanese scholars that do acknowledge it use it as a springboard to launch a survey of Abe no Seimei in written and performed media throughout history, and the English speaking scholars have limited their analyses to the form that *oni* take in the narrative. My research has revealed that Yumemakura Baku utilizes a complex set of mechanisms to combine disparate narratives into a cohesive whole, integrating elements of genre and modern literary aesthetics to make old narratives agreeable to modern tastes. In the process he creates a dark and threatening world through which the Heian courtiers must navigate. Abe no Seimei acts as their guide and mediator. Despite holding an official rank within the court he is as otherworldly as the world, filled with supernatural beasts and formless creatures, in which they live. Using the mechanism of Abe no Seimei, Yumemakura Baku reveals to the reader their own tendencies toward prejudice, while constructing a vast world through centuries of written material.

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INTRODUCTION

I.1 What is *Onmyōji*?

The *Onmyōji* 陰陽師 series of novels and short stories, first serialized by prolific sci-fi author Yumemakura Baku 夢枕獏 in 1986 and then published as a *tankōbon* in 1988 by *Bungei shunju* 文藝春秋, has had an incredible impact on Japan's entertainment market.¹ *Onmyōji* are practitioners of a complex form of cosmology based on Chinese and Japanese traditions that was officially established with the *Ritsuryō* 律令制 system, a style of government modeled on Chinese ideology that was first enacted in the year 645 with the *Taika* 大化の改新 reforms. Yumemakura Baku's novel and short story series is credited with creating an entire genre of storytelling featuring these esoteric practitioners. Referred to as *onmyōjimonō* 陰陽師物, the genre has seen explosive growth in recent years.² Yumemakura Baku's series itself has sold over five million copies alone, and has inspired not one but two movie productions, a manga series, and even a television series.

Despite this, it has been woefully understudied in both Japanese and English language scholarly circles. Many reasons can be posited for this, not the least of which is the fact that its importance only became apparent as recently as the beginning of the twenty-first century. The Japanese scholars who have engaged with the series have done little more than to brush it off as novelty, or note its status as the root of what has come to be called the Abe no Seimei boom, only to abandon it as a topic of study, effectively using it as a springboard to justify exploration of the history of Abe no Seimei as he appears in written and staged works. People have become so fascinated with Abe no

¹ Yumemakura 2003. p. 346.

² Yumemakura 2012. p.154

Seimei that even scholars have failed to take notice of what is happening in the series that inspired their interest.

It is not surprising, then, that English speaking scholars have done little to investigate the series as well. Those who are ambitious enough to take it on stop short of putting it into context, instead focusing on the unique perspective Yumemakura Baku has shown on the topic of *oni* in the series,³ or the role the *onmyōji* take in various pieces of narrative fiction.⁴ Though these are all valid contributions, with the announcement that the first original Kabuki production since 2010,⁵ which was based on Yumemakura Baku's *Onmyōji* series has won the Ōtani Takejirō 大谷竹次郎賞 prize,⁶ it has become painfully clear that a closer look at the series needs to be taken in order to elucidate both its place in the history of cultural production as well as its larger social implications.

I.2 Abe no Seimei and *Onmyōdō* in History

Abe no Seimei (921 – 1005), one of the two main characters of Yumemakura Baku's *Onmyōji* series, is the axis upon which almost all scholarly engagement with *Onmyōji* turns. A relatively low ranking Heian period aristocrat, the origins of the Abe no Seimei who lived and died in Heian Japan are almost completely unknown. He is credited with having written a guidebook on how to perform various *Onmyōdō* 陰陽道 rituals called *Senjiryakketsu* 占事略決, but scholarship has yet to confirm anything else produced by him.⁷

³ Reider 2007.

⁴ Lepointe 2009.

⁵ Shochiku 2014.

⁶ Kabukibito 2014.

⁷ Tōya 2006. P. 277.

Abe no Seimei cannot be discussed without the word *onmyōji* materializing like some inevitable consequence of his existence, so strongly is he associated with the occupation. It is largely thanks to Yumemakura Baku's depictions of him that the concept of *onmyōji* and *Onmyōdō* has skyrocketed into the public consciousness. He is the *onmyōji*, as far as contemporary audiences are concerned, and the *onmyōji* could not ask for a better representative. Indeed, if we are to believe the stories that are told about him, an accomplished *onmyōji* could just as easily thrust an entire country beneath his boot (or sandal, in this case), as he could save a single courtier from a pesky *oni*. It is fortunate that so great a being is too aloof and unconcerned with matters of politics to use such power for personal profit.

The term *onmyōji* refers to the title of Abe no Seimei's station, and was translated in the American release of the movie as *yin-yang* master. This translation stems from the characters that make up the word, which are precisely the characters for yin and yang in Chinese. However, this translation is completely inaccurate, since the Japanese term signifies a system of beliefs that are only loosely related to *yin-yang* at best.⁸

Japanese scholars long believed that *Onmyōdō* as a concept and term came from China and evolved in Japan. To the contrary, recent scholarship has revealed that *Onmyōdō* was actually born in Japan as an amalgamation of various belief systems imported from the continent and was not imported as a complete system.⁹ The primary influencing forces on its development are often identified as *Yinyang wuxing teaching* 陰

⁸ Ono 1994. Pp. 427-428.

⁹ Ono 1994. Pp. 427-428.

陽五行説, or the five ways of yin and yang, and Daoism, independent entities which made their way to Japan from the continent as early as the sixth century.¹⁰

Interestingly, *Onmyōdō*'s development is closely related to the establishment of the imperial court, and took its most recognizable shape with the birth of the *Ritsuryō* system. The *Ritsuryō* system created a wing of the court called the *Onmyōryō* 陰陽寮, whose primary concern it was to perform rituals to predict disasters, keep time, develop the court's calendar system with complex methodologies rooted in the Chinese Zodiac system, predict auspicious days and directions for travel, and find safe locations upon which to build government buildings.¹¹

It has been posited that in addition to these duties the *Onmyōryō* was also in charge of designing the royal family's diet, having developed a complex understanding of nutrition based on both native concepts as well as Chinese theory.¹² Due to the pragmatism of the court and its willingness to compromise various modes of what might be labeled religiosity, *Onmyōdō* developed into an incredibly complex system whose primary purpose it was to guide its users to positive outcomes.

The breadth of applications for *Onmyōdō* that appeared in the Heian period has resulted in a myriad of traditions and practices that have become *jōshiki* in modern Japan, a term used for both common sense and basic facts or traditions that everyone is familiar with. Such is the degree that *Onmyōdō* has become integrated into Japanese culture that the origins of such *jōshiki* are known only to specialists, who delight in pointing out their roots in *Onmyōdō*.

¹⁰ Ono 1994. P. 427

¹¹ Ono 1994. P. 430

¹² Tōya 2006. P. 52

Yet, it remains exceedingly difficult to describe precisely what *Onmyōdō* is, since its nature evolved significantly over the centuries. Its origins in the *Ritsuryō* system reveal its grounding in astrology and calendrology; however, this *Ritsuryōteki onmyōdō* 律令的陰陽道 would evolve into what is referred to as *Kyūtei onmyōdō* 宮廷陰陽道, which adapted elements of esoteric Buddhism and Shintōism to emphasize magical and spiritual elements over the more mathematical methods of its predecessor.¹³ It is well after this *Kyūtei onmyōdō* had taken hold that Abe no Seimei was born and ultimately occupied a position of great authority within the *onmyōryō*.

It is this Abe no Seimei that Yumemakura Baku discovered and resolved to develop for a modern audience's tastes. He manages to accomplish this while remaining largely faithful to the material that inspires him, expanding upon the basic narratives of the older texts and adapting them to straddle the line between various genres, such as horror, magical realism, and *jidai shōsetsu* 時代小説. Indeed, he is even criticized by scholars for remaining too faithful to the original material; though a close analysis of his work with the series renders such criticism meaningless.

The result of his innovations is a dark horror fantasy that features a mysterious and alluring protagonist whose actions reflect an unfamiliar world view that challenges our conceptions of autonomy, prejudice, and compassion. The goal of this thesis is to contextualize Yumemakura Baku's contributions to Abe no Seimei's ongoing evolution, while presenting an in-depth analysis of his first and most iconic work with the character, “*Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto* 玄象といふ琵琶鬼のために盗らるること,” or “A Biwa Called *Genjō* is Stolen by an *Oni*.” While Noriko T. Reider has done

¹³ Ono 1994. P. 430

analyzed the role of *oni* in the piece,¹⁴ an analysis of Seimei's role has yet to take place. As such, Seimei's role will be a central theme of this thesis.

¹⁴ Reider 2007.

CHAPTER 1

TRACING SEIMEI IN WRITTEN MATERIAL

Tracing Abe no Seimei's path through history is an extensive project well beyond the scope of this thesis; however, a rudimentary understanding of the two major periods prior to the Heisei period in which Abe no Seimei gathered significant interest is necessary for one to understand the significance of the contributions that have been made to his ongoing evolution in Yumemakura Baku's *Onmyōji* series. The description of the Insei 院政¹⁵ period and Edo 江戸 period incarnations of Abe no Seimei that follows is cursory at best. Still, it contextualizes the most essential changes that Seimei has undergone through the centuries and allows me to delineate specific areas that Yumemakura Baku modified in the process of rendering Abe no Seimei in his Heisei form.

I use the word incarnation to refer to Abe no Seimei's general form in these periods because each features what has been referred to as a "boom" of creative development, with each focusing primarily on a specific persona. While much work still needs to be done to elucidate what specifically triggered each transformation, it is safe to say that prior to the Heisei period Abe no Seimei had taken two recognizable shapes. In the Insei period he appears as a middle aged ritualist of the state. In the Edo period he appears primarily as the young boy, Abe no Dōji, abandoned by his fox mother, who has been immortalized in Kabuki performances that are performed to this day. These two are followed by Yumemakura Baku's beautiful and young Abe no Seimei, whose unique

¹⁵ A term used to refer to the period of the gradual close of the Heian period and the establishment of the Kamakura *bakufu* between the end of the 11th century and the beginning of the 12th century.

personality and aloof attitude toward his contemporaries contrasts starkly with his predecessors. Each of these booms boasts a text that either characterizes it or functions as its origin. Though there are many texts on the periphery of each, I will focus on the individual texts that represent his individual personas most effectively.

1.1 Abe no Seimei in the Insei Period and *Konjaku monogatari shū*

Many studies of Abe no Seimei have been undertaken, and while few have revealed much about the historical Abe no Seimei beyond that which has been described here, the sheer quantity of mythological material surrounding him is daunting. His most prominent appearances in the Insei period are featured in *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集, or *Anthology of Tales from the Past*. The impact of *Konjaku monogatari shū* on later stories, including Yumemakura Baku's *Onmyōji* itself, cannot be understated. As such, a detailed description of its contents follows in this chapter.

Konjaku monogatari shū is the largest collection of legends from the Heian period. It features over one thousand tales and is split into three parts: stories set in *Tenjiku* 天竺 (India), *Shintan* 震旦 (China), and *Honchō* 本朝 (This realm, referring to Japan). Although many of the stories feature prominent Buddhist elements, stories set in Japan describe events involving warriors, commoners, and many figures outside the realm of Buddhist doctrine.¹⁶ Of the over one thousand tales compiled, *onmyōji* feature in seven. Of those seven, Abe no Seimei appears in four.¹⁷

The identity of the author of *Konjaku monogatari shū* is unclear. According to the *Konjaku monogatari shū* and *Uji shūi monogatari* 宇治拾遺物語 (Gleanings from Uji

¹⁶ Komine 1991. Pp. 18-19

¹⁷ Tanaka 2003. P. 36

Dainagon Monogatari) edition of *Shinchō koten bungaku arubamu* 新潮古典文学アルバム, there are those who theorize that the author/compiler was Minamoto no Takakuni 源隆国, a mid to late Heian period aristocrat who is known for pieces like the *Uji dainagon monogatari* 宇治大納言物語,¹⁸ and maintained a vacation home in Uji.¹⁹ This theory has been discredited by studies that date several of the later legends in the piece after his death, though supporters of the theory persist and claim that they must have been added by his son.²⁰ Others hypothesize that it was written by high ranking Buddhist monks from Tōdaiji 東大寺 or Kōfukuji 興福寺. Whichever the case may be, it has been confirmed based on extensive analyses of the writing style and format that it was compiled and written by one person.²¹ It is important to note that Heian period court documents are notorious for their exaggerations and inaccuracies, and while the circumstance in which *Konjaku monogatari shū* was compiled is unclear, it does not distinguish itself from its contemporaries in this regard. The result of this is that the historical Abe no Seimei sits largely in the realm of myth.

It is often thought that Abe no Seimei is the star *onmyōji* of the collection; however, this is not the case. Several *Onmyōji* feature more prominently and perform even more impressive feats than Seimei's own already impressive ones, but history has not been as kind to them.²² There is much debate about the reasons for Abe no Seimei's inordinate popularity in later time periods, but little conclusive evidence to support any particular theory.

¹⁸ Uji Dainagon 宇治大納言 is one of Minamoto no Takakuni 源隆国's names.

¹⁹ Komine 1991. P.14

²⁰ Komine 1991. P.14

²¹ Komine 1991. P.10

²² Tanaka 2003. P.37

There are those that suggest that Seimei’s political ties with the Fujiwara, a family that established control over the court through marital ties to the emperor, and the successive political victories they enjoyed along with the position his family went on to take in the *Onmyōryō* overshadowed the accomplishments of his contemporaries in later generations. Others suggest that the nature of the stories in which he appears were simply more inspiring to authors of later generations, or that the legends in which he appears functioned better as stories. Still others suggest that despite his origins as a member of the court, his name was used by unsanctioned *Onmyōdō* practitioners who worked with the common people (that is, anyone not directly in the employ of the court), who then went on to create their own legends. Whatever the case may be, he has seen several bursts of popularity in the writings of both court officials and commoners alike throughout history.

The first of these myths appears in the nineteenth book of *Konjaku monogatari shū*, which is labeled, *buppō* 仏法 or “Buddhist Teachings.” Entitled, “Tale 24: About the Monk Whose Name Was Written on the Altar of the Taizan Fukun Ritual,”²³ in which Seimei of an unspecified age is called to the sickbed of the head monk of a temple. Unfortunately, the name of both the temple and the monk did not survive the centuries, so we are left with little background to the story. This only exaggerates Seimei’s role, as his is the only name that remains intact. He is described as having mastered every facet of *Onmyōdō*,²⁴ making use of it both in public settings as well as private matters.²⁵ This is an important element of Abe no Seimei that remains a part of his character to this day--he makes use of his knowledge in whatever setting he chooses.

²³ しにかはりてたいさんぶくんのまつりのとじやうにいるそうのこと
代師入大山府君祭都状僧語第二十四

²⁴ つき やむごとな
道ニ付テ止事無カリケル者也

²⁵ おほやけ わたくしもちみ
然レバ、公・私此ヲ用タリケル

Abe no Seimei is then ordered to perform the *Taizan fukun* 泰山府君 ritual to save the life of an ailing priest.²⁶ The use of the term “ordered” reveals Seimei’s status relative to the priest--a fact that becomes increasingly inconsequential to his admirers throughout the centuries, but is important to keep in mind when thinking about the Seimei phenomenon.

He obliges, and upon performing the initial divination ritual, declares that the likelihood that the priest’s life will be saved is very low, but that if one of his apprentices is willing to have his name written on the *fuda* 札 on the altar, the monk’s life may be saved in exchange for the apprentice’s. Initially no one is willing to make the sacrifice. After a moment, a low ranking apprentice steps forward and offers his name, the ritual is performed, and the monk’s life is saved. The monk who offered up himself then goes about taking care of his affairs before going into solitude to chant the *nenbutsu* until his death. Yet the morning comes and he still lives. The monks begin to wonder if he will actually die when Seimei appears, declaring, “Master monk, you have nothing to fear today. Also, the monk who offered up himself has nothing to fear as well. We have received the blessing of both your lives.”²⁷ He then returns to his abode. The monks are overjoyed, and cannot contain their tears. The master monk treats the monk more dearly than even his best apprentices.

Seimei’s role in the story, while certainly pivotal, is not that of the main character. He appears to offer his services and disappears when they are rendered. The narrative lens remains completely focused on the monks’ plight throughout the story, and the tension lies completely between the heavens, which hold the key to their survival, and the

²⁶ 其ノ晴明ヲ呼テたいざんぶくん泰山府君ノまつり祭ト云フ事ヲせしめ命テ、此ノ病ヲたすけ助テ命ヲそんせ存ムト為ルニ

²⁷ 「師、今ハ恐レ不可給ズ。亦、「代ラム」と云シ僧モ不可恐ズ。共に命ヲ存スル事ヲ得タリ」

monks themselves. Seimei's role as simple intermediary in this story reflects the section in which the story appears. Since the book is labeled "Buddhist Teachings" it is unsurprising that a practitioner of a completely different cosmological system would appear only as a guest. The fact that he appears as a savior, however, speaks volumes about his reputation when *Konjaku monogatari shū* was written.

The following story in which he appears is entitled, "Tale 16: Abe no Seimei Learns the Way from Tadayuki."²⁸ Although this episode is often presented as four separate sections of *Konjaku monogatari shū*, it is in fact a single piece. To be sure, there are distinct stories included within the chapter, but they are all contained in the sixteenth chapter of the twenty fourth book labeled, *sezoku* 世俗, or "commoner" stories. The beginning of this chapter features one of the more popular Seimei stories, which is used by many authors to describe his innate talent.

It begins by introducing Seimei as *tenmon hakase* 天文博士²⁹ Abe no Seimei, who possessed abilities that could even be compared to the ancient masters. It then establishes that he trained under Kamo no Tadayuki before launching into the brief but iconic story of how he caught Tadayuki's eye.

The story, which is no longer than six lines of text, describes Kamo no Tadayuki's late night travels on his way to a place called Shimo watari. Tadayuki is in a deep sleep in a carriage while his retinue follows behind on foot, when Abe no Seimei, who is among the retinue, spots a group of *oni* heading toward the carriage. He runs to the carriage and wakes Tadayuki, who quickly and calmly uses his techniques to hide not only himself,

あべのせいめい ただゆきにしがひてみちをならふこと
28 安倍晴明、随忠行習道語第十六

29 Ritsuryo system teacher responsible for training in astronomy, astrology, calendar-making, etc. (via weblio)

but the entire retinue. Tadayuki discerns that Seimei has unusual talent from this event, and “imparts all he knows about the way³⁰ to Seimei as if pouring water from one jug into another.”³¹

The chapter then digresses and briefly describes the location of Abe no Seimei’s home north of the Tsuchi Mikado 土御門 gate and east of the Tōin 洞院 house.³² An old monk with two boys in tow claiming to be from Harima no kuni visits him there and requests that Seimei teach him the way of *Onmyōdō*, having heard of Seimei’s proficiency in the art. However, Seimei perceives that the old monk is in fact learned in the way of *Onmyōdō* and is testing him. He decides to play dumb, and asks the monk to come back another time since he has matters to attend to. He then pulls his hands into his sleeves and silently whispers a chant while forming seals beneath his sleeves. The monk leaves, but comes back before he had even gone two hundred meters inquiring about the two boys he brought with him, saying that Seimei had taken them away. Seimei feigns ignorance, asking why he would do such a thing. The monk apologizes for his imprudence, to which Seimei replies, “Alright, alright. I felt it positively outrageous that you should come along with these two *shikigami* 識神 (low level spirits that *onmyōji* are known to control in legend) to test me, so I decided to test *you* instead,” before putting his hands into his sleeves, forming a seal and whispering a chant.³³ The two boys emerge from beyond the gates and the old monk explains that Seimei was well known amongst

³⁰ *Onmyōdō*

³¹ 此道ヲ教フル事瓶ノ水ヲ写スガ如シ

³² Abe no Seimei’s progeny are later called Tsuchi Mikado, likely due to his home’s geographical proximity to the gate of the same name. The Tsuchi Mikado house went on to run the *onmyōryō* until the Meiji period.

³³ 吉々^{よしよし} 御房ノ、人^{ひと} 試^{こころみ} トテ識神ヲ^{しきじん} 仕^{つかひ} テ来タルガ不安^{やすからず} 思^{おも} テル也。然様ニハ異人ヲコソ^{きょう} 試^{ことひと} メ、
晴明^{はるあき} ヲバ此^{かく} 不^せ 為^な デコソ有^あ ラメ。

the different sects of *Onmyōdō* practitioners and so he thought to come to test him to see if he lived up to those rumors. He says that using *shikigami* has been considered an easy task since ancient times, but that to take control of another person's *shikigami* and hide them is unheard of, and requests that Seimei allow him to train under him.

Next Seimei is depicted visiting high monk Kanchō in Hirosawa,³⁴ where aristocrats and monks are enjoying some small talk.³⁵ They ask Seimei whether or not he could kill someone with his *shikigami*, to which he replies, “It takes some energy, but I can if I try. I can kill a bug easily. However, I do not know a method to bring them back to life, so it is a sinful thing to do.”³⁶ The aristocrats proceed to point to the nearby pond where five or six frogs could be seen hopping about, and tell him to try killing one of them, to which he replies, “You ask me to do such sinful things, sirs.”³⁷ But if you wish...³⁸ He picks up a blade of grass, whispers a chant, and flings it toward a frog. The blade of grass floats over to the frog, lands on top of it, and squishes it flat, killing it. The onlookers' faces turn white with fear.

The last section consists of comments describing Seimei, who it is said, would use *shikigami* when no one was around at his abode, opening and closing the lattice shutters or doors with them – something that passersby would remark upon with amazement. It goes on to say that even at the time of the *Konjaku monogatari shū*'s writing, his grandson, of the Tsuchimikado house, was exceptional in all the tasks

³⁴ 亦、此晴明、ひろさわ 広沢ノくわんでう 寛朝僧正ト申ケル人

³⁵ In the *Konjaku* version of the story the monks and aristocrats both appear, but in other versions of the story it is only monks.

³⁶ やす 安クハえ 否不殺。え 少シカダニ入テまつら 掬ヘバ必ズ殺シテム。虫ナドヲバちりばかり 塵許ノ事セムニ、カナラズ殺シツベキニ、生ク様ヲ不知バ、罪ヲ得ヌベケレバ、由無キ也。

³⁷ In other versions of the story it is monks who ask him to kill the frog, but in the *Konjaku* version it is explicitly aristocrats.

³⁸ 罪造リ給君カナ、然ルニテモ、「こころ 試ミ給ハム」ト有レバ。

presented to him when he was called upon, and that one could hear the sound of *shikigami* voices about him. The chapter concludes, saying, “And so, it is said that Seimei must not be an ordinary man.”³⁹

Although *Konjaku monogatari shū* is unequivocally the principal source through which the Abe no Seimei legends and stories are channeled in Yumemakura Baku’s *Onmyōji*, it is not the only collection in which stories featuring him appear that was written during the period. Despite this, these other collections are often relegated as being of secondary interest by scholars and authors alike.

The relative silence of written materials that engage with Abe no Seimei following the Insei period can perhaps be seen as inevitability. Although *Konjaku monogatari shū* has become an important source of inspiration for Abe no Seimei tales, it is not through *Konjaku monogatari shū* that Abe no Seimei’s next resurrection occurs. Rather, Seimei continued to ferment in the minds of people of all walks of life in the several hundred years between the production of *Konjaku monogatari shū* and the Edo period. Yet it was not until the appearance of the Edo period’s mass market for cultural consumption that we would see another explosion of literature written about him.

1.2 Abe no Seimei in the Edo Period

The more time passed, the more legends about Seimei evolved. The stories that featured him were so grandiose in form and his origins so shrouded that they became the perfect grounds within which authors’ minds could prosper. Perhaps it is only natural that curiosity about his origins would spawn new legends; however, one can hardly argue that

³⁹ 然レバ、晴明尚只者ニハただもの非あらざリケルトナム語り伝ヘタルトヤ。

it was an inevitability that they should be written and subsequently inspire centuries of adaptations and re-imaginings in a myriad of various mediums. Enter the early Edo Period, when the likes of Asai Ryōi 浅井了意 saw fit to answer such questions, claiming to base his explanations on *Hokishō* 篋篋抄, an abbreviated version of *Sangoku sōden onmyō kankatsu hoki naiden kin'u gyokuto shū* 三国相伝陰陽輶轄篋篋内伝金烏玉兔集. Ryōi was likely more interested in Abe no Seimei as fiction than as a historical figure given the contents of *Hokishō* as well as his strong association with merchant organizations in the publishing market.⁴⁰ It is Asai Ryōi's work in the form of *Abe no seimei monogatari* 安倍晴明物語 that would go on to form the foundation for an incredible fecundity of creativity surrounding Seimei in the Edo period.

Given the sheer quantity of stories in all sorts of mediums, including *jōruri* 浄瑠璃, *kabuki* 歌舞伎, *ukiyo-zōshi* 浮世草子, *bukkyōsho* 仏教書, *kurohon* 黒本, *aohon* 青本, *kōshaku* 講釈, *kibyōshi* 黄表紙, and *gōkan* 合巻 that *Abe no dōji* 安倍童子 as he would come to be known appears in, this section will focus primarily on *Abe no seimei monogatari*, which is considered the origin of the Edo period Seimei boom.⁴¹

Abe no seimei monogatari features two sections, the first a summary of the contents of *Hokishō*, and the second a description of techniques for which Abe no Seimei is known, including physiognomy and astrology. Although it has long been assumed that Asai Ryōi was a devout Buddhist who supplemented his activities with writing, according to Wada Yasuyuki, it has been determined unequivocally that he was a writer

⁴⁰ Wada 2002. P. 100

⁴¹ Suwa 2002. Pp. 110-111

fully steeped in the environment of commercial production.⁴² The publisher of the tale was none other than Nishimura Matazaemon 西村又左衛門, who was known for printing and selling an eclectic range of almost all genres of books, from *bussho* to *ōraimono* 往来物.⁴³ The pragmatism displayed by Ryōi by choosing *Hokishō* as his base text, then, comes as no surprise. Not only did he avoid engaging with the significantly lengthier original text, as *Hokishō* was an abbreviated version of the original, but he uses it to great effect to leverage Abe no Seimei's already alluring story. The result was a two pronged approach that aims at both drawing in the reader with the promise of an interesting story and educating them on legend that, due to the difficult nature of the older texts, the average reader would not otherwise have had access to.

As the contents of *Abe no Seimei monogatari* reveal, the tales included in the text are fascinating no matter how deep or shallow the reading. The narrative section of the piece can be broken up into seven sections. The first section summarizes how *Hokinaiden* came to be.⁴⁴ The author of *Hokinaiden*, Hakudō Shōnin 伯道上人, sets out to perfect the art of *Tenchi in'yō* 天地陰陽.⁴⁵ He travels to Wu tai Mountain 五台山, and studies under the tutelage of a bodhisattva by the name of Manjusri 文殊, who teaches him the laws of *Yinyang wuxing*, which he writes down in a massive work consisting of one hundred and sixty scrolls, *Hokinaiden*.

The second section describes the famous story of an emissary to China by the name of Abe no Nakamaro 安倍仲磨, who, under suspicion of an unknown crime, is

⁴² Wada 2002. P. 100

⁴³ Wada 2002. P. 100

⁴⁴ The abbreviation of *Sangoku sōden onmyō kankatsu hoki naiden kin'u gyokuto shū*.

⁴⁵ Hakudō shōnin seems to be a Japanese invention. At present I have yet to find a reference to him in a Chinese text. His Chinese name would be Bodao shangjen.

captured and jailed. He is subsequently given no food and dies of starvation, becoming an *oni* upon his death.

The next section continues the famous story. It begins the following year, when Minister Kibi no Makibi 吉備真備 heads to China as an emissary. The Chinese Emperor is dissatisfied with the tribute that he brings, and decides to take out his anger on him by challenging him to a match of go, deciding that if he won he would have the minister killed. However, Kibi is saved by Abe no Nakamaro's *oni* self, and wins the match. Next the emperor tests Kibi by telling him to interpret two texts called *Wen xuan* 文選 and the *Yabatai* poem 野馬台詩 respectively. Again Kibi overcomes this trial with the help of both Abe no Nakamaro's *oni* and the Kannon Buddha of Nagatani Temple in Japan. The Emperor is duly impressed, and decides to send Kibi home with seven treasures in tow, including *Hokinaiden*. Before his death Kibi finds a relative of Abe no Nakamaro's in Abeno village, and passes *Hokinaiden* on to him.

The first three sections set the stage for Abe no Seimei to receive knowledge of the ways of *wuxing*, but the following sections have had inextinguishable influence on depictions of Seimei. Here, his faerie tale father's name first appears as Abe no Yasuna, a man living in the village of Abeno during Emperor Murakami's reign. A woman comes to Yasuna's door, and the two go on to get married. A boy is born and they name him Abe no Dōji. When the boy is three years old the woman leaves a poem on the folding screen and disappears. Dōji grows up, and shows great promise in his studies.

In the fifth section, Dōji goes on to save Otohime 乙姫, the princess of the dragon palace, and receives many treasures from the dragon king for his service. From these treasures he derives mysterious supernatural powers. The emperor grows ill, and he uses

these powers to discover the cause of his illness. For his service, he is granted the name Seimei.

The sixth section introduces a new layer to the story that goes on to play a central role in depictions of Seimei as an adult, and introduces Seimei's nemesis, Ashiya Dōman 蘆屋道満. Ashiya Dōman learns the ways of *Onmyōdō* from an Indian practitioner by the name of Dharmamārga (Japanese: Hōdō shōnin 法道上人), and challenges Seimei to a *jutsu* duel. Seimei defeats Dōman, and he becomes one of Seimei's apprentices. Eventually Seimei goes to China, and while he is gone Dōman conspires with his wife, who shows him the *Kin'u gyokuto shū* and *Hokinaiden*. When Seimei returns Dōman kills him with his newfound knowledge.

In the last section, Hakudō Shōnin comes from China and resurrects Seimei, who slays both his wife and Dōman. It concludes by saying that Seimei went on to perform all sorts of miraculous feats and garnered quite a name for himself.

It is from the third and fourth section that the later ubiquitous *Kuzunoha* 葛の葉 stories are born. Appearing primarily in *Shinodazuma* 信田妻 (Also written with the characters 信太妻) productions in many media including Kabuki, *jōruri*, *kibyōshi*, and *gōkan*, the narrative focuses squarely on Seimei's childhood. *Kuzunoha* is the nickname given to Seimei's mother, taken from the concluding line of the poem she writes on the folding screen before disappearing entitled "*Urami kuzunoha* うらみ葛の葉."

“If you long to see me
Come to visit
In Izumi's
Shinoda Forest
The kudzu leaves whose backs are visible.”⁴⁶⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Goff 2002. p. 270

The *urami* in the final line of the poem is typically rendered in hiragana, since it is a clever word play on a term for cursing or hating, *urami* 怨み/恨み, and a phrase that means for the underside to be visible, *urami* 裏見. This is a typical technique to conjure multiple meanings. Avoiding the use of kanji to clarify the meaning of a homophonous word allows the reader to fill in the potential meanings themselves. This use of language conjures several strong emotions which cause the words to stand out so strongly that they become Seimei's mother's moniker.

This branch of the Seimei legend grew into the primary focus of his appearances in theater. As a result for the three hundred year period between *Abe no seimei monogatari* and Yumemakura Baku's work, Abe no Dōji became Seimei's most well known persona – the abandoned child, who, it would later be revealed in subsequent retellings of the story, was the child of a fox who was tragically forced to abandon her child by fault of not being human. While the circumstances of Yasuna and *Kuzunoha's* pairing differ greatly depending on the version of the story, the element of the poem on the folding screen and Abe no Dōji's abandonment by his mother became the drama through which his story blossomed. In fact, to call it his story is perhaps a misnomer, as *Kuzunoha's* emotional parting with him became such a prevalent scene in time that it almost completely overshadowed Seimei himself.

Ashiya Dōman maintained his position as Seimei's nemesis in various retellings of *Abe no Seimei monogatari*, but they are utterly overshadowed by *Kuzunoha* both in their influence on subsequent interpretations of the legends as well as their dramatic effect. The associations with Seimei and foxes as a result of these legends are a powerful

⁴⁷ 恋しくば尋ねきてみよ和泉なる信太の森のうらみ葛の葉

driving force in many *onmyōjimonos* today. Yet it is an overstatement to say that Ashiya Dōman disappears as a result of the success of this thread of the story. In fact, in written forms it can be argued that during the Edo period their rivalry had a very healthy consumer base, as stories focused on them appeared in many notable pieces including *Abe no Seimei ichidaiki* 安倍晴明一代記 and *Abe no Seimei Ashiya Dōman chie kurabe* 阿部⁴⁸晴明芦屋道満智慧比べ.⁴⁹

Despite pieces like these, the Seimei that lived on in the minds of most in the modern period remained the abandoned child of a fox destined to become a great member of the court. In fact, until Yumemakura Baku's *Onmyōji* series' success, few Japanese knew what an *onmyōji* was, though the *onmyōji* that lives in their minds scarcely resembles the *onmyōji* that worked in the Heian courts.

1.3 Contemporary Abe no Seimei

With Abe no Seimei's transformation in the Edo period into Abe no Dōji, Seimei had changed irrevocably from a character with mysterious powers without an origin into a character with a compelling and dramatic history. He had also shape shifted from a middle aged man to a child in the minds of his audience.

Although one might think this personalized Abe no Seimei would be infinitely more compelling to authors than his indecipherable persona from the Insei period, this new background story only served to provide another source for discovery of the character for authors after the Edo boom had died down. As we will see, materials from

⁴⁸ Seimei's name has been written with various characters throughout history. Contemporary usage has settled on 安倍晴明, so unless a title specifically uses something else, these characters are what are used typically.

⁴⁹ Suwa 2002. Pp. 111-113

the Insei period featuring Abe no Seimei are arguably more prominent in depictions of Abe no Seimei in the Heisei period than his Edo form. He had garnered significant interest for a period, but as all things do, this burst of interest came to an end and he slipped again into obscurity, only to live on in the Kabuki plays that continue to be performed to this day as Abe no Dōji until he was resurrected by Aramata Hiroshi, Yumemakura Baku, and Okano Reiko.

This is the dominant narrative that persists in the popular imagination of the consumers of the *Onmyōji* series, as Yumemakura Baku often cites Aramata Hiroshi's 荒俣宏 *Teito monogatari* 帝都物語 as a significant inspiration to which he credits the beginning of the boom and Okano Reiko as the person who brought the *onmyōji* series into the popular consciousness with her detailed depictions of Abe no Seimei as a beautiful young man. To a degree this interpretation is true; however, it overlooks the many whispers of his existence that persist through the Meiji and Shōwa periods.

This is slightly surprising, if only because some fairly significant figures had taken on Abe no Seimei long before any of the three pioneers. Amongst those that populate the source of these whispers is none other than Mishima Yukio, who took up the pen to scrawl a tale inspired by the Heian period *Ōkagami*, in which Seimei is said to have predicted the resignation of Emperor Kazan 花山天皇. The contents of Mishima Yukio's story are almost precisely the same as that of *Ōkagami*'s version, but they differ in one way. In *Ōkagami*, it is unclear whether or not Seimei divined the Emperor's resignation before its occurrence, or simply knew of it without having been told when the emperor passes his home. In Mishima's version, Seimei was aware that the Emperor

would resign before he had announced publically.⁵⁰ Whether or not this reflects an intentional addition or simply Mishima's own interpretation is unclear. More important is simply the fact that Mishima draws from *Ōkagami* for his inspiration out of the vast sea of material featuring Seimei that existed. It is likely that Mishima did not choose this story due to Seimei's presence in it, but was drawn in by other elements. Whatever knowledge Yukio Mishima had of Abe no Seimei, he was not inspired to use him in any significant capacity.

This is what distinguishes previous authors from Yumemakura Baku and Aramata Hiroshi, whatever their fame or notoriety. Seimei appears in their stories as a passing fancy, a figure that is useful to serve some other narrative purpose. Yumemakura Baku, in stark contrast, discovered Seimei and thought, "I can use this."⁵¹⁵²

In his approach to Abe no Seimei, Yumemakura Baku realized that while Seimei had been depicted as a middle aged man and a young boy, he had yet to be depicted in his prime years. With this in mind, he set out to rewrite the character with a new aesthetic in mind--one that would resonate deeply with modern audiences. In particular, as he reveals in several interviews, this new Abe no Seimei drew the attention of young women.⁵³

He could not have predicted how on target his instincts were, or how much his interpretation of the character would reverberate in today's market. While it will not be the goal of this thesis to answer what, precisely, that nerve was, it is an important question to consider. Who, then, is the man at the epicenter of this phenomenon?

⁵⁰ Shimura 2001. P. 348

⁵¹ 美味しい.

⁵² Yumemakura 2003. P. 11

⁵³ Yumemakura 2010. P. 27

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCING YUMEMAKURA BAKU'S *ONMYŌJI*

2.1 Yumemakura Baku

Before introducing the work in question, some background about the author is in order. Yumemakura Baku, born in 1951 in Kanagawa prefecture's Odawara City, decided at age ten to pursue becoming an author, and was one of a few to achieve his childhood dream. Few can boast the wide range of approaches he has taken to the variety of genres in which he has worked, nor his prolificacy. Comparisons to the likes of Takizawa Bakin are not unreasonable in light of the furious pace of his work.⁵⁴

He graduated from Tōkai University with a degree in Japanese literature, and while he did not initially publish in his now trademark style, which he refers to as, “sex, violence, and the occult,” he pursued his career as an author in an unusually direct manner.⁵⁵ His adaptability served him well, as he started his career writing *shōjo* fiction, or juvenile fiction aimed at girls for Shūeisha's 集英社 *kobaruto bunko* コバルト文庫.⁵⁶⁵⁷

It is considered that he made his “literary” debut in 1977 with *Kaeru no shi* カエルの死⁵⁸ which originally appeared in a *dōjinshi* 同人誌 magazine that was supervised by Tsutsui Yasutaka called *Neo nuru* ネオ・ヌル before being published in *Kisō tengai*

⁵⁴ An Edo Period *gesakusha* 戯作者 who is credited with revitalizing the *yomihon* genre. He was extremely prolific and is best known for producing a massive novel consisting of 106 volumes called *Nansō satomi hakkenden* 南総里見八犬伝, or The Eight Dog Chronicles.

⁵⁵ Books From Japan 2014.

⁵⁶ Nihon SF Sakka Kurabu 2001.

⁵⁷ A label produced by Shūeisha that publishes science fiction and fantasy stories aimed primarily at, but not limited to young girls.

⁵⁸ The Frog's Death

奇想天外, a science fiction serial that was printed from 1974 until 1990.⁵⁹ This piece afforded him moderate success, particularly within the industry, for its unusual style and opened the door for him to do further writing. He followed *Kaeru no shi* with *Neko hiki no oruorane* 猫弾きのオルオラネ in 1979, a collection of short stories that reflected a distinct adult oriented fairy tale style, far from the violent and sexual style for which he is now known.

He went on to publish the first volume to one of his longest running series, *Kimaira* キマイラ (Chimera), in 1982, which would become a best seller in following years, but did not get his first major break until 1984, when he published the first part to another of his long running series, *Saiko daibā* サイコダイバー (Psyche Diver). Entitled *Majūgari* 魔獣狩り (Hunting Magical Beasts), this first installment in one of his most popular series brought him immense success.

He continued to publish several successful long running series in supernatural fiction, and has received several prizes for his work. It is due to the genres in which he chooses to write that he has not received the likes of the much sought after *Akutagawa* 芥川賞 and *Naoki* 直木賞 prizes for literature, but his success and dominance in the science fiction genre reveal his talent as an author as well as his pragmatism. He has received the tenth *Nihon SF Taishō* 日本SF大賞 award for *Jōgen no tsuki o taberu shishi* 上弦の月を食べる獅子, for which he also won the twenty first *Seiun* 星雲賞 award, another award for exceptional pieces in the science fiction genre. It is unsurprising that he has

⁵⁹ Nihon SF Sakka Kurabu 2001.

received several other awards, considering the ubiquity of literary awards that are offered by various organizations in Japan as well as his prolificacy.

Yumemakura Baku first encountered Abe no Seimei through *Konjaku monogatari shū* in his middle school days, so he was aware of the character long before he decided to use him in his own writing.⁶⁰ Since he established himself as a writer of violent fiction early in his career, he found it difficult to escape the expectations of his fans to write in the more elegant style that the *Onmyōji* series has become known for.⁶¹ It was not until 1986 that he was able to break free to publish the first and arguably most well known story of the series, later renamed, “*Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto.*” The story first appeared in a magazine called *Ōru yomimono* オール読物 with the ambiguous description, “A Supernatural Kaleidoscope that Invites You to Dream-Space”⁶² alongside a picture of Yumemakura Baku. The editor introduces the piece in the editor’s note with the words, “Yumemakura Baku, who is overwhelmingly popular with young readers, makes his first appearance in this magazine. Please enjoy his fresh prose.”^{63,64}

Following its serialized publication, the series was picked up and published by *Bungei shunju* in 1988 with the title *Onmyōji*. Although the precise details of its immediate reception remain unclear, it was not until 1993 when Okano Reiko began publishing a memorable manga interpretation of Yumemakura Baku’s original text that the series took off. Yumemakura Baku followed up Okano Reiko’s efforts with his

⁶⁰ Yumemakura 2003. P. 170

⁶¹ Yumemakura 2003. P. 170

⁶² 夢幻へ誘う妖しの万華鏡

⁶³ 若い読者に圧倒的人気のある夢枕獺氏の本誌初登場です。新鮮な才筆をお楽しみ下さい

⁶⁴ Shimura 2001. Pp. 346-347

second addition to the series' now lengthy line up of books in 1995 with *Onmyōji: hiten no maki* 陰陽師・飛天の巻, the second short story collection in the series.

Having established a fan base, he followed this up with a flurry of short story collections ranging from one and a half year to two year intervals on average, with a few notably long gaps, adding up to an impressive ten collections with seventy four individual stories. He complimented these short story collections with two full length novels in the form of *Onmyōji: Namanari hime* 陰陽師・生成り姫(2000) and *Onmyōji: Takiyasha hime* 陰陽師・瀧夜叉姫(2005) and a picture book called *Onmyōji: kobutori Seimei* 陰陽師・瘤取り晴明 (2001). It is safe to surmise that Yumemakura Baku's gratitude toward Okano Reiko for helping to push the novel into explosive popularity with her depiction of Seimei is not due to characteristic Japanese humility, but rather the very real impact the manga had in light of the trajectory of its publication patterns.⁶⁵

2.2 Critiquing the Critical Reception of *Onmyōji*

Yumemakura Baku's success as a science fiction and "combat" fiction writer has indelibly marred *Onmyōji*'s reception. As with many contemporary pieces of cultural production, *Onmyōji* suffers from a dearth of critical engagement from the scholarly community. Most critical looks at the series in Japan are designed to inform the reader whether or not they are likely to be entertained by it and amount to little more than product reviews. Such opinion pieces do provide useful information about the way the piece may be perceived by its readership, but they naturally fall short of real analysis. As such, they are useful as primary source material to contextualize the contemporary Abe

⁶⁵ Yumemakura Baku 2010. P. 26

no Seimei phenomenon, but they cannot be taken as secondary source material to aid in an analytical reading. This absence of secondary source material certainly contributes to both English and Japanese speaking scholars' hesitance to tackle *Onmyōji*. The unfortunate reality is that most prefer to wait until an author dies before attempting to analyze their work.

This lost opportunity to gather primary source material at the height of a phenomenon's importance is regrettable. How much deeper might our understanding of Chikamatsu Monzaemon be if contemporary scholars had the foresight to interview him and his followers, or to analyze his contributions to *bunraku* 文楽 conventions? What details might have stood out to contemporary viewers, and how might knowledge of these things inform modern scholarship on the topic? To watch as a representative piece of national literature is born and allow it to pass by without taking action would be quite an oversight.

Even without the difficulties outlined above *Onmyōji* has faced many challenges in the scholarly community by simple virtue of its subject matter and genre. Perhaps most damning is its lack of thematic unity, which makes it seem inscrutable to most. Despite this, it has been undeservingly lambasted for staying too faithful to the folk tales from which it derives its inspiration, and it has been largely dismissed by the academic community in Japan due to its status as *taishūbungaku* 大衆文学, or popular literature. Those that have written about the series refer to it as a starting point for research on other topics in lieu of engaging with it. With this in mind, I hope this thesis will be the first of many inquiries into Yumemakura Baku's work on the *Onmyōji* series.

What little critical writing about *Onmyōji* exists is found mostly in introductions to articles about Abe no Seimei and books published to appease the curiosity of its massive fan base. Tanaka Takako is perhaps the most critical of Yumemakura Baku's rendition. She explains what she thinks are the reasons for its success with an extremely reductive reading of the text:

“*Onmyōji* was completely uninteresting to me. After all, my job is to research legends. I knew where the story was going instantly because I knew the stories that Mr. Yumemakura drew from. Although it is interesting to compare the originals to their imitations, in Mr. Yumemakura's case, with the exception of a few original additions, it was like reading the original piece just as it was. When *Onmyōji* first came out Seimei and his trusty companion Hiromasa's personalities were still rather ambiguous, and Mr. Yumemakura had not yet established his ‘great pattern,’ in which each story begins with Hiromasa bringing sake and a mystery to Seimei's abode. Even still this pattern does not stand out much. There was a lot of dialogue, paragraphs were short, and the bottom half of the page was often left completely bare, so I even felt a bit ripped off.

Meanwhile, people who knew almost nothing about Japanese classics all said they found it very interesting. It must have been because most people were not aware of the existence of *onmyōji* that they were so taken in by it. Most people tend to think they have to sit in *seiza* to read classical literature. When one hears, ‘Genji monogatari’ or ‘Heike Monogatari’ one is apt to mutter to themselves, ‘What a pain!’ It's difficult to even just read a simplified translation.

That's the world in which *Onmyōji* appeared. The pocket book version came out not too long after the paperback, so it was easy to get your hands on, and paragraphs were

brief so it was easy to read. Beyond that, a lot of people who were *not* a part of the national literature ‘industry’ were surprised to find that there were interesting stories like the ones in *Onmyōji* in the Heian period. *This* is why Mr. Yumemakura was able to acquire such a massive readership.”⁶⁶ (See Appendix B.1 for original text)

First, she dismisses Yumemakura Baku’s contributions entirely, while simultaneously acknowledging their existence by saying, “with the exception of some original creations it was like reading the source text as it is.” This generalization does little to advance a critical analysis of the text and does even less to support her argument. It is acceptable as a personal opinion; however, she continues to compare this impression with that of the average reader – attributing their enjoyment of the text to simple ignorance of classical literature, effectively demeaning both these readers and the author himself without providing evidence to support such conclusions.

Such scorching criticisms completely ignore several elements of the series. First, Minamoto no Hiromasa’s presence in the series deserves consideration. To disregard his presence in the story is to ignore the very “original creations” that make *Onmyōji* unique and important, as his relationship to Seimei is entirely a fabrication of Yumemakura Baku’s. It also precludes any attempt at answering important questions about Seimei and Hiromasa’s roles in relation to one another.

In what ways does Hiromasa serve to advance the plot? How does his relationship with Abe no Seimei affect the reader’s view of him, and in what position does it place him within Heian society? How do the limitations (or lack thereof) of the reader’s knowledge affect their perception of the two? How does Hiromasa’s presence in each story affect the narrative from which the story is drawn? All of these are questions that

⁶⁶ Takako 2003. Pp. 14-15

when considered carefully reveal how Hiromasa shapes *Onmyōji* and therefore help us to define both what appeals to readers about the story as well as how *Onmyōji* differs from its predecessors. They also serve to reveal attitudes toward Abe no Seimei and *onmyōji* in the period of the original piece compared to the attitudes of modern readers. Such comparative analysis, contrary to Tanaka Takako's judgment, is essential to understanding the text, its place in modern society, and the creative process of authorship.

Other scholars are much more diplomatic in their handling of the material in question. Some even acknowledge the place it has taken in modern literature. Shimura Kunihiro writes, "Yumemakura Baku pulled Abe no Seimei through one thousand years' time and made him into a popular figure. Beyond that, it would not be an exaggeration to say that *Onmyōji* is becoming a piece of national literature,"⁶⁷⁶⁸ of the series. This divisiveness is unsurprising considering the material from which Yumemakura Baku draws his inspiration. It is natural that scholars of classical literature would be defensive of the sacredness of their chosen subject of study; however, as Shimura Kunihiro so aptly observes, to diminish the *Onmyōji* series to a novelty that is the result of rampant ignorance ignores the reality that it has become an essential part of a larger cultural phenomenon.

This is the point upon which this thesis bases its analysis – the basic assumption that all literary work, with the exception of the most depraved of copy and paste novels, by virtue of being creative human productions, reflect the culture in which they are born, along with the personal experiences of the individuals who produce them, and as such, have intrinsic value that is not visible to or appreciable by all. It is the job of the scholar

⁶⁷ 夢枕獏は「陰陽師」で安倍晴明を千年の時空を超えて人気者に仕立てあげ、それどころか、この作品は今や国民文学になりつつある、といっても過言ではないと思う

⁶⁸ Shimura 2001. P. 347

to find what is of value and to attempt to elucidate its form for the benefit of their contemporaries as well as future scholars.

CHAPTER 3

CHARACTER, WORLD BUILDING, AND NARRATIVE STYLE IN *GENJŌ TO IU BIWA ONI NO TAME NI TORARURU KOTO*

3.1 Introducing Abe no Seimei

This section will take a comparative look at the stories that make up the first entry of the series, entitled *Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto*. An analysis of this story will provide direct insight into Yumemakura Baku's treatment of Seimei and how he uses the original source materials in his stories. Ultimately, it will elucidate Seimei's role in Yumemakura Baku's world and provide insight into the methods Yumemakura Baku employs to incorporate essentially genre-less narratives into genre fiction.

The *Onmyōji* series' first short story, *Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto*, begins with a narrative voice akin to that of an orator. "I will tell the tale of a peculiar man. If one were to liken him to something, he would be like a cloud floating in the night sky, drifting in the wind. A cloud floating in the darkness changes in an instant, even as one stares at it, unable to perceive the change in its shape from one moment to the next. Though it is but one cloud, one cannot seem to grasp its form. This is the story of a man like that. His name: Abe no Seimei."⁶⁹

Yumemakura Baku explains this style of writing in some depth, claiming that even if one is manipulating written words, there is a distinct advantage to being conscious of the sound of the language being used--that when rhythm, meaning, and sound are used

⁶⁹ 奇妙な男の話をする。たとえて言うなら、風に漂いながら、夜の虚空に浮く雲のような男の話だ。闇に浮いた雲は、一瞬前も一瞬後も、どれほどかたちを変えたようにも見えないが、見つめていけば、いつの間にかその姿を変えている。同じ雲であるはずなのに、その在様かたちの捕えどころがない。そんな男の話だ。名は、安倍晴明。

properly, words have the ability to stimulate all the senses as though they have their own physical body.⁷⁰ With this philosophy in mind, one can see why he begins the series in much the same manner a street story teller might. Oratory story telling demands the attention of the audience in a manner that a faceless third person omniscient narrator is not capable, and it recalls lyrical and rhythmic verbal forms used in performance art. Evidence of the impact this style of story-telling has had on its readers can be seen in the fact that Yumemakura Baku has been invited to *rōdoku* (recitation) sessions of the series in a public forum, in which musical accompaniment complemented his recitation.⁷¹

The narrator goes on to describe Seimei as he is depicted in *Konjaku monogatari shū*, chiming in periodically to add his own imaginative touches. His faithfulness to the original text so explicitly noted by Tanaka Takako is apparent as one proceeds through the first chapter of the story; however, it is framed within Yumemakura Baku's unique narrative voice, and includes many important touches that reveal his interpretation of both the character and the stories on which it is based. They also reveal key interpretive liberties that Yumemakura Baku takes to help fill out the otherwise bare bones text presented in *Konjaku monogatari shū*.

Consistent with the overall tone of the series, Yumemakura Baku characterizes the Heian period as, “An age in which darkness remained as it is, darkness, and in which many people believed whole-heartedly in the existence of mysterious forces.”⁷² While stories existed prior to *Onmyōji* that were set in the Heian period and depicted mysterious supernatural events, the dominant contemporary perception of the period at the time of

⁷⁰ Yumemakura 2012. P. 31

⁷¹ Yumemakura 2012. P. 31

⁷² 闇が闇として残っていた時代で、人々の何割かは、妖しあやのものの存在を確実に信じていた頃である。

Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto's writing was more closely tied with *The Tale of Genji* and its ilk--a decidedly different style of narrative that carries with it a reputation for grace, beauty, and astringency, not to mention a sense of nationalistic pride.

Yumemakura Baku, heedless of this, imagines his own Heian period in which his Abe no Seimei could act as a mediator between the darkness he describes and the people who live in it. This transformation of the Heian period, thus, serves two purposes: to create a world that does not reject his signature violent narrative style, while also providing a distinct role for Seimei to fill. In addition, it provides him with a channel through which he can incorporate narrative styles that are more elegant than the hyper-masculine fare for which he had come to be known. Yumemakura Baku has said that it was difficult to break free from the mold that he had made for himself early in his career, and *Onmyōji* was his solution for that.⁷³ This process of building a more elegant world in which he could work demanded a protagonist to match it. With this in mind, the form in which he conceives Abe no Seimei is not surprising.

The introduction of *Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto* continues with Yumemakura Baku's rendition of the contents of the sixteenth tale of the twenty fourth book of *Konjaku monogatari shū*, which, incidentally was the first piece through which Yumemakura Baku became acquainted with Abe no Seimei.⁷⁴ It is preceded by a description of what an *onmyōji* is--information that has become common knowledge since. The description is exceedingly brief since it needed to do little more than establish Seimei's role as master of the supernatural. He characterizes the *Onmyōji* as "Diviners... Sorcerers or ritualists... Who could view the fate of people by viewing the fate of the

⁷³ Yumemakura 2003. P. 170

⁷⁴ Yumemakura 2003. P. 170

stars, kill people with curses, divine auspicious directions, and use magic. They had control over supernatural forces--invisible forces such as spirits, souls, fate, and *oni*, and had a deep connection with such things.”⁷⁵

Having established Seimei’s role, he takes every opportunity that *Konjaku monogatari shū* presents to elaborate on his personality--a matter that was of little importance to the authors of the original text. In the original text, events are described as if the inner workings of the characters in question were of no consequence. No insight is given by the narrator about their attitudes and motivations, though there is ample opportunity for the reader to surmise various elements of their personality through their actions and words. Yumemakura Baku capitalizes on this to take creative control of the text, and through doing so establishes Seimei’s personality.

Although the narrator makes many interjections, let us focus on this specific group--those that elucidate Seimei’s personality. Yumemakura Baku goes out of his way to distinguish Seimei from his contemporaries first through his clothing. The other retainers described accompanying Tadayuki during his outing wear *hitatare* 直垂, wide sleeved robes over which *hakama* 袴, wide pants or skirts, are worn. The young Seimei, who Yumemakura Baku imagines is between ten and thirteen years old, on the other hand, is wearing weathered old hand-me-downs. Even from this early on in the story, the reader understands that he is an outsider in the aristocrats’ realm, one who is ultimately co-opted by the aristocrats for his unusual talents. Though his origins are not explained, one cannot

⁷⁵ 分かり易く言うなら、占い師とでもいうことになるだろうか。幻術師、拝み屋という言い方もできようが、どれも適確なものではない。陰陽師は星の相を観、人の相を観る。方位も観れば、占いもし、呪詛によって人を呪い殺すこともでき、幻術を使ったりもする。眼に見えない力——運命とか、靈魂とか、そういうもののことに深く通じており、そのようなあやかしを支配する技術を持っていた。

help but imagine that Yumemakura Baku was recalling the Edo stories in which Seimei is depicted as the son of a commoner from Abeno village when he introduced him in this manner.

He continues to describe Seimei, marking his elaborations with terms like *de arō* (maybe), and *ni chigai nai* (definitely), in lieu of making absolute statements, a technique that reminds the reader that this is not fiction, but historical fiction. The ability of the Japanese language to indicate the perspective of the speaker through terms like these without providing the subject of the sentence allows Yumemakura Baku to weave in and out of the original *Konjaku monogatari shū* story, producing subtle transitions between his own interjections and the information provided by the original text.

He goes on to describe Seimei as a handsome youth whose natural talent, one might imagine, would be obvious, but is still childish in the way any other young boy might be. This childishness is important, as it defines Seimei as a character in adulthood as well. It also endows Seimei with a sense of unpredictability while simultaneously tearing down the perception that an individual involved in such serious affairs as those associated with an *onmyōji* must be astringent and disciplined. This contrast between Seimei's character and his profession allows Yumemakura Baku to consistently keep his readers guessing as to what his intentions and motivations are.

Yumemakura Baku characterizes Seimei by imagining his thoughts when the monk comes to visit his abode with two *shikigami* boys in tow. The first indication during this section of Yumemakura Baku's elaborative approach comes with Seimei's good humored response to the realization that the monk was testing him. In stark contrast to his presentation in *Konjaku monogatari shū*, he is mildly impressed by the *onmyōji* and

smiles internally even as he nods to the monk and informs him that he is too busy to meet with him. He is so unthreatened by the monk that he proceeds to stare up at the sky as the monk departs.

Although Seimei's attitude toward the monk revealed to be *onmyōji* in *Konjaku monogatari shū* is belligerent, in *Onmyōji* he is depicted as cool and relaxed. Seimei in *Konjaku monogatari shū* harbors human insecurities; he is so offended by the *onmyōji*'s bold attempt to test his abilities. Seimei in *Onmyōji* has so exceeded the realm of human capacity that he is completely divorced from human concerns. This reveals that the Seimei as a foreigner in the aristocrat's world that Yumemakura Baku first depicted with his description of him as a child is more than a suggestion – it becomes a theme and an important aspect of his character.

Seimei goes on to smile in a way that is “neither vulgar nor particularly refined” and proceeds to call the two *shikigami* boys back.⁷⁶ Here, the narrator's voice becomes more conspicuous. “It would be interesting if Seimei said in amusement, ‘I had them buy some snacks nearby. Since you entertained me so well, why don't you take the snacks back home with you?’ as the boys came back bearing sake and some side dishes, but *Konjaku monogatari shū* does not go into that much detail. The boys just come running back.”⁷⁷

The story continues in precisely the same order as *Konjaku monogatari shū*. Seimei is conversing with some aristocrats when they ask him whether or not he can kill

⁷⁶ 下品ではないにしても、あまり上品ではない笑み

⁷⁷ そのふたりの童子が、それぞれ酒と肴を手にもっていて、「すぐそこで購わせてきた。楽しませてもらったのでな、それを持って帰りなさい—」と晴明がおかしそうに言ったとあればおもしろいのだが、そこまでは「今昔物語」には書かれていない。ふたりの童子は走ってもどってきただけである

with his techniques, to which Seimei replies, “You ask about the most secret and most sought after of our techniques as though it were no important matter.”⁷⁸ In *Konjaku monogatari shū* Seimei’s demeanor is not elaborated, yet Yumemakura Baku imagines that he, “Might have purposely eyed the aristocrats who asked him the question with a frightening look, and continued after briefly enjoying the look of fear in their eyes.”⁷⁹

He further refines the bare bones presentation of *Konjaku monogatari shū* in order to build Seimei’s personality as he imagines it by qualifying Seimei’s following statement, which reads in *Konjaku monogatari shū*, “It takes some energy, but I can if I try. I can kill a bug easily. However, I do not know a method to bring them back to life, so it is a sinful thing to do.”⁸⁰ Instead, *Onmyōji* reads, “‘Well no, killing a person is not so easy a task...’ Seimei may have smiled and put the men at ease before adding something like, ‘but there are various ways to accomplish it.’”⁸¹

By drawing the conversation out, Yumemakura Baku allows room for Seimei to play with his associates, filling out his character significantly. This distinct feature of *Onmyōji*’s narrative is the result of the demands of modern story-telling, in which the personality of the characters involved are no less important than the plot itself. More importantly, it demonstrates Yumemakura Baku’s mastery of the original material, and allows him the creative license to draw Seimei out of these original contexts into stories

⁷⁸道ノ大事ヲ此 現ニモ問ヒ給フカナ

⁷⁹わざとこわい眼で、清明はその質問をした公達の顔を覗き込んだかもしれない。公達の眼の中に生じた怯えをちらりと楽しんでから

⁸⁰安クハ否不殺。少シカダニ入テ 掬ヘバ必ず殺シテム。虫ナドヲバ塵許ノ事セムニ、カナラズ殺シツベキニ、生ク様ヲ不知バ、罪ヲ得ヌベケレバ、由無キ也。

⁸¹「いや、そう簡単に、人など殺せるものではありませんよ」微笑して、清明は公達を安心させてやり、「まあ、色々と方法はありますがねー」そのくらいはつけ加えたかもしれない。

of both original Yumemakura Baku creation and other stories inspired by materials in which Seimei did not have a presence.

He goes on in this manner, filling in the gaps left by *Konjaku monogatari shū* to establish Seimei's character, before summing him up in the end of the first chapter in a lengthy description of his characteristics, habits, and abilities:

“If one takes a gander at the other stories in which this Abe no Seimei appears, one finds that he is often depicted using magic at whim to shock and amaze, much like he did with Chitoku the monk or the frog.⁸² He seems to be enjoying shocking people in this way. He seems to have some childish traits despite the airs he puts on with his composed demeanor.

From here on is merely my conjecture but, it seems to me that this man called Abe no Seimei had a fair appreciation for and understanding of common parlance and was a bit irresponsible in some ways, even as he worked for the imperial court. He was probably an attractive youth, tall and thin with pearl white skin and a cool laid back look in his eyes. The women of the court would stare longingly when he appeared in court, strolling casually about in elegant attire. He most certainly received one or two letters full of amorous words from some high ranking women. Though he was adroit in his dealings with his superiors, he would occasionally slip up and use some inappropriately familiar phrase. He was the kind of person one could imagine carelessly yelling, ‘Hey you!’ to the emperor.

At times his lips would be drawn up into an elegant smile, but at others one might find a churlish grin on his face. *Onmyōji* must have had a distinct understanding of the

⁸² The name Yumemakura Baku gives to the monk who visited him with two *shikigami* boys. It does not appear in *Konjaku monogatari shū*.

finer points of moral doctrine, and those that worked in the imperial court must have had particularly advanced training. He probably had the standard Chinese poems memorized and had some talent with musical instruments as well. He could probably play one or two instruments like the *biwa* or flute pretty well.

I imagine the Heian period as an age of darkness and grace. I will tell you the story of a man who floated carelessly through this elegant and graceful yet ghastly darkness like a cloud in the wind.”⁸³ (See Appendix B.2 for original text)

Ultimately all of these comments serve to create the Seimei that Yumemakura Baku imagines--one who contrasts with all prior depictions of him in very important ways. It can be said that during the Insei period Seimei's persona was that of a middle aged to old man who worked as a member of the court's aristocracy. The stories from the Edo period boom separated him from the aristocracy by placing his origins in the countryside and positing the theory that he was the son of a fox. It further altered his age from that of an old to middle aged man to that of a young boy. Yumemakura Baku chose to depict him as he had not been depicted before--a young man at the height of his beauty, who is aloof, self-assured, and most importantly, playful.

In the style of *Konjaku monogatari shū*, which functions more as a recording of orally transmitted tales than a narrative, Seimei's actions and abilities are the primary hook for readers to engage with. His personality is inconsequential, though his actions and words reveal a more insecure man than the self-assured one that Yumemakura Baku imagines. Just so, in the Edo period the story of his growth into an all powerful *onmyōji* and the drama of his childhood are far more important elements of the narrative than his personal quirks and traits. He is a means through which human drama as seen through the

⁸³ Yumemakura 1988. Pp. 29-31

eyes of the viewer or reader can unfold. Through seeking to explain Seimei, writer Asai Ryōi humanized him even as created a story in which he is not wholly human, since in his rendition Seimei is the son of a fox and a man.

Yumemakura Baku redraws the veil of mystery about Seimei while beautifying him to create an alluring charm with which to draw in the reader. While *Onmyōji* is ultimately about much more than Seimei's personality, Yumemakura Baku lures the reader into his dark Heian world by reading a charismatic personality into Seimei that does not appear in any of the material that precedes him. By doing so, Yumemakura Baku separates Abe no Seimei from his peers, presenting him as a foreign entity in the human realm--an aspect of his character that is essential for him to perform the role of mediator between the supernatural and the mundane.

3.2 *Shasekishū* in *Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto*

Although Yumemakura Baku works extensively from *Konjaku monogatari shū* in the first story of the *Onmyōji* series, he does not limit himself to it. The scope of *Konjaku monogatari shū* is massive unto itself; however, Yumemakura Baku shows signs of the potential scope of the *Onmyōji* series by drawing from materials outside of it. It is but a whisper that shows itself in this first chapter, but Yumemakura Baku reaches out to *Shasekishū* 沙石集, or *Sand and Pebbles* for inspiration as well.

Shasekishū, a Kamakura 鎌倉(1185-1333) period collection of Buddhist tales, was written from approximately 1279 until 1285. After its completion it was edited extensively and its repertoire of stories grew. The author, Mujū Ichi'en 無住一円, was a practitioner of a type of Zen Buddhism called *Rinzai-shū* 臨濟宗, and gathered various

stories from the region around Chōbo 長母 Temple, which is situated in Owari 尾張 or modern day Nagoya 名古屋. It contains many contemporaneous slang terms and was ultimately used as inspiration for many *Hanashibon* 咄本 and *Kyōgen* 狂言 plays. Despite this, one still finds plenty of stories featuring more sober subject matter. Yumemakura Baku draws upon one of its stories to help set the tone of the Heian Japan he imagines.

Appearing in the fifth book of the collection and entitled “*Uta yue ni inochi o ushinau koto* 歌ユヘニ命ヲウシノウ事,” or “A Life is Lost to Poetry,” the story features Mibu no Tadami 壬生忠見, who appears in an *uta-awase* 歌合 hosted by Emperor Murakami 村上 alongside Taira no Kanemori 平兼盛. Mibu no Tadami, endeavoring to write a truly great poem, writes,

“That I am in love
Is the fame that already
Has spread abroad;
And yet I was so secret then
In those first still thoughts of you.”⁸⁴⁸⁵

Kanemori, equally motivated to write an amazing poem writes,

“I had kept it dark,
The hue that now is plain to see:
My longing is out,
People have started to notice;
‘What’s on your mind?’ they ask.”⁸⁶⁸⁷

⁸⁴戀ステフ我名ハマダキ立ニケリ人シレズコソ思ヒソメシカ

⁸⁵ Cranston 1993. P. 319

⁸⁶ ツツメドモ色ニ出デニケリ我戀ハ物ヤ思フト人ノトフマデ

⁸⁷ Cranston 1993. P. 319

The judges, unable to decide on a winner, look to the emperor, who reads Mibu no Tadami's poem three times before proceeding to read Kanemori's poem repeatedly. Eventually the emperor indicates the left, and Kanemori is declared the winner. Tadami, unable to bear the loss, stops eating and closes himself up in his quarters.⁸⁸ Kanemori, hearing of Tadami's illness, visits Tadami in his quarters. Tadami tells him, "This is no illness. At the *uta-awase*, when I thought I had written an excellent poem and you wrote, 'What's on your mind?' they ask," I was shocked by how much better your poem was than mine and my heart closed up. That is how I ended up this way."⁸⁹ He then passes away and the narrator ends the chapter with the following comment: "To obsess is not a good thing, but to obsess about poetry the way Tadami did is a painfully touching thing."⁹⁰

Mibu no Tadami's presence in *Onmyōji* is brief, and his role secondary. He is first introduced by Hiromasa when he is asked by Seimei whether or not anything had happened at the capital while he was visiting a monk at *Kōya* 高野.⁹¹ Hiromasa explains that Mibu no Tadami had starved himself and passed away, to which Seimei responds, "The Tadami who wrote 'That I am in love'?"⁹² Seimei's knowledge of Tadami's poem provides Yumemakura Baku with a concrete example of Seimei's worldliness to impress upon the reader. He also provides Yumemakura Baku an elegant story based in the tradition of Heian that most are familiar with, full of sensitive poets and evocative poetry.

⁸⁸ The original refers to this as a "Failure to eat illness," or 不食の病.

⁸⁹ 「別ノ病ニアラズ。御歌合時、名歌ヨミ出シテ覺侍シニ、殿ノ、「物ヤ思おもふト人ノトフマデ」ニ、アワト思おもひテ、アサマシク覺ヘシヨリ、ムネフサガリテ、カク思おもひ侍リス」

⁹⁰ 執心コソヨシナケレドモ、道ヲ執スル習ヒアワレニコソ。

⁹¹ Yumemakura Baku 1988. P. 50

⁹² 恋すてふの壬生忠見か—

By presenting the story as a rumor, he also efficiently creates the sense of a wider world. He avoids the need to delve into lengthy descriptive narratives about the details of courtly politics, and effectively maintains the sense of distance between Seimei and the rest of Heian society he went to such lengths to create. As we will see, he also transforms the relatively tame narrative presented in *Shasekishū* into a violent one, infusing it with the darkness he claims to see in Heian Japan in the first chapter.

His use of the tale does not end there. In characteristic Yumemakura Baku fashion, the tale functions in multiple capacities. After Hiromasa explains that Mibu no Tadami had died, Yumemakura Baku launches into a brief retelling of the contents of *Shasekishū*'s tale, with some distinct changes.

First, the emperor does not hesitate to proclaim Kanemori the winner. The judges, unable to decide on a winner, look to the emperor, who recites Kanemori's poem, which the onlookers take to mean the emperor prefers Kanemori's poem. The readiness with which the emperor chooses Kanemori's poem over Tadami's emphasizes the impact of that decision. Had the emperor hesitated as he does in *Shasekishū*, the force of the decision would be necessarily reduced, and the reader's sense of Tadami's distress would likewise have softened.

Second, Tadami is said to have passed away while biting his own tongue, impressing upon the reader the violence of his emotional state in a manner that the original tale does not. If he had merely passed away due to starvation, his ghost's appearance would have seemed less threatening. Clearly, Yumemakura Baku is intentionally incorporating violence into a story that was fundamentally void of it in order to infuse the world he is building with darkness. This darkness is an essential element of

the *Onmyōji* narrative, for it is through this darkness that Abe no Seimei is looked to by his contemporaries to help them navigate.

Last is the appearance of Tadami's ghost in the palace. He is said to wander about the palace muttering the first line of his poem over and over according to Hiromasa. Seimei responds to this tale with amusement, which Hiromasa reprimands him for, reminding him that if the emperor heard about it he may move his quarters. Each of these changes functions in some capacity; however, it is the presence of Tadami's ghost that is most critical to *Onmyōji*'s structure, for it is through this ghost's presence that Seimei's boundaries are drawn. Seimei is amused by Tadami's ghost, but does not see a need to take action despite Hiromasa's reproach. In fact, Seimei circumvents the issue and asks Hiromasa why he came to visit, which prompts Hiromasa to delve into the tale of *Genjō*.

One might expect given the potential for disruption that Tadami presents that Seimei would take action to deal with him; however, doing so would subvert Yumemakura Baku's narrative goals. Tadami's presence in the story is our first indication that Seimei has true agency--Hiromasa knows that it would be for the better for the court if Tadami's ghost is dealt with, but he does not push the issue because he knows that Seimei will act as he pleases. Seimei, for his part, has clearly decided that Tadami's ghost does not pose a threat or that even if it did, he may not care enough to take action. Here, Seimei demonstrates that not only does he have agency, but that he is unwilling to arbitrarily oppress or suppress supernatural forces, despite the power he has over them. Quite simply, Seimei does not see his role as that of a court exorcist, nor does he view the supernatural as fundamentally different or separate from the human world. Ultimately, it is precisely this perspective that affords him power over both.

Yumemakura Baku utilizes several techniques to construct a cohesive personality for Abe no Seimei. He utilizes a distinct narrative voice which allows him to make interjections that fill out Seimei's personality, describing a childish prankster whose tendency toward petty tricks belies his aloof manner. He then uses the foil of Mibu no Tadami's pathetic tale to establish Seimei's boundaries and confirm unequivocally that he is an entity independent from the court he serves. This groundwork is essential in order for Seimei to freely perform the role of mediator that he is later asked to.

CHAPTER 4

THE STRUCTURE OF *GENJŌ TO IU BIWA ONI NO TAME NI TORARURU KOTO*

4.1 Combining Disparate Narratives

Although as we have seen Yumemakura Baku has already taken significant creative liberties with his presentation of the contents of tale sixteen of chapter twenty four of *Konjaku monogatari shū*, it is from the second chapter on that he begins to be far more selective about the information he takes from the original texts, as well as the order in which he presents it. The first chapter of *Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto* is explicitly pulled from one chapter and section, constituting the most straight forward of Yumemakura Baku's adaptations, as well as elucidating the most fundamental techniques he utilizes to differentiate his tale from its source texts.

Yumemakura Baku mixes multiple sources in the remaining six chapters, providing ample opportunity for us to analyze the world of darkness he depicts. Two of his most obvious inspirations are Tales Twenty-Three and Twenty-Four of book Twenty-Four of *Konjaku monogatari shū*. Although the general contents of the stories are similar in *Onmyōji*'s recounting, Tale Twenty Three is lifted out of its original context as an independent story and integrated into tale twenty four as a segment that allows Yumemakura Baku to import the *biwa* master Semimaru into his larger vision of tale twenty four. His reasons for doing this are not immediately obvious, but when one considers the contents of the two stories, they become much clearer.

Tale Twenty Three, entitled “*Tale 23: Minamoto no Hiromasa no ason Ausaka no meshii no moto ni yuku koto*,”⁹³ or “Court Noble Minamoto no Hiromasa Goes to Visit the Blind Man of Ausaka,” begins by describing Minamoto no Hiromasa’s status and familial ties in some depth, something that Yumemakura Baku does not see fit to include in his variation. According to *Konjaku monogatari shū*, he is the son of Emperor Engi’s son, Hyōbukyō, making him exceptionally close to the emperor in terms of familial ties. Although he is described as being talented in all things, but being particularly talented in the realm of music, whether or not he had training in the martial arts is not mentioned. Given his lineage, it is difficult to imagine that someone of his rank would be familiar with something as boorish as the martial arts, yet Yumemakura Baku misunderstands Hiromasa’s fundamental character in his early depictions, and describes him as a warrior. Over time this depiction becomes greatly muted; however, it is important to note that Hiromasa is first described as a warrior who looked to be in his mid thirties, with sword on belt, and an assiduous air.⁹⁴

Although this representation is faithful in essence to his personality as it is presented in *Konjaku monogatari shū*, his presentation as a warrior lends him a harsher air, and significantly alters the reader’s perception of him. This misrepresentation is evidence of Yumemakura Baku’s lack of familiarity with the source material. He is no scholar of Heian literature, a fact that he is more than willing to acknowledge and point out himself.⁹⁵ We will see as we read on; however, that mistakes like these are few and far between, and that each change Yumemakura Baku makes to the original stories has a distinct purpose. *Konjaku monogatari shū* goes on to say that Hiromasa played the *biwa*

⁹³ 源博雅朝臣、行会坂盲許語第二十三

⁹⁴ Yumemakura 1988. P. 35

⁹⁵ Yumemakura 2003. P. 66

impressively well, and that words could not describe his flute playing, something that Yumemakura Baku refrains from noting at this stage in the narrative.

After introducing Hiromasa in this manner, Hiromasa's visit with Seimei begins. They converse at length about Seimei's thoughts on the relationship between spells and names, as well as Mibu no Tadami's ghost before Seimei asks Hiromasa why he has come. Hiromasa describes his encounter at *Rashō* Gate with an *oni* who has stolen the emperor's *biwa*, *Genjō*. When Hiromasa hears the *biwa* being played, the narrator digresses into the contents of *Konjaku monogatari shū*'s "Tale 23, Minamoto no Hiromasa no ason, Ausaka no meshii no moto ni yuku koto." The story describes a blind man who built a hut away from the capital in a place called Ausaka no seki 会坂の関. It turns out this blind man is none other than Semimaru, who Hiromasa hears about. He decides he must hear Semimaru's *biwa*. Rather than go himself, he sends a courier in secret to Semimaru's hut with the message, "Why do you live in such a terribly unfitting place? Why don't you come and live at the capital?"⁹⁶ Semimaru responds with a *waka*:

"Wherever one lives
Intrinsic disparity
Cannot be discerned
For, our final resting place
Is inevitably death"⁹⁷

Hiromasa, greatly impressed by Semimaru's sensibilities, decides that he must hear Semimaru's *biwa*, thinking, "I feel very strongly, since I love the way of music so deeply, that I must meet this blind man. Who is to know how much longer he will live? How am I to know how much longer I will live? There are *biwa* songs by the name of *Ryūsen* 流泉 and *Takuboku* 啄木. What a loss the world would suffer should these songs

⁹⁶ な おもひかけぬ すめ
何ト不思懸所ニハ住ゾ。京ニ来テモ住カシ。

⁹⁷ 世中ハトテモカクテモスゴシテムミヤモワラヤモハテシナケレバ

be lost. This blind man is the only person left in the world who knows them. I must hear him play these songs.” He goes to Ausaka no seki; however, Semimaru does not play the songs, so Hiromasa goes every night for three years to wait beside his hut in secret, thinking, “He’ll play it now, he’ll play it now,” in anticipation, until on the fifteenth night of the eighth month of the third year, a slightly cloudy, slightly breezy evening, he thinks, “Oh, might I revel this night? The blind man at Ausaka no seki is sure to play *Ryūsen* and *Takuboku* tonight,”⁹⁸ and makes his way to listen by the side of the hut. There, he finds Semimaru absorbed in sentiment as he plucks away at the *biwa* strings.

Hiromasa is overjoyed as he stands there enjoying the melody, when Semimaru speaks into the nothingness,

“I endure the storm
As it assaults my abode
Until the night’s⁹⁹ end
Here at the barrier of
The place we call Meeting Slope^{100,101}

Hiromasa is moved to tears as the man strums the *biwa* again, feeling this extremely poignant. The blind man continues speaking to himself: “Oh, may this be a night for reveling! Might there be some young soul that enjoys the arts in this world? Might someone who is familiar with the *biwa* come to me this night, that we may speak of such things ‘till morning comes?’”¹⁰²

⁹⁸ 哀レ、今夜ハ興有カ。会坂盲、今夜コソ流泉・啄木ハ弾ラメ

⁹⁹ There is a double meaning with the word *yo*, which functions as a homonym for both night and life. The implication is that he is enduring the storm of life until it ends as well.

¹⁰⁰ *Ausaka no seki* 会坂の関

¹⁰¹ アフサカノセキノアラシノハゲシキニシキテゾキタルヨラスゴストテ

¹⁰² 哀レ、興有ル夜カナ。若シ我レニ非ズ____者ヤ世ニ有ラム。今夜心得タラム人ノ来カシ。物語セム。

Hiromasa, hearing this, steps forward and proclaims, “There is such a man! I Hiromasa, have come here from the capital.”¹⁰³

He then proceeds to explain that he has been visiting the hut for the past three years to listen to Semimaru’s *biwa*, which delights Semimaru. Hiromasa enters the hut and asks Semimaru to play *Ryūsen* and *Takuboku* for him. They enjoy each others’ company, and ultimately Semimaru teaches him the songs verbally, as Hiromasa does not have his own *biwa* on hand.

Here the narrator of *Konjaku monogatari shū* interjects briefly, lamenting the fact that “in future years there will be few people skilled in each of the ways.”¹⁰⁴ The narrator goes on to praise Semimaru’s talent at the *biwa*, saying that despite his low station he plays just as well as the best of the *biwa* players at court, and that he is the reason that blind *biwa* players began to gather at Ausaka.

Yumemakura Baku chooses to frame this story within the larger narrative of *Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto*, which he expands upon significantly, while largely ignoring the comments of *Konjaku monogatari shū*’s narrator.

As noted earlier, the story of Hiromasa’s meeting with Semimaru is introduced as a digression while Hiromasa ostensibly recounts his encounter with the *oni* at *Rashō* Gate. I use the term ostensibly because there are no clear linguistic markers to indicate that it is Hiromasa’s recollection of the tale that is being told in Yumemakura Baku’s text. Rather, the reader understands by context that the story as it is told is a description of Hiromasa’s experience. This ambiguity affords Yumemakura Baku significant freedom to enter the

¹⁰³ おうじゃう 王城ニ有ル博雅ト云者コソ此ニ来タレ

¹⁰⁴ 然レバ、まつだい末代ニハ諸道ニ達者ハ少キ也。まこと これ実ニ此哀ナル事也カシ

text and introduce the digression that is his interpretation of the contents of “*Tale 23: Minamoto no Hiromasa no ason Ausaka no meshii no moto ni yuku koto.*”

Yumemakura Baku introduces his reading of Seimei in the first chapter. He utilizes “*Tale 23: Minamoto no Hiromasa no ason Ausaka no meshii no moto ni yuku koto*” to establish Hiromasa’s character. Amidst this introductory process, he establishes Hiromasa’s relationship to Seimei by beginning the story with Hiromasa’s visit to Seimei’s abode.

Although at this early stage the reader is unaware that Hiromasa visiting Seimei at his home would become the pattern that each of the series’ stories would follow, this technique functions in three capacities. The first is that it allows him to avoid introducing how the two developed a relationship that ignores their courtly rank--one simply accepts that their friendship is special, which allows Seimei to refer to Hiromasa in a manner unbefitting their status relative to each other.

The second is that it establishes a strong sense of comfort, for the reverse in roles that is instantly apparent to the reader gives one the sense that Hiromasa truly trusts Seimei, and that in turn the reader can feel comfortable in their presence. The episodic nature of the narrative and Yumemakura Baku’s loyalty to this pattern further reinforces this sense of comfort. In fact, Yumemakura Baku has commented himself that he avoids touching on details such as their family and rank in order to maintain the otherworldly sense of the narrative.¹⁰⁵

The third is that it creates a space separate from the original tales through which Yumemakura Baku can integrate them. It is in large part thanks to the creation of Abe no Seimei and Minamoto no Hiromasa’s relationship that Yumemakura Baku is able to

¹⁰⁵ Yumemakura, 2012. Pp. 27-29

integrate distinct stories into a single narrative, for it is through the stage of their meetings that the stories are interwoven.

Having established the world in which Seimei and Hiromasa perform as well as their personalities and relationship to one another, Yumemakura Baku loses no time in introducing the dilemma of the story--the disappearance of one of the emperor's prized possessions: the *biwa* called *Genjō*. This section of the story is the most elaborated of his adaptations of *Konjaku monogatari shū* and features the contents of Tale Twenty-Four of book Twenty-Four, of the same name as the chapter in *Onmyōji*.

The contents of the story can be described rather briefly. *Genjō* disappears, and the emperor is naturally distraught. One night Hiromasa hears *Genjō* being played and due to his uncanny talent as a musician is able to recognize it and follows the sound to *Rashō Gate*. *Konjaku monogatari shū* describes in depth the process of Hiromasa's course to the gate – an aspect of the story that Yumemakura Baku remains faithful to. There, he listens for a moment and is amazed at the skill of the player, and proclaims that the player must be an *oni*. He adds that he heard the sound of the *biwa* and came to find it because the emperor was looking for it. Then something falls from atop the gate, and overcoming his fear, Hiromasa approaches to find *Genjō* hanging from a rope. He takes it and brings it back to the emperor, explaining that it was taken by an *oni*. The emperor is overjoyed and Hiromasa is praised for his deed. The story ends explaining that *Genjō* had a life of its own, and would mysteriously appear in the garden or play on its own.

Because Abe no Seimei does not appear in the original *Konjaku monogatari shū* story Yumemakura Baku must make significant changes in order to accommodate his presence. Although Minamoto no Hiromasa follows the sound of the *biwa* to *Rashō Gate*

on his own in the original, in *Onmyōji* he brings along a boy servant. The boy becomes frightened when the torch he is holding goes out and he begs Hiromasa to go back to the palace. This boy serves an important purpose. He allows Hiromasa to investigate and to come to the conclusion that the situation is supernatural without having him solve the matter outright.

It would have been simple enough to have Hiromasa become nervous or frightened himself; however, using this technique would have betrayed Hiromasa's character as a straightforward and courageous man. Rather, through use of the boy, Yumemakura Baku gives Hiromasa a chance to involve Seimei without contradicting the disposition he has equipped him with. It is important to note that while Hiromasa does visit the gate once more, he does so prepared with the knowledge that his torch will likely be blown out and he prepares himself properly. It is only after he attempts to climb to the top of the gate upon his second visit that he decides to involve Seimei, for a rotten eyeball falls from atop the gate and alerts Hiromasa to the fact that it is indeed a supernatural being that he is dealing with. It is reason and not cowardice that causes him to withdraw. Ultimately the boy is an important foil for typical human emotion through which Yumemakura Baku demonstrates Hiromasa's qualities. It becomes clear on a close reading that each alteration Yumemakura Baku makes is supported by distinct and balanced reasoning.

It is after this point temporally that the story begins, for Hiromasa returns with the boy and we are only informed of these first visits to the gate because he tells Seimei when he visits to ask for his assistance with the matter.

Yumemakura Baku expands upon two key elements of the stories to link them together. In tale twenty four, Hiromasa is impressed by the *biwa* playing of the *oni* atop *Rashō* gate, prompting Yumemakura Baku to have Hiromasa think to himself, “There are yet still secret melodies to be heard in this world.”¹⁰⁶ This provides the narrator a space to interject, explaining that it was just last year that Hiromasa had heard the secret songs *Ryūsen* and *Takuboku*, and ultimately launch into a faithful retelling of the contents of tale twenty three using the same techniques he used to introduce Seimei from the original stories of the *Konjaku monogatari shū* to introduce Hiromasa and Semimaru’s relationship while expanding upon the narrative with his characteristic touches.

The narrator’s voice fades in and out of prominence. In moments where he is quoting utterances taken from the text and translating them into modern Japanese, he appears to inform the reader that this modern rendition is an approximation of the original meaning, giving the reader the same sense a person listening to a tale passed down orally might, even going as far as to use conversational queues. One such example is when he translates Semimaru’s reply to Hiromasa’s invitation. “Well, he sang something to that effect with the *biwa*.”¹⁰⁷ It is important to note that my translation of *maa* as “well” does not maintain quite as significant a conversational tone as the original Japanese. One rarely sees a phrase like this in a written text. Its existence reminds the reader that this is a story being spoken and not written.

Next, Yumemakura Baku feels the need to explain to the audience why Hiromasa goes to Semimaru’s abode for an entire three years every night without simply asking him to play the two songs. “However, Semimaru is not the type to respond favorably if

¹⁰⁶ さても、世には隠れたる秘曲があるものよ。

¹⁰⁷ まあ、そのような意味のことを、琵琶の楽音にのせて言ったのだった。

Hiromasa went to see him and asked him to play the songs. Even if he did play them, one can only wonder how heartfelt his performance would be. If possible, Hiromasa wanted to hear the songs played naturally, with heart.”¹⁰⁸

This explanation is made necessary by the change in common sentiment between when *Konjaku monogatari shū* is written and modern times. One might assume that Hiromasa’s reasons for going and waiting outside Semimaru’s hut for three years to hear the two secret melodies were so obvious to the author of *Konjaku monogatari shū* that they hardly required stating. At the very least such extreme patience and reservation was not considered unusual enough to require explanation. Were Yumemakura Baku not to provide such explanation a modern reader would be likely to feel the narrative slightly odd, even unnatural. One would likely have the sense that something was going on that was being left unsaid and feel a little bit cheated. Yet Yumemakura Baku does not simply seek to explain Hiromasa’s motivations--by describing his reasons for choosing this course of action he also seeks to provide insight into Hiromasa’s character. Upon reading this, one gets the sense that Hiromasa is an extremely sensitive man who takes music very seriously. Understanding the reasons for his actions allows the reader to understand key aspects of Hiromasa’s personality.

As we have seen, Yumemakura Baku weaves a complex web of disparate stories together masterfully into a singular narrative, all while expanding upon the original material to establish the personalities, motivations, and desires of the characters featured in the story. He first sets the stage for these disparate narratives to come together by introducing the story with Hiromasa’s visit to Seimei’s abode, presenting their

¹⁰⁸ しかし、会いにゆき、その曲を弾いてくれと頼んだのでは、このような方は快く思わず、たとえ弾いてくれたとしてもどれほど心のこもったものになるかどうか。できることなら、自然に、心のままにこの老法師が弾くのを聴きたいものだ。

relationship as having already been established. He draws upon the contents of Tale Twenty-Four of *Konjaku monogatari shū* briefly to describe Hiromasa's character, but makes the mistake of assuming Hiromasa was a warrior, a fact that he slowly distances himself from throughout the series. He then utilizes Hiromasa's presence in both tale twenty three and twenty four of *Konjaku monogatari shū* to weave them together, utilizing the narrator's voice to introduce tale twenty three. He also uses the narrative technique of having a character (Hiromasa) tell a story within the story in order to draw in Mibu no Tadami's story in *Shasekishū*. The foundation of this structure is the unexplained relationship between Hiromasa and Seimei, a fact that necessitates the pattern of Hiromasa bringing an issue to Seimei's abode that has become such an iconic element of the series. This structure is a significant characteristic of the approach taken in *Onmyōji* to introduce classical narratives in a form agreeable to modern audiences.

4.2 Onmyōji as Magical Horror Fiction

Having demonstrated the supernatural nature of Hiromasa's problem, established his fundamental character, and introduced his first guest character in the form of Hiromasa's visit with Semimaru, Yumemakura Baku moves the narrative into its next stage: the investigation. From this point on there are two major elements that stay faithful to the original *Konjaku monogatari shū* text, while the rest of the story is Yumemakura Baku's personal creation. The first element that remains unchanged is that the *oni* uses a rope to lower *Genjō* down from the gate. Yumemakura Baku uses this rope to great effect to separate the humans who communicate with the *oni* from it so that one finds it easy to

sympathize with the *oni* before its form is revealed.¹⁰⁹ The second element is that of the *biwa*'s sentience upon its return to the palace--an element of the story that ties in directly with Seimei's solution for the problem of the *oni*'s immortality and need for a body. Yumemakura Baku weaves these elements of the story into his larger narrative in order to expand upon the original material. By doing so, he transforms the original stories into a stage upon which his characters perform their own drama--one that draws upon genre fiction and other contemporary conceits.

The investigation can be split into two parts, which I will refer to as acts: the performance and the confrontation. The performance represents the elegant Heian of yore and focuses primarily on Semimaru and the *oni*'s *biwa* playing, in which Seimei and Hiromasa act as a foil through which the readers enjoy the music. The *oni* is concealed from the audience through the mechanism of the rope and its position atop the gate, and the audience is effectively shielded from the darkness that looms in the following act. The audience's ability to sympathize with the *oni* humanizes it. Sympathy acts as the *oni*'s mask.

A distinct characteristic of Yumemakura Baku's world of darkness is that he conflates *oni* with ghosts, though later depictions of *oni* as humans whose emotions have taken control of them and transformed them both spiritually and physically into *oni* indicate that the true form of an *oni* in *Onmyōji*'s world is overpowering emotion and obsession. Whether or not the *oni* possesses the physical body of the human who harbored those emotions or works through another vessel is a matter of circumstance rather than a qualitative difference. The *oni* that steals *Genjō* is the spirit of a dead man

¹⁰⁹ Reider 2007. Pp. 111-112

that possessed a dying dog, and Seimei refers to Mibu no Tadami's ghost as an *oni* in passing, facts that act as further evidence of this interpretation.

It is precisely the fact that *oni* are essentially human that makes them so pitiable. It is also what makes them easy to relate to, a fact that Yumemakura Baku capitalizes on to instill in the reader the necessary compassion to understand Seimei's actions, for as we have noted, he is not an exorcist or oppressor.

The performance is followed by a dialogue between the *oni* and Seimei's group, for which Seimei acts as intermediary. The *oni* begins talking to itself in Sanskrit, which Seimei identifies and informs his group that he can speak. He then proceeds to act as their interpreter for a moment before the *oni* begins speaking Japanese. The *oni* asks them their names and provides his own in turn--Kandata. Seimei then proceeds to inquire about the *oni*'s history and motivations, which the *oni* obliges with a heart wrenching tale. Seimei's inquiries are cut short when the *oni* says, "It's a strange fate, sir Masanari,"¹¹⁰ using the false name that Seimei provided and precluding Seimei's response due to the power responding to the name would give the *oni*. At this point Hiromasa demands the *oni* return *Genjō*, to which the *oni* responds with his own demands. They must allow him a night with a woman named Tamagusa, who he says resembles his wife in life. Though it is Hiromasa who accepts these demands, it is Seimei that opens the dialogue and enables their proceeding. The *oni* leaves the group with a demonstration of its power, warning them not to attempt to deceive him.

From this point on Seimei's true role begins, as the darkness that has been hinted at throughout the story takes front and center stage, and the knowledge Seimei's initial investigation provided is put into practice. The following evening Seimei and Hiromasa

¹¹⁰ 「不思議な縁でございます、正成どの—」

are accompanied by the woman the *oni* requested along with her brother, who happens to be a warrior known to have defeated a cat monster two years prior.

The woman is lifted up to the top of the gate with a rope, and the *oni*'s cries of delight can be heard from overhead before it lowers *Genjō* down by rope, as though to remind us that this is still the same story written in *Konjaku monogatari shū* even as Yumemakura Baku strikes up the narrative style of a practiced author of modern fiction.

Momentarily, it is revealed that Tamagusa and her brother had plotted to slay the *oni* by having a blade blessed by a monk. They intended for Tamagusa to conceal the blade and then behead the *oni* with it when she is sent up to it.

From here Yumemakura Baku makes use of several techniques to instill a sense of dread in the reader, describing the scene with a vividness characteristic of horror fiction. The exchange goes as follows:

“‘It’s *Genjō*.’ Hiromasa said as he approached the two¹¹¹ bearing the rosewood *biwa*. That’s when it happened. A disturbing voice came from atop *Rashō* Gate. It was the strangled cry of an agonized beast.

‘YOU TRICKED ME!’ The beast roared. The sound of struggle could be heard for just a moment. Then, a woman’s spine chilling scream echoed in the night, but it was quickly cut short. They could hear the sound of something wet falling to the ground, like the sound of water being poured from a pail. It dripped down to the ground and a warm stench filled the night air. The stench of blood.

‘Tamagusa!’ Seimei, Hiromasa, and Takatsugu cried, running to the foot of the gate. There they could see a black stain. When they lifted the light to it, they could see that it was crimson blood. A grotesque, skin crawling rustling sound came from atop the

¹¹¹ Seimei and the woman (Tamagusa)’s brother.

gate followed by the sound of something heavy striking the earth behind them. It was a woman's forearm, with hand still attached, the white flesh now stained scarlet with blood. 'Damn!' Takatsugu cried."¹¹² (See Appendix B.3 for original text)

Prior to this passage, the *oni* is not referred directly to as a beast. Rather, the sounds coming from atop *Rashō* Gate are described as beast-like. The reader quickly forgets the beast like nature of the *oni* as he converses with the group; however, these associations are instantly conjured when the *oni*'s voice is referred to as that of a beast. He is transformed in an instant from a pitiful soul to a frightening creature. What they suspected is confirmed, lending the discovery of the *oni*'s nature an impact that it would not otherwise have had.

Yet simultaneously a twang of guilt runs through the reader, who identify with the humans who attempted to deceive the *oni*. The *oni* cries out in shock at their betrayal. It cannot be said that the *oni* was naively trusting, yet his impotent rage is all too understandable. One cannot be sure what is more horrifying--the *oni*'s violent actions and form or the deception that inspires it.

Yumemakura Baku is relentless as he continues his description. The *oni* tears Tamagusa apart while Seimei and his companions are helpless to stop it. The description of the process of their realization is intentionally intimate, and reflects modern narrative tastes. They rush to the foot of the gate only to see the horror that the deception had wrought. Here, we must recall that it was not Seimei and Hiromasa's plan to deceive the *oni*, but Takatsugu and Tamagusa's. Seimei and Hiromasa are just as surprised as the *oni* when Takatsugu explains himself.

¹¹² Yumemakura 1988. Pp.108-109

The horror that Yumemakura Baku induces in the reader is multi-layered. Certainly the violence of the *oni*'s reprisal is horrifying; however, so is the humans' willingness to murder a pitiful soul for the sake of their reputation. One is confronted with the reality that they completely understand Takatsugu's motivations, while also being forced to acknowledge that Kandata's rage is all too understandable. The barbarousness of the world in which the *oni* are born and the realization that that world is not so different from our own instills a sense of horror in the reader that is all too intentional. This reveals *Onmyōji*'s grounding in genre fiction, an element of its structure that is absent in the individual pieces from which it is inspired. One is forced to acknowledge the skill with which these disparate elements are integrated, for they are so naturally executed that even a scholar such as Tanaka Takako fails to notice them.

4.3 *Genjō* and Seimei's Role

As we have seen, Yumemakura Baku's view of Seimei is shaped by various forces, not the least of which is depictions of him in classical literature from both his prior booms. The Seimei that appears in *Onmyōji* would not have been possible if he were only inspired by materials more closely related to *Konjaku monogatari shū* and its ilk, for if these were his only intermediaries, Seimei would necessarily have been more closely connected to the court, essentially subservient to the courtiers or even high ranking Buddhist priests. Yumemakura Baku's presentation of Seimei as foreign to the court affords Seimei the agency that he needs to fulfill his role in the narrative – that of negotiator and mediator. The latter of these two is most pronounced in *Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto*.

This philosophy is further demonstrated by Seimei's dealings with the *oni* that steals *Genjō*. When he encounters the *oni* he first attempts to understand its motivations and feelings. Seimei apparently views *oni* as beings with equal right to negotiate, as evidenced by his conversation with the *oni*, with whom he speaks in much the same way he might a human being. As his actions reveal, he does not discriminate between supernatural and mundane when it comes time to play the role of judge.

Once the *oni* is provoked, Seimei displays perhaps questionable moral judgment, depending on the readers' point of view. Yet it is also a moral judgment that reveals Seimei's attitude toward the situation, and it is therefore of great value to us. As Takatsugu is showering the *oni* with arrows to no effect, Seimei merely cries, "No!"¹¹³ impotently as the *oni* leaps onto him and tears out his throat. Moments later, when the *oni* turns his attention to Seimei and Hiromasa, he proceeds to control it with an ease that leaves no doubt that he allowed the *oni* to slaughter Takatsugu. The sequence is described as follows:

"Takatsugu let loose another arrow. The arrow buried itself in the *oni*'s forehead just like the last one.

'No!' Seimei yelled as the *oni* sprinted to Takatsugu. It leaped onto him in the midst of letting loose another arrow, tore open his throat with its fangs, and began devouring his flesh.

Takatsugu fell flat on his back and his arrow flew up into the darkness of the night sky. The *oni* looked at them¹¹⁴ with sad eyes. Hiromasa drew his sword rapidly.

'Don't move, Hiromasa,' the *oni* said.

¹¹³ 「いっかゝん！」

¹¹⁴ Seimei and Hiromasa.

‘Don’t move, Masanari¹¹⁵,’ the *oni* turned to Seimei and said. Hiromasa stood completely frozen with his sword drawn. ‘So sad...’ The *oni* murmured with a heart wrenching voice. A frightening green flame emerged from between the *oni*’s lips. ‘So sad, so sad...’ They could feel the heat of the green flame as it emerged from the *oni*’s lips and danced in the darkness. Sweat beaded on Hiromasa’s forehead as he struggled futilely to move, his sword in his right hand *Genjō* in his left. ‘I will devour your flesh and leave this place along with *Genjō*.’

As the *oni* spoke Seimei replied, ‘I’m afraid we can’t part with our flesh,’ a cool smile splayed across his face. Seimei stepped forward and plucked Hiromasa’s sword from his hands effortlessly.

‘You deceived me, Masanari!’ The *oni* cried. Seimei merely smiled and said nothing, for if he were to respond, even though he was being called by a false name, the spell would have taken effect. Hiromasa had given the *oni* his true name then proceeded to respond to it when he was called, so the spell had worked on him, whereas Seimei had given a false name. The *oni*’s hair stood up grotesquely.

‘Don’t move, Kandata,’ Seimei commanded. Kandata the *oni*’s movement ceased, his hair still standing grotesquely. Seimei proceeded to slip the tip of the blade into Kandata’s stomach, then gave it a good twist. Blood gushed from the wound. Seimei reached into Kandata’s stomach and withdrew something covered in blood and flesh. It was the living head of a dog. The dog snapped violently, attempting to latch onto Seimei. ‘As I suspected. It was a dog after all,’ Seimei muttered. ‘This is the *oni*’s true form. More than likely, Kandata’s devilish ‘*ki*’ possessed some dying dog that it found somewhere.’ Before he finished speaking, Kandata’s body began to transform. His face

¹¹⁵ The false name Seimei provided to the *oni*.

began to change shape, and hair sprouted up all over. What appeared to be his face was the rear end of a dog with two arrows sticking out of it. Suddenly Hiromasa could move again.

‘Seimei!’ He yelled in a high voice. One could clearly hear a tremor in it. The warped and dried up body of the dog fell to the ground where Kandata once stood. The only thing that still moved was the crimson stained dog’s head in Seimei’s hands.

‘Bring me *Genjō*,’ Seimei said, and Hiromasa brought the *biwa* over, grasping it gingerly. ‘This time, you shall possess this *biwa*, which does not possess a life force of its own,’ Seimei thrust his left hand before the dog’s head while grasping it firmly with his right. The dog bit down violently on Seimei’s arm. In that instant Seimei released the dog’s head from his right hand and used it to cover the dog’s eyes. But the dog’s head remained latched tightly onto Seimei’s arm and did not fall from it. ‘Place *Genjō* on the ground,’ Seimei said and Hiromasa did so. Seimei squatted and placed his left hand, with the dog still latched onto it, atop *Genjō*. Seimei’s blood flowed from where the dog’s fangs pierced his flesh. Seimei looked down at the dog’s head with deep, heartfelt compassion in his eyes. ‘Hey, listen...’ Seimei said comfortingly to the dog. ‘The sound of that *biwa* was magnificent, wasn’t it?’ He whispered, and gradually lifted his right hand, which was still covering the dog’s eyes. The dog’s eyes were closed. Seimei removed the dog’s fangs from his arm, blood gushing from the wound.

‘Seimei...’ Hiromasa said.

‘Kandata is now a part of *Genjō*.’

‘You cast a spell on him?’

‘Yes,’ Seimei whispered.

‘With those words...?’

‘Didn’t you know, Hiromasa? No spell is more effective than one made up of kind words. It may be even more effective if the one receiving the words is a woman, perhaps...’ Seimei said, his lips rising into a slight smile.”¹¹⁶ (See Appendix B.4 for original text)

In this passage Seimei’s actions speak to his orientation toward his benefactors in the court and the wider world he is asked to navigate for their benefit. It becomes clear here why Yumemakura Baku went to such lengths to portray Seimei as separate from and irreverent to the court--his goal with Seimei was to present him as an objective entity, who views each conscious being as fundamentally equal. His orientation toward other beings, therefore, is one of basic respect for their autonomy, whether they are supernatural or not. For this reason he could not abide by Kandata’s willingness to take the life of Tamagusa, Takatsugu, or perhaps more importantly, the dog. In the moment that he frees the dog from Kandata’s grasp, he looks at the fused beings with intense pity. It is also for this reason that he allows Kandata to confront Takatsugu, for he cannot ignore the fact that Takatsugu has wronged Kandata.

Of course, one might ask why, then, he was willing to allow Tamagusa to be used as an object with which to be bargained. Here, it must be understood that Seimei himself had no direct input in the matter. It was Hiromasa, who functions within the social structure of Heian Japan, in which such inequality was ingrained, who made the negotiations. As we have already seen, Seimei acts as intermediary through which the dialogue takes place. Yumemakura Baku wisely presents Seimei as a mysterious figure

¹¹⁶ Yumemakura 1988. Pp.112-118

whose intentions, goals, and views are inscrutable. By doing so, we are left with only his actions upon which to judge his character.

Here, an interpretation of the ritual he uses to placate Kandata's spirit becomes of great importance. After separating the dog's head from its body, it is still driven by Kandata's *ki* 鬼, as it could not function separate from its body under normal circumstances. Kandata's *ki* was filled with rage and anguish, inspired by the course of his life and the things that he lost. His betrayal exacerbates those emotions, making Seimei's group the target of his rage. The source of his rage, then, is neither the actions nor the existence of Seimei, but the pain that he feels from his longing for his home country and his lost wife. Seimei, therefore, allows the dog's head to tear into his flesh, using the dog as a conduit to channel Kandata's pain into himself through the symbol of the dog's fangs. In so doing he takes Kandata's pain into himself and redirects Kandata's attention to *Genjō*. He responds with kind words to Kandata's assault and reminds Kandata of the peace that *Genjō* brought to him. This overwhelming compassion completely overpowers Kandata's *ki* as Seimei coaxes his spirit into the *biwa*.

Yumemakura Baku presents Seimei as an even-handed and fair being who uses his position to negotiate and placate anguished souls. However, if he were merely a sober savior figure, he would be no different from the multitude of other such figures. Yumemakura Baku, therefore, endows him with the seemingly contradictory characteristic of child-like playfulness that belies the seriousness with which he treats the issues presented to him. One is left wondering if he is truly a vessel of greatness or a child with too much power and confidence. Therein lies his charm. Ultimately he

performs the role of intermediary and judge, all with the apparent nonchalance of a child picking his/her favorite candy.

CONCLUSION

Yumemakura Baku's work on the *Onmyōji* series has largely been ignored due to its status as *taishūbungaku*, or mass literature. As is often the case with dualistic categories, *taishūbungaku* has been held in opposition to *junbungaku*, or pure literature. Strecher argues that in times of literary crisis practitioners of *junbungaku* have attacked *taishūbungaku* in their attempts to carve out a space for Japanese high culture and through this a definition of what it means to be Japanese. He makes the case that increasing prevalence of international communication brought about by technology ultimately results in attempts to elevate *junbungaku* over *taishūbungaku*.¹¹⁷

Seaman has argued that the 1990s represent a time in which such a crisis occurred. In opposition to this tendency to assault *taishūbungaku*, she notes that scholars have demonstrated that it is actually a great medium for discussing social problems in Japan or getting at larger philosophical issues in ways that *junbungaku* is incapable.¹¹⁸

What Yumemakura Baku has done is proven how malleable *taishūbungaku* is. Although he is not overly concerned with taking on specific social issues, he excavates the “classic” works of the Heian period as well as the largely dismissed works of the Edo period and recontextualizes the Heian period for the modern world. This pragmatic approach that borrows the narrative stylings of long idealized works and combines them with modern aesthetics demonstrates the flexibility of written mediums and helps put into perspective the literary values of the authors of the original pieces and the effects of entertainment markets on written forms. Although Yumemakura Baku makes use of

¹¹⁷ Strecher 1996. P. 374

¹¹⁸ Seaman 2004. Pp. 10-12

classic tales to inform his narratives, he has been regarded as little more than an entertainment novelist and dismissed wholesale based on arbitrary judgments by the literary elite.

Purists like these have a tendency to argue that pure literature reflects a true artistic look at the medium of the written word. Mass literature is often criticized for pandering to the lowest common denominator and reducing the medium to a product for consumption on a mass scale – an object that fails to reveal anything of value to scholar and consumer alike. Proponents of the view that mass literature is equally valuable to pure literature tend to argue that purists fail to engage with the material and lack the creative analytical skills to draw out what is of value in the vast landscape that popular literature has come to occupy.

On both parts, such reductive discussions fail to grasp a basic axiom: that value is essentially subjective. Each stance attempts to assert that it is their chosen type or style that should be valued, since it has an objectively definable use to the scholarly community, while downplaying the importance of the other sides' insights. The fact is that there is more than one way to analyze an object of cultural production, a reality that neither side wishes to acknowledge because their own pride is so connected to their chosen methods that they fail to view the objects in question in favor of advancing their own objectives.

The issue is only further exacerbated by confusion about disciplinary boundaries. Where does literature end and sociology begin, or art history start and comparative literature begin? “Inter-disciplinary” has become such a popular term in the academic world that one must stifle a chuckle when reading a brochure advertising an academic

conference. Though we strive to be reasoning beings capable of objective analysis, we still seem not to be immune to the tendency toward fads that is so ubiquitous in society at large. One could argue that this tendency toward collective reasoning can bring us closer to the “truth,” however I find it difficult not to connect this phenomenon in academia to the phenomenon we see all too often in our daily lives, of slogans, brand names, and the hairstyle of the week inspired by the famous actor, so-and-so.

To be sure, it is important to acknowledge that there are those whose expertise far exceeds our own in areas of our analysis; however, this has always been the case. It is impossible to discuss literature without discussing the social situation in which it is born; yet literary scholars often avoid discussion of the larger social implications of the work in question for fear of crossing the boundary into sociological analysis. The attempts that we now see in the scholarly community to compromise the barriers of discipline are the result of scholars’ frustration with these limitations as well as the realization that a deeper understanding of the material is impossible without collaborative analysis. Ultimately the integration of these various disciplines should help to produce more level and useful analyses, yet one cannot help but wonder why it took so long for this catharsis to occur or how the map of academic discipline will be redrawn.

The distinction between *junbungaku* and *taishūbungaku* remains strong in Japan. Indeed, with the *Naoki shō* 直木賞 and *Akutagawa shō* 芥川賞 effectively codifying the two categories, it is no wonder that writers consciously choose in which style to write when they begin a piece. Yukio Mishima was incredibly prolific and wrote in both categories, but chose which narratives he aimed at a general audience and which he aimed at the literary elite. Oe Kenzaburo laments the dearth of writers writing in the

junbungaku style in recent years, yet it is no wonder that they do not.¹¹⁹ While there are no set characteristics that define *junbungaku*, it is safe to say that very specific and pointed themes must be apparent in the piece for it to be considered as such. The limitations such demands put on writers cannot be underestimated. This is not to say that *junbungaku* lacks validity, or that a better literary future is one void of it. It is only to say that the challenges to entry and appreciation of the field are significant, and that to disregard the many authors who write in other styles is far too limiting an approach – one that fails to recognize the work that goes into their creation and their contributions to the literary landscape.

Authors experiment in various narrative styles, endeavoring to explore a myriad of topics, but few are viewed as anything more than writers of trash fiction. Certainly some reach the depths of depravity, failing to engage with any issue in favor of replicating a narrative that has become synonymous with trash fiction. Some attempt to grasp a narrative style that is uniquely their own while acknowledging those authors that have been heralded as great from ages past, aiming to create a piece of equal merit. Many others simply write in their chosen style, engaging with topics they find interesting and characters that inspire them.

In the last of these types a gold mine of fascinating analysis that has never taken place awaits. In fact, due to the very history which created the institution of *junbungaku*, entire periods of literary history have until recently been ignored by scholars, none more neglected than the Edo period. One might argue that the time has come to refine literary canonship to fit less broad chronological spaces.

¹¹⁹ Seaman 2004. P.11

While the focus of this thesis is not on Edo period literature, pieces written in the Edo period play an unquestionably important role in the process of the development of Abe no Seimei's portrayal in written and performed mediums, Yumemakura Baku's iteration of him, and Yumemakura Baku's creative process. Asai Ryōi's creative adaptation of *Hokishō* clearly informs Yumemakura Baku's presentation of the contents of *Konjaku monogatari shū* and ultimately Abe no Seimei. The fact that Yumemakura Baku looks to the past to inspire and inform his writing does not devalue his creative work as Tanaka Takako suggests, rather it reminds us of the value of the writers and materials that precede him. What fascinating elements might be revealed about *Onmyōji*, let alone other works, with further consideration of the history that precedes them?

As we have seen, Yumemakura Baku does not simply rewrite what has come before. Using a measured approach, he takes classic tales and rearranges them in a new context to serve as a stage upon which his characters can perform. He then utilizes the characters and setting that he imagines to present tales that struggle with issues fundamental to the human experience. Seimei acts as a foil through which we can view our own subjectivity in action, while Kandata reminds us of the dangers of obsession. Our presence as readers or observers within the story reminds us of our capacity for pity and compassion. Yet, *Onmyōji* cannot be called essentially didactic. No clear moral code is presented in the actions of the characters. Each character simply acts in accordance to their position and set of beliefs. Despite the insight that the narrative of only one of *Onmyōji*'s stories presents us, the series has been ignored on the basis of preconceived notions of what literature is and what it is not. A reevaluation of the series in light of this is in order, and this thesis is but a step toward such a reevaluation.

In *Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto*, Yumemakura Baku injects genre into tales that are essentially genre-less in the modern, non-academic sense of the word. Academics and theorists define *Konjaku monogatari shū*'s genre as *setsuwa*; however, *setsuwa* are hardly beholden to specific linguistic styles, nor are they as concerned with evoking specific emotional responses as modern genres. This reflects the time in which *Onmyōji* was written. With further analysis, the presence of genre in the series could elucidate how expectations of storytelling affects narrative choice in market settings compared to non-market settings.

A key difference between the original texts and Yumemakura Baku's rendition of them is Yumemakura Baku's invention of Seimei's personality. Yumemakura Baku reads personality into the characters' actions in the original piece, with Abe no Seimei being the most prevalent example. He uses this technique to define the personalities and thought processes of the characters he treats as central to the plot and in the process breathes life into an otherwise relatively two dimensional text. He leaves secondary characters such as Mibu no Tadami in a form much closer to the original text, creating a contrast that pronounces Seimei and Hiromasa's personalities. The result of this is that Seimei stands out as foreign in an environment of relative simplicity.

It is not until the final moments of the text, in which he reveals intense compassion for Kandata that the depth of his character is revealed and his role as intermediary rather than acting party is defined unequivocally. If his role was partial to the court, he would not meet conflict with compromise, and he would not attempt to understand the entity at the source of the problem. He would, much like the other

characters in the text, attempt to oppress or destroy them. Only through understanding Kandata's pain did he understand that he must take it on in order to placate him.

Abe no Seimei evolved significantly as a character throughout the centuries, but it is in *Onmyōji* that his most significant evolution takes place. He has transformed from an accomplished and powerful *onmyōji*, whose primary purpose and honor it is to serve the court and the emperor, into an aloof entity who openly mocks the emperor and strides the line between the mundane and the supernatural, acting as mediator and navigator for his benefactors. In *Onmyōji* Abe no Seimei has finally broken the shackles of courtly stewardship and attained a state of true autonomy, for Yumemakura Baku makes it clear that Seimei is independent of the court even as he acts as its ally.

Due to Seimei's prominent role in the *Onmyōji* series, he has been featured heavily in this thesis, but there are still many characters from various sources that appear in the series, presenting many other opportunities for new studies comparing the stories from which they are extrapolated with *Onmyōji*. One such character is Ashiya Dōman, who also features prominently in the series, and even becomes the main character of one of the stories in the series. The number of stories featuring Ashiya Dōman that appeared during the Edo period provides a wide range of possibilities for analyzing his character and role in *Onmyōji*.

The scope of the series is massive and the scope of the material and history with which it engages infinitely more so. In *Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto* alone Yumemakura Baku draws on three stories from *Konjaku monogatari*, one from *Shasekishū*, and he heavily alludes to the mass of material on Abe no Seimei produced in the Edo period. What other materials has Yumemakura adapted to his dark Heian world,

and how has he changed them? What do these changes say about narrative style and the expectations of contemporary readers?

The breadth of this thesis was by necessity limited; however, it should serve as a model for the kind of studies that can be applied to the *Onmyōji* series. The potential for new discoveries about narrative style through careful analysis of the materials that inspire *Onmyōji* is great, as is the potential to deepen our understanding of the social factors that are at the root of the series' success. With further analysis of the techniques for adaptation of old texts for a modern audience that appear throughout *Onmyōji*, it is possible to further define the characteristics of genre both in contemporary and classical texts as well.

I have done some preliminary work identifying the stories that Yumemakura Baku bases his stories on; however, the limitations of time and space rendered them impossible to analyze here. With that said, I hope it will be useful for future scholarship if I identify them here.

First and most obvious is the story entitled *Taizan fukun sai* 泰山府君祭, which appears in *Onmyōji: Hō-ō no maki* 陰陽師・鳳凰の巻, the fourth collection in the series. The story is based on tale number twenty-four from the nineteenth book of *Konjaku monogatari shū*, and presents an interesting opportunity for analysis.

Next is the final story in *Hō-ō no maki*, entitled *Seimei, Dōman, ōimono no nakami o uranau koto* 晴明、道満、覆物の中身を占うこと, which could be based on any number of pieces that feature a version of the story in which Ashiya Dōman has a *jutsu* duel with Abe no Seimei, including Asai Ryōi's *Abe no seimei monogatari*; however, *Onmyōji no subete* 陰陽師のすべて lists *Kin'u gyokuto shū* 金鳥玉兎集 as a

keyword for the tale,¹²⁰ so it is not unreasonable to surmise that this is the source from which Yumemakura Baku works.

Last of the stories whose likely source I have tracked down is that of *Kurokawa nushi* 黒川主 from the first *Onmyōji* collection. In *Kurokawa nushi*, an otter enchants a courtier's daughter and sleeps with her. There is an entire genre of fiction called *irui-kon* 異類婚 that features animals sleeping with humans; however, specific tales in the Japanese tradition featuring otters sleeping with women were difficult to track down. There is a Chinese text called *Xian qiwen* 西安奇文 that features precisely this kind of tale, and Yumemakura Baku has said that he has pulled from Chinese stories, so it is a distinct possibility that this is the text from which he worked.¹²¹ Whether or not he did so using a translated text or worked in the original Chinese is unclear. It is also possible that he was familiar with the theory that *kappa* 河童 are based on otters,¹²² used a story featuring a *kappa* in the *irui* role and switched the *kappa* out for an otter, though the similarities between *Xian qiwen* and *Kurokawa nushi* are striking.¹²³

There is much work left to be done on the *Onmyōji* series. This thesis represents but a fraction of the varieties of inquiry that can be directed at it. From comparative analyses of the texts that inspire the stories in the series, to analyses of the roles of different characters and what they represent to the wider audience, the possibilities are considerable.

Yet, I hope my work has made one thing clear. The series represents a stylized vision of older tales that incorporates elements of genre fiction such as horror, *ero-guro*,

¹²⁰ Yumemakura 2010. P. 88

¹²¹ Kuzu 1932.

¹²² Inada 1977. P. 211

¹²³ Kuzu 1932.

and dark fantasy and uses those elements to re-imagine Abe no Seimei as a beautiful young man who mediates for his contemporaries and the complex world in which they live, where one's emotions have the power to kill as surely as a knife. To dismiss the work that Yumemakura Baku has done transforming the stories he works from into a form that is not only digestible to contemporary audiences but also engaging, on the basis that the audience's enjoyment of the text is the result of ignorance, is grossly reductive. To the contrary, knowledge of *Konjaku monogatari shū* and *Shasekishū* only serves to deepen our appreciation of what he has accomplished in *Genjō to iu biwa oni no tame ni toraruru koto*. How, then, might our appreciation of the series grow with further inquiry?

APPENDIX A

A CHRONOLOGY OF “A *BIWA* CALLED *GENJŌ* IS STOLEN BY AN *ONI*”

Chapter 1:

- Narrator’s voice describes Seimei
- Contents of *Anthology of Tales from the Past*’s (*Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集) “Tale 16: Abe no Seimei Learns the Way from Tadayuki.”

Chapter 2:

- Setting the stage, Hiromasa visits Seimei’s home.
- Seimei and Hiromasa converse about Mibu no Tadami. The contents of “A Life is Lost to Poetry” from the 5th book of *Sand and Pebbles* (*Shasekishū* 沙石集).
- Hiromasa segways into his encounter with the *oni* from *Anthology of Tales from the Past*’s “Tale 24: A *Biwa* Called *Genjō* is Stolen by an *Oni*.”

Chapter 3:

- Hiromasa recounts his encounters with the *oni*, an expanded version of the original text.
- As Hiromasa approaches the *biwa* at *Rashō* Gate, the narrator delves into the contents of *Anthology of Tales from the Past*’s “Tale 23: Court Noble Minamoto no Hiromasa Goes to Visit the Blind Man of Ausaka.”

Chapter 4:

- Hiromasa describes his second encounter at *Rashō* Gate and Seimei decides to investigate

Chapter 5-7:

- Yumemakura Baku’s original tale drawn out of “Tale 24: A *Biwa* Called *Genjō* is Stolen by an *Oni*.” Both conflict and resolution included in Yumemakura Baku’s expansion of the *oni*’s tale and the following encounter.

APPENDIX B

ORIGINAL JAPANESE TEXT

APPENDIX B.1:

私にとって「陰陽師」はまったくといってよいほどおもしろくなかった。なにせ当方、説話の研究者である。夢枕氏の使っているネタがすぐに全部わかってしまったからだ。典拠とそれを模倣したテキストを比較するという方法もおもしろいものだが、夢枕氏の場合は、いくつかの独創を除けば「出典そのまま」を読んでいるような感じだったのである。初期のころは、晴明と相棒の博雅の性格づけもまだ曖昧としており、後に氏が確立する「大いなるマンネリ」（博雅が事件と酒を携えて晴明の館へやってくる、という設定）も目立たなかった。改行や会話文がやたら多く、本の下半分が真っ白なままなので、ちょっと損な気もした。

ところが、日本の古典をほとんど知らない人たちは、とてもおもしろかった、と口をそろえて言うのである。陰陽師という存在が、まだ一般には知られていなかったので新鮮に映ったせいであろう。たしかに、「古典文学」というと正座して読まねばならないような、そんな考えの人がほとんどである。「源氏物語」「平家物語」。。。「ああ、しんどいな」つい口をついて出る言葉。。。口語訳でも読み通すのは苦勞がいる。

そこへ「陰陽師」が出た。単行本の後に文庫版がすぐに出たので、買いやすい、改行が多いので読みやすい、それに、あの平安時代にこんなおもしろい話があったのか。。。多くの国文「業界」以外の読者はそう思ったのだ。そんなわけで、夢枕氏の「陰陽師」は多くの読者を生み出していったのである。

APPENDIX B.2:

この安倍晴明、他の資料もほろほろと眺めてみると、智徳法師や蝦蟆の例と同様に、かなりみだりに方術を使っては、人を驚かせている。そういうことを楽しんでいるようである。すました顔でもったいぶるわりに、子供のような所があるらしい。

ここから先は想像になるが、この安倍晴明という男、宮仕えをしていながら、どこかいいかげんで、かなり下世話のことにも通じていたのではないか。

長身で、色白く、眼元の涼しい秀麗な美男子であったろう。

雅ななりをしてそぞろ歩けば、宮中の女共がそれを眺めて噂しあったことだろう。

やんごとない筋の女から、色っぽい歌を記した文のひとつふたつはもらっていたに違いない。

上の者には如才がなく、かと思えば、ふいにぶっきらぼうな口をきく。

「おい」

とうっかり天皇に声をかけてしまったことくらいはありそうである。

上品な微笑を浮かべていた唇が、別の時には下品な笑みを溜めたりもする。

陰陽師という職業がら、人の道の裏側にも通じておらねばならず、宮中にあっては、ほどのよい教義もなくてはならない。

漢詩のひとつ通りは諳んじていようし、歌の才もあり、琵琶か笛か、楽器のひとつふたつはかなりいじることができたのではないか。

平安時代とは、雅な闇の時代だとぼくは思っている。

その、たおやかで、雅で、陰惨な闇の中を、風に漂う雲のように、飄ひようと流れて行った男の話を、ぼくはこれからするつもりなのである。

APPENDIX B.3:

「玄象だ」その紫檀の甲を持つ琵琶をもって、博雅がふたりの所までもどつてくると、玄象を清明に見せた。その時であった。羅城門の上から、不気味な声があがった。押し殺した、苦痛に満ちた獣の吠える声であった。

「たましたなあ」獣の声が言った。何やらもみあう音が、わずかに聴こえた。続いて、ぞっとするような女の悲鳴があがった。すぐに女の悲鳴がとぎれた。湿った音が地を打った。

小さな桶から、水をこぼすような音であった。地面にそれが滴り落ちている。温かい生臭い匂いが、夜気に広がった。

血臭であった。

「玉草っ！」清明、博雅、貴次は、同時に叫んで、門の下に走り寄った。そこに黒い染みが見える。灯りをかざしてみれば、はたして、それは赤い血であった。

こり、こり、

くちや、くちや、

という、体毛のそそけ立つような音が、頭上から届いてきた。どん、と重い音が響いて、何か下へ落ちた。まだ手首の残った、血まみれの白い女の二の腕であった。

「しまった」貴次が叫んだ。

APPENDIX B.4:

貴次がまた矢を射た。その矢がまた鬼の額に潜り込んだ。

「いかん！」晴明が叫んだ時、鬼が疾(はし)った。

次の矢を放とうとしている貴次に跳びかかり、牙で喉(のど)の肉を喰らいちぎっていた。仰向けに貴次は倒れ、矢が暗い天に向かって疾った。鬼が、哀しそうな眼で、ふたりを見た。博雅が腰の太刀を抜き放った。

「動くな、博雅」鬼が言った。

「動くな、正成」晴明に向かっても言った。博雅は、太刀を抜いたままの姿勢で、動けなくなった。

「哀しいのう」さびた声で、鬼がつぶやいた。ひゅう、と、おどろのみどり色の炎が、鬼の唇から滑り出た。

「哀しや、哀しや……」つぶやくたびに、鬼の口から、めらめらとみどりの炎が闇の中に躍り出る。博雅の額からは汗がこぼれ出ていた。右手に太刀、左手に玄象を抱えたまま、動こうとしても動けないらしい。

「ぬしらの肉を啖(くろ)うて、玄象戸と共に去(いぬ)るわ……」鬼が言った時、

「肉はやれぬな」晴明が言った。涼しい微笑を浮かべた。

晴明は無造作に足を踏み出して、博雅の手から太刀をむしりとった。

「だましたな、正成」鬼が言った。晴明は笑っただけで答えない。たとえ、いつわりの名で呼ばれようと、呼ばれて答えればそこに呪(しゅ)がかかってしまうからだ。昨夜、博雅は本当の自分の名を教え、しかも名を呼ばれて答えたために、呪を受けたのだ。晴明が言ったのは、嘘(うそ)の名である。ぞわりと鬼の髪が立ちあがった。

「動くな、漢多太(カンダタ)」晴明が言った。髪の毛を立ちあがらせたまま、鬼—漢多太の動きが止まった。晴明は、無造作に、漢多太の腹に太刀の先を潜り込ませて、えぐった。おびただしい血があふれた。晴明は、漢多太の腹の中から、血肉にまみれたものを取り出した。生きた、犬の首であった。犬が、がちがちと牙を噛み鳴らして、晴明に噛みつこうとした。

「やはり、犬であったか」晴明がつぶやいた。

「これが、鬼の本体さ。どこぞで見つけた、死にかけた犬にでも、漢多太の“鬼(き)”が憑いたのだらうよ」言い終わらぬうちに、動かない漢多太の肉体が変化し始めた。顔のかたちが変わり、毛が生えてゆく。顔と見えていた

ものは、犬の尻であった。その尻にふたつの矢が刺さっていた。ふっと、博雅の身体が自由になった。

「晴明！」高い声をあげた。その声が震えていた。歪(いび)つなひからびた犬の身体が、さっきまで漢多太の立っていた土の上に転がっていた。晴明の手の中の血まみれの犬の首だけが、動いていた。

「玄象を一」晴明が言うと、博雅が、琵琶を抱えてやってきた。「生き物ではないこの琵琶に、今度は憑くがよい」

晴明は、右手で犬の首を抱え、左手をその首の前へ差し出した。かっ、と牙を鳴らして、犬の首がその手に噛みついた。

その瞬間に、右手を放し、右手で犬の両眼を塞いだ。しかし、ぎりぎりとして晴明の左手を噛んでいる犬の首は下に落ちなかった。

「玄象を地に置いてくれ」晴明が言った。博雅が玄象を地に置いた。しゃがんで、晴明が、自分の左手を咥えている犬の首を玄象の上に置いた。犬に噛まれた晴明の左手からは血がこぼれ出している。晴明は、しみじみと、上から犬の首を見やった。

「なあ、おい—」優しい声で、晴明は犬の首に言った。

「あの琵琶の音はよかったなあ—」つぶやいた。犬の眼を塞いでいた右手をゆっくりと放した。犬の眼が閉じられていた。晴明は、犬の牙から、左手を引き抜いた。血が出ていた。

「晴明—」博雅が言った。

「漢多太は玄象に憑いたよ」

「呪をかけたのか—」

「うん」晴明がつぶやいた。

「あの言葉でか—」

「知らんのか、博雅、優しい言葉ほどよく効く呪はないぞ。相手が女ならば、もっと効きめがあろうな—」微かな笑みをその唇に浮かべ、晴明が言った。

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