Reviews

Marvels & Tales Editors
Ambiguous Bodies: Reading the Grotesque in Japanese Setsuwa Tales.

Setsuwa are “short Japanese tales that depict extraordinary events, illustrate basic Buddhist principles or . . . other Asian religious and philosophical teachings, and transmit cultural and historical knowledge” (1). Dating from approximately the ninth through fourteenth centuries and gathered into a number of collections, with the most important being the multivolume Konjaku monogatari shū (A Collection of Tales of Times Now Past, ca. 1120), their sheer number means that they both defy easy categorization and offer an enormously valuable resource of linguistic and cultural material. Equally, their heterogeneous quality has meant that research, in English at least, has tended to focus on the lengthier, discrete texts of the Japanese late Classical to early medieval period, and so as a resource setsuwa remain still largely untapped. Given this, Li’s treatment can be nothing but welcome.

The work consists of six chapters, bookended with an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter, “Setsuwa and the Grotesque,” provides a discussion of and introduction to both setsuwa and theories of the grotesque, and each of the remaining five chapters provides readings of selections of tales with similar themes or on broadly related topics.

Chapter 2, “Fantastic Detached Body Parts,” considers tales in which body parts act independently after death (a king’s head and that of his enemy biting each other in a cauldron), are ghostly apparitions (a child’s hand beckons to a nobleman from a knothole in a pillar), or are removed and returned by magical means (a provincial governor uses sorcery to remove the penises of men who attempt to sleep with his wife). In each case the tales involve some form of degradation of men at the higher or highest levels of society and so are read by Li as literary reflections of the changing social status of the court aristocracy as the capital lost power to the emerging military clans in the provinces.

Similarly, in the next chapter, “Curious Sexual Encounters,” one tale describes the passion of a monk for the empress; his lust is so great that he
returns from death as a demon to continue the relationship. Another tale involves a ghost interrupting the emperor while he is making love to his consort; the ghost demands the woman for himself. Both of these tales demonstrate the loss of imperial prestige and also connect with another tale Li considers, about a girl who becomes pregnant after eating a turnip that a man has used to masturbate. In each of these three cases, “the female body . . . functions as the central point for conflict between men” (114). In addition, in Buddhist setsuwa the idea that the sexual desire generated by women could prevent men from reaching enlightenment is represented by the tale of a monk who awakens from an erotic dream of a beautiful woman to discover that he has choked a serpent with his ejaculating penis. The danger of women’s desire for men is illustrated by the tale of another monk who is pursued relentlessly by a woman turned snake and is eventually burned alive while hiding from her in a temple bell.

Both of the next two chapters, “Who Eats Whom? Flesh-Eating Demons and Political Power Struggles” (Chapter 4) and “The Feminization of Demons” (Chapter 5), address the topic of Japanese oni (demons). “Who Eats Whom?” provides an introduction to and discussion of previous approaches to oni before discussing a number of tales in which a woman is consumed by a demon after the oni has tricked its way into her house, or she has been taken to a building revealed to have been an oni’s lair, or she has even walked unwisely on the grounds of the Imperial Palace. Li views these narratives of demonic consumption as embodying the “suppressed discontent” of the lower classes in relation to the higher aristocracy (152). Thus “the undermining of one group of people . . . suggests the liberation of another,” and setsuwa about oni also depict social conflicts as the Heian period (794–1185) drew to a close (152).

“The Feminization of Demons” addresses the genre of setsuwa in which demons take on the form of human women, either beautiful ones, often found in isolated places, or old women offering assistance. In this way, oni-turned-women play a dual role, both “revealing [male] shortcomings and punish[ing] them,” while also stimulating people to “experience a gamut of feelings, not only hatred and repulsion but also attachment, familial love, and loss” (191). The role of revealer of men’s shortcomings is illustrated by the well-known story of the man who is asked by a woman he encounters to take a box to her sister, but not to open it. Forgetting, he takes the box home, where his suspicious wife opens it and discovers that it contains eyeballs and severed penises. The man hurries to deliver the box but dies soon after, cursed by the oni for having opened the box. The role as punisher is illustrated by two tales. First is the tale of two brothers who are attacked by an oni in the forest; they wound it badly and then discover it to be their
transformed mother. The second tale is about a young noblewoman who travels to an isolated house to give birth to an unwanted child; she is offered assistance by an old midwife and then, overhearing the woman muttering how delicious the baby will be, flees in horror and arranges for the child’s upbringing after all.

The final chapter, “Animal Spirits,” explores the rich vein of tales focusing on animals: foxes, monkeys, snakes, and birds all get a mention. Often taking on human form and attempting to confuse, befuddle, or otherwise mislead a gullible person, animals in *setsuwa* “are an effective way of commenting on human behaviour” and revealing people’s foolishness and frailties (233). Li discusses many tales here, notably, that of a wild boar that impersonates a bodhisattva before a monk, only to be shot by a suspicious hunter, and that of the monkey god who abandons demanding human sacrifices after being captured and threatened.

Given the aforementioned heterogeneity of *setsuwa*, Li can, of course, do little more than scratch the surface, and many types and topics of tales remain unexplored. With that being said, the book is coherent and cogent in the tales it does explore, and Li writes extremely well. The book is impeccably researched and referenced and contains a wealth of information that would be valuable for either Japanese studies specialists seeking to expand their knowledge of *setsuwa* and the period or literary specialists interested in opening a window onto a fascinating and unfamiliar genre of writing. In these aspects the book is thoroughly to be recommended, but it does have a weakness: the grotesque.

When the grotesque is introduced and discussed in Chapter 1, Li provides excellent coverage of previous theories and their applications, with a special focus on the ideas of Bakhtin, but the reader is left wondering why his ideas have been given special emphasis and how they relate to Li’s own. We are told that Li cannot “adopt [Bakhtin’s] theories without modifying them” but not how she will do so (48). This lack of essential clarity over what constitutes the grotesque in Li’s terms unfortunately continues throughout the rest of the book; pages of discussion and interpretation go by in most chapters without the grotesque being mentioned at all, and some conclude with only a cursory reference to it. Even when it is mentioned, the discussion can be less than enlightening because Li seemingly assumes that readers understand what she means. The conclusion does outline some of the ways in which the grotesque in *setsuwa* differs from that in European literature, suggesting Li wishes to posit a particularly Japanese type of grotesque rather than develop a new broadly applicable theory. If so, she should have clearly stated this much earlier because it would have better framed the discussion and analysis in the main body of the work.
Overall, the value readers will derive from this book will vary depending on their motivations in reading it. The discussion of setsuwa and background material is excellent, and the interpretations are also compelling, but the material on the grotesque is less so.

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Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yōkai.

Yōkai are, to borrow Michael Dylan Foster’s own terminology in this fascinating study, the “monsters” of Japanese folklore. In Western traditions we might think of ghosts, phantoms, banshees, spirits, boggarts, hobgoblins, fairies, and so on. In other words, these are the various beings that inhabit the supernatural world, characterized more by their mischievousness (and often downright malevolence) than by any benign or talismanlike qualities.

Of course, such supernatural beings only exist in relation to the real, human world, reinforcing its values. Foster’s approach is to divide the book into four main chapters, each exploring yōkai through the lens of a different trope and a particular historical period. Thus Foster convincingly presents the development of yōkai culture as a reflection of wider societal changes and, in particular, the tensions that emerged from an engagement with Western intellectual and cultural traditions, with the process of modernization and the embracing of postwar global capitalism.

The first of these chapters looks at yōkai culture at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries through the trope of natural history. During this period Japan witnessed a significant growth of interest in Western scientific fields of study, such as pharmacology and botany, leading to the first serious attempts to marshal the pandemonium of the yōkai into a more orderly parade through the creation of bestiaries that sought to visualize, name, and classify. This encyclopedic approach brought together the academic world and the popular imagination, but it also claimed yōkai as a body of national knowledge, part of a larger nation-building project, a theme that persists throughout the volume.

The next chapter deals with the end of the nineteenth century, when Japan’s adoption of the solar calendar and the 24-hour clock heralded the arrival of “the scientific age.” Foster concentrates on the work of Inoue Enryō, whose mission to modernize Buddhism meant the further classification of yōkai so as to separate them from the rational world and confine them to the world of superstitious belief.

Then comes the first half of the twentieth century, during which the yōkai were once again rehabilitated and incorporated into the service of modernizing
Japan as “historical constructions still relevant to creating a sense of self for the individual as well as the nation” (27–28). This is examined through a close analysis of a number of contemporary literary texts, which accept yōkai as a legitimate part of the cultural landscape that influenced behavior and provided a way of defamiliarizing the present, in order to see it in sharper focus. At this time folklore studies as an academic discipline was also attracting interest and gaining credibility through the work of Yanagita Kunio, who was concerned with yōkai as a symbol of an authentic Japan and the “appropriation of their value as cultural commodities of an ideal past” (28).

The final major chapter of the book is arguably the most fascinating. It deals with the appearance of yōkai in the modern, mediated, and (more recently) digital world. Beginning in the 1950s with Godzilla as the ultimate monster of the nuclear age and rapidly moving through the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, Foster focuses on the work of manga artist Mizuki Shigeru and identifies the 1970s revival of interest in traditional culture as a response to the rapid postwar industrialization that transformed Japan into an economic superpower but relegated workers to little more than corporate robots. Perhaps the most interesting part, though, is Foster’s analysis of Kuchi-sake-onna (the Slit-Mouthed Woman), who appeared as an urban legend in the late 1970s, causing panic among schoolchildren and their parents. Kuchi-sake-onna was the first new yōkai of the media age; she represented the societal fears of that time and provided a commentary on the role of women in a Japanese society driven toward economic success.

The book concludes with a brief chapter considering yōkai of the 1990s and the twenty-first century with particular reference to Japanese horror films, Pokémon (where yōkai are turned into rather lovable and harmless creatures), and the adoption of yōkai into the advertising culture, where they become the ultimate symbols of Japanese traditional values. As interesting as these observations are, in this final chapter Foster tantalizes the reader rather than explores the assertions—or indeed the central thesis—of yōkai as broader symbols of national culture in any great depth.

Foster has presented us with an excellent introduction to this corner of Japanese culture, and we are all the richer for it. Most impressively, Foster has managed to write in a way that engages the general reader (or at least the reader with little background knowledge), yet he maintains the academic robustness, scholarly tone, and level of erudition that the subject matter deserves. Foster argues that yōkai operate within an arena of opposites and contradictions—simultaneously ephemeral and material, traditional and contemporary, urban and rural—and that it is these contradictions that render yōkai so culturally essential, because they demonstrate that the “real and the fake, the serious and the playful, are anything but mutually exclusive” (75).
And yet one contradiction that Foster seems to miss (or at least underplay) is that between Japan and the West. On the one hand, Foster’s argument that yōkai are a specifically Japanese cultural phenomenon is convincingly made. And yet I could not help reading this book without being constantly reminded of folk narratives from Western cultures. Whether it is the description of Moryo, who “likes to eat the livers from dead people” (43), or the stories of ghosts and monsters that haunt the school toilets, I was reminded of similar stories commonly told by children across Britain and Ireland (and elsewhere). So the one trick that Foster misses is the tension between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the culturally specific and the shared experience, showing that we are, across all cultures, as similar as we are different.

Nevertheless this book is a significant contribution and deserves recognition. Only one thing: this particular reader, with limited knowledge of Japanese history and language, would have been grateful for the inclusion of a glossary.

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No one can deny the significance of setsuwa (“spoken story” in old Japanese, or technically, “anecdotes”) in the long history of Japanese oral and literary traditions. In light of literature and folklore scholarship, setsuwa can always tell us about what stories people in ancient and medieval Japan—low and high alike—enjoyed hearing, jotted down, and read. It can also convey, moreover, what worldview (even if it was primitive and fantastic) setsuwa authors applied to the creation of their setsuwa.

Indeed, setsuwa authors skillfully and sometimes awkwardly incorporated the Buddhist doctrine of karma (the cycle of cause and effect) into their works, but most setsuwa reveal surprisingly funny and preternaturally scary stories pertaining to people’s daily lives. The acts of everyday life depicted in setsuwa differed completely from those of hermetic Buddhists and, moreover, of aristocrats living inside courts as described, for example, in The Tale of Genji, a work of the early eleventh century. Reading setsuwa can build a gateway to the voices of people living in ancient and medieval Japan.

In this respect, setsuwa will surely benefit from folklore scholarship, but a language barrier always haunts folklorists. Originally setsuwa were written in old Japanese, a language that differs from modern Japanese in grammar, vocabulary, and writing style. Without special training in reading setsuwa, we
can hardly understand, let alone enjoy, their original texts. However, thanks to Watson and Shirane’s *Demon at Agi Bridge and Other Japanese Tales*, we now have access to “the richness of the fascinating and influential body” of *setsuwa* (ix). This book really helps us to look at what stories Japanese people enjoyed and to get some sense of the social atmosphere that people experienced during ancient and medieval times.

Watson and Shirane’s book consists of two parts: the first half of the book provides an introduction to *setsuwa*, and the latter half is *setsuwa* selected from seven famous *setsuwa shū* (collections of *setsuwa*). In the “Introduction to Anecdotal (*Setsuwa*) Literature,” Shirane defines *setsuwa*, saying that “*setsuwa* (anecdotes) . . . refer to stories that were first orally narrated and then written down” and that “these recorded stories were often retold, resulting in new variations, which were again recorded” (1). In this respect, he points out that “*setsuwa* frequently exist in multiple variants, with a story usually evolving or serving different purposes over time” (1). This characterizes the powerful driving force of engendering *setsuwa* from the early ninth century until the late thirteenth century. Shirane also defines *setsuwa shū* by saying that “the *setsuwa shū* was a literary form that provided a structured worldview and that categorized that world into different spheres and topics” (1). This structured worldview creates a specific atmosphere for each *setsuwa shū*. His definitions of *setsuwa* and *setsuwa shū* prepare us to understand and enjoy the world of *setsuwa*.

After giving these definitions, by mentioning three *setsuwa shū* compiled in different times with different literary tastes, Shirane propounds “three key elements to understanding *setsuwa*”: “the act of narration (storytelling)”; “the act of writing, which records the spoken story or rewrites an earlier *setsuwa*”; and “the act of editing, which brings together the stories in a certain order or by topic” (2).

In the introduction Shirane attempts to demonstrate how those three key elements characterize *setsuwa* and what worldview *setsuwa* authors created for themselves. However, his explanation of the elements is too concise to indicate clearly any connections between these elements and selected *setsuwa* in the latter half of the book. Therefore it does not always help us understand how to apply the three elements to all the selected *setsuwa* available to us. Despite this, the introduction gives readers general information about the place of *setsuwa* and *setsuwa shū* in Japanese literature scholarship.

In the latter half of the book we can enjoy reading examples of *setsuwa* that Shirane has skillfully selected from seven famous *setsuwa shū* written between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries. This selection helps us to
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understand what topics setsuwa authors dealt with in their works. Although the original texts of these setsuwa shū contain many erotic comic stories (from which we hear people's laughs and boos), half of his selected setsuwa center on the Buddhist karma motif that connects to the ongaeshi (repaying gratitude) motif as told in modern Japanese folktales. These two motifs help us consider similarities between setsuwa and modern Japanese folktales. In this respect, we cannot ignore the following four setsuwa in particular: “On Ransoming Some Crabs and a Frog and Setting Them Free, She Was Immediately Rewarded by Being Saved by the Crabs” from Record of Miraculous Events in Japan (Nihon ryōiki, ca. 822) (18–19); “How a Nine-Colored Deer Came Out of a Mountain and Saved a Man from Drowning” from Tales of Times Now Past (Konjaku monogatari shū, ca. 1120) (36–40); and “How Someone Had a Wen Removed by Demons” (97–101) and “How a Sparrow Repaid Its Debt of Gratitude” (105–110) from A Collection of Tales from Uji (Uji shūi monogatari, early thirteenth century). Surprisingly enough, without any changes, the last two setsuwa from A Collection of Tales from Uji are still told and heard as folktales among Japanese people.

There is little doubt that setsuwa served as a kind of treasure trove of modern Japanese folktales. However, because of the language barrier and some archaic writing styles, setsuwa have not been so friendly to worldwide folklore scholarship. Without any reader-friendly setsuwa anthologies in English, we have not approached setsuwa freely and directly. Thanks to Watson and Shirane's book, we now have access to setsuwa as rich resources containing important motifs that can be found in other cultures' oral and literary traditions. Thus this book contributes not only to Japanese folklore scholarship but also to comparative folklore studies.

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Miracles of Book and Body: Buddhist Textual Culture and Medieval Japan.

Some years ago I visited Ryūkōji, a Buddhist temple near the Japanese city Aizu-Wakamatsu. My goal was to view a twelfth-century copy of the Lotus sutra, designated a national treasure by the Japanese government. The temple priest unrolled the scroll with great ceremony, revealing a text in which each Chinese character is shown seated, Buddha-like, on a lotus petal platform. “Each character is the Buddha,” he explained. The sutra, of course, purports to be words spoken by the Buddha; but in this eloquently written study, Charlotte Eubanks goes a long way toward explaining both the rhetoric and the underlying meaning of the priest's claim.
The book’s central theme is “the text-flesh continuum,” that is, the ways in which a sacred text can become an embodied being and a human body can reproduce, contain, and even make itself into a sacred text. Eubanks amply illustrates her arguments with examples from both sutras and medieval Japanese didactic tales called *setsuwa*. The *setsuwa* are clearly the junior partner in this pairing; *setsuwa* talk about sutras, but the reverse is not true. Eubanks does not limit herself to a medieval Japanese understanding of sutras, however, but offers insights into the construct of Buddhist textual culture as a whole.

After an introduction that explains her work’s theoretical underpinnings, Eubanks turns to sutras, which often act like sentient beings with a will to live. Specifically, they exhort their audience to preserve and propagate them. When transmitted per request, sutras benefit devotees in various ways, including physical ones; the most significant is the transformation of the human body into a container for the text. As Eubanks explains in a later chapter, this means that the body, originally a vessel for all sorts of impurities, is flushed of dross and holds the purest substance of all, the teachings of Buddhism.

Chapter 2 focuses on *setsuwa*, arguing that their presentation of sutra teachings fulfills the sutras’ request for propagation. Not only do *setsuwa* illuminate how sutras may be understood, but also, Eubanks argues, they claim to have some sense of their own being. Of course *setsuwa*, having been compiled in many cases by identifiable human beings, seem less miraculously embodied than the sutras, which may even claim existence before that of the Buddha who supposedly uttered them. However, when *setsuwa* are described by their compilers as food or medicine, they are shown to sustain or cure the human body. Thus they, like sutras, are intimately related to flesh and have a place along the “text-flesh continuum”; and when compilers assert that *setsuwa* perform the role of preacher, then their embodiment does seem to approach that of sutras.

Eubanks next focuses more closely on the body, treated in *setsuwa* as decaying flesh, the agent or object of sexual desire, and as potential sacred Buddhist text. Tales show the body at its most impure and disgusting yet demonstrate that bodily sacrifice can make the body into a container of the Buddhist dharma. Sacrifice could be extreme, as in the case of the thirteenth-century monk Myōe who cut off his ear as a sign of devotion, hoping that by doing so his deed would be miraculously inscribed in previously written sutras. Or it could be milder and a lot more practical: a sutra could be copied using one’s blood as ink or one’s hair to make a brush. Both types of action equate body and scriptural text.

Eubanks then turns to ways in which sutras can be reproduced by bodily action on the part of human devotees. Although this point may seem obvious, Eubanks gives weight to memorizing the sutras and to chanting and copying...
them. In fact, memorization—the inscription of the sutra on the mind—becomes a primary way in which a human being can become a container for Buddhist teachings. Particularly striking examples of this trope are setsuwa tales of skulls found chanting a sutra; memorizing the sacred text has preserved the tongue that intones it. Eubanks ends this chapter with a fascinating exploration of a twelfth-century illustration of a Japanese copy of a portion of the Lotus sutra that incorporates text and pictures to produce a rebus for a sutra verse.

Eubanks concludes the book with an examination of circumambulatory practices and devices, viewing them in the context of the Buddhist worldview that sees time as a repeating cycle. The trope of “turning the wheel” of the Buddhist law is applied to the common practice of circumambulating a stupa or sutra text, to the revolving sutra library, and to spinning modern media sometimes used to reproduce Buddhist texts, such as the DVD. In a fascinating section Eubanks examines the counterintuitive preservation of the scroll as a medium for sutras, arguing that “turning” a scroll can be seen as “turning” the wheel of the dharma. Such circular motion, she argues, is thought to have the potential to renew the cycle of the dharma.

Eubanks’s arguments are solid, convincingly presented, and amply illustrated. They are also quite complex, and this book is not particularly easy to read. The richness of her examples makes one lose sight of her central theme on occasion, and in one portion, at the end of Chapter 2, a discussion of medieval preaching techniques, though interesting, seems like a digression. Occasionally, too, Eubanks falls into the trap of directly quoting a theoretical treatment without explaining what the quotation really means. Her citation of Peggy Phelan’s work on page 98, offered as a “concise definition” of performative writing, does not really tell us what performative writing is. In general, however, the book rewards an effort to follow its arguments.

Although I know this is beyond Eubanks’s mission, I wonder to what extent her insights can be applied to sacred texts outside the Buddhist world. Much here, perhaps, is particular to Buddhism, but scriptures are sometimes treated as talismans by Christians and Muslims. Eubanks’s work not only illuminates medieval Japanese practices but also points to possible broader implications of her findings.

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Written by British freelance writer Dani Cavallaro, The Fairy Tale and Anime: Traditional Themes, Images, and Symbols at Play on Screen is an impressive book examining the fairy-tale traditions of sixteen select anime titles.
As its subtitle states, Cavallaro’s analysis focuses on fairy-tale themes, images, and symbols that appear in recent productions of anime from Japan. What distinguishes The Fairy Tale and Anime from other books on the same topic of Japanese popular culture is Cavallaro’s unique perspective of “Japanese aesthetics and cultural history,” as she reveals subtle images and symbols that are not necessarily discernible to those who are unfamiliar with Japanese culture. It is quite enjoyable to read the discussion about how some elements of classic Japanese myths and legends (e.g., the Snow Bride, the Princess Kaguya) overlap with the anime plot or how certain scholarly discussions of Faerie, or “the realm or state in which fairies have their being” (7), help us find hidden fairy-tale motifs within the plot. Cavallaro’s other books on anime, such as The Art of Studio Gainax (2009), Anime Intersections (2007), and The Anime Art of Hayao Miyazaki (2006), demonstrate her immense knowledge of the animated medium in Japan. This book, The Fairy Tale and Anime, seems to cement her reputation as an anime aficionado and scholar.

However, for the reader who is not knowledgeable in the fields of Japanese or fairy-tale studies, The Fairy Tale and Anime does pose some challenges. For example, Cavallaro’s numerous references to Japanese cultural concepts and prominent fairy-tale scholars, such as Cristina Bacchilega, Jack Zipes, and Maria Tatar, may make this book somewhat elusive. For this reason the book may not be adaptable as a textbook for an introductory undergraduate course. Too often, while analyzing certain anime motifs, Cavallaro refers to Japanese terms that are highly abstract and require a little more explanation than a simple English word equivalent. Even those familiar with Japanese culture may find it hard to recognize some words right away because of the book’s use of non-Hepburn spelling convention (e.g., yugen on p. 25, as opposed to yūgen; goryou on p. 187 instead of goryō). I myself failed to identify the original words of the terms jijuu (translated as “playful freedom”), kire tsuzuki (referred to as a Zen Buddhism concept), and mamoko-tan, or “stepdaughter tale” (perhaps meant to be mamako-tan). Sometimes, Japanese words appear without translation (e.g., kazari on p.115). In this case the reader without a sufficient Japanese background may find this book a bit hard to follow. A glossary of the Japanese terminology would have been helpful.

The merits that The Fairy Tale and Anime offers outweigh these minor challenges. For instance, the book is well structured, neatly placing these sixteen anime titles, most of which were originally made as television series in Japan, into four distinctive themes. In Chapter 1 Cavallaro presents an overview of the book. In Chapter 2, “Alterity,” she reviews Last Exile,
Le Chevalier D’Eon, and Petite Cossette, using topics such as the other world, supernatural beings, animal spirits, and other common denizens of Japanese folklore. In Chapter 3 Cavallaro analyzes the voyage theme in Kino’s Journey, The Story of Saiunkoku, Tokyo’s Godfathers, and Someday’s Dreamers, and in Chapter 4 she tackles a wide range of creative elements devised for the traditional fairy tale (e.g., costumes, decorations, and the visual representations of cuteness), which are reproduced in Paradise Kiss, La Corda d’Oro (both Primo Passo and Secondo Passo), Nodame Cantabile, Earl and Fairy, and Honey and Clover. Featuring Basilisk, Ergo Proxy, and Wolf’s Rain, the final chapter, which I enjoyed most, discusses the theme of dystopias around which these anime stories are centered.

Besides the aforementioned features of the book that may have greater appeal to a highly specialized readership, in some instances Cavallaro does invite the general audience as well. For example, the appearance of such familiar names as J. R. R. Tolkien, Angela Carter, and Joseph Campbell may attract any readers who recognize these authors’ highly popularized works. Cavallaro also cites relatively well-known Japanese lore, such as The Peach Boy, some recent Hollywood films, including Minority Report, and many familiar Western fairy tales, such as “Sleeping Beauty,” “Cinderella,” and my favorite, “Blue Beard.” In addition, aside from some detailed literature reviews of the specialized fields, I believe that college-age anime fans on our U.S. continent can relate to the anime titles this British author selected for this book. Although I myself only know Wolf’s Rain and Tokyo Godfathers, at least one or two of the U.S. students who are currently taking my manga course have watched each of the sixteen titles reviewed in the book. Many of these students are self-identified manga-anime fans. Of all the titles, Wolf’s Rain, Honey and Clover, and Nodame Cantabile are best known to my U.S.-born students. With so many new anime films being produced annually, it would be nearly impossible to foresee exactly which titles would generate the strongest readership for a book. The selection of these less well-known anime titles is reasonable. In addition, Cavallaro has already reviewed the other, more globally recognized titles, such as Final Fantasy: The Spirit Within, Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence, and Spirited Away in her previous publications.

Personally, I would have liked to see some sample drawings of anime characters or scenes, which help me identify particular folktale symbols and motifs discussed in the book, and to read a synopsis of each anime plot, either at the beginning of the chapter or at the end of the book as an appendix, rather than having these embedded in each chapter’s analysis. But the book does have a section called “Filmography” that neatly lists each anime’s original title,
production year, and other details. All in all, Cavallaro’s *Fairy Tale and Anime* is an excellent read. I highly recommend this book to scholars of fairy tales, particularly those interested in anime and Japanese popular culture.

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*Anime and Its Roots in Early Japanese Monster Art* is a welcome addition to the growing body of academic writing in English on Japanese manga and anime. However, it suffers from a misleading title, which may alienate its target audience of Japanese scholars, because it implies an essentialist, totalizing, or even Orientalist perspective that treats all Japanese culture as unchanging and looks to ancient art or literature to explain modern culture. This book is not, as the title implies, an overview of classical sources of contemporary anime or a survey of Japanese cultural elements in anime as a whole. Papp’s focus is far more specific. She analyzes the work of author and artist Mizuki Shigeru (b. 1922) and his long-running manga *Gegege no Kitarō* (1959–1969) as well as its various offshoots, including an animated television show (1971–1972; 1983–1988; 1996–1998; 2008) and several live-action films. Papp catalogs the folklore that influenced Mizuki’s work and analyzes his creations in terms of the changing uses of folklore in the twentieth century.

Mizuki Shigeru first began writing about Kitarō, the one-eyed monster boy born in a graveyard, in the 1950s under the title *Hakaba no Kitarō* (Graveyard Kitarō) for *kamishibai* (paper theater) and *kashihon* (rental comic books), which were the forerunners of modern manga. In 1959 Mizuki retitled the story *Gegege no Kitarō*, turning his own childhood nickname into a nonsense word with a spooky sound. He also toned down some of the horror elements to create a more child-friendly version in manga format. Kitarō is the last descendant of a race of *yōkai* (supernatural beings, variously translated as spirits, demons, or monsters) whose serial adventures involve encounters with hundreds of different creatures, drawn from Japanese folklore. *Gegege no Kitarō* is largely unknown to Western audiences, even among fans of Japanese animation, because it has not been translated. Nevertheless, it is central to the development of manga and anime and remains tremendously popular in Japan. Papp’s book is the only book-length study of *Gegege no Kitarō* in English.

After a brief introduction, Papp begins with an overview of images of *yōkai* from prehistoric times to the present. She demonstrates how *yōkai* began as
the embodiment of common fears of death and disease in earliest written records through the medieval period and then changed in the Edo period (1600–1868) to represent outcasts and foreigners. With this change, yōkai became the subject of picture scrolls, chapbooks, and woodblock prints, giving them corporeal or anthropomorphic form for the first time. Papp discusses Edo period supernatural tales and ghost stories but in particular the encyclopedic codices that give the name, illustration, and features of hundreds of yōkai. Papp ends with a discussion of how yōkai became tools of imperial propaganda in the Meiji, Taishō, and early Shōwa periods (i.e., from the late nineteenth century through World War II) and then reemerged as entertainment for children in the 1950s and 1960s.

In the next brief chapter Papp gives a quick biography of Mizuki and examines folklore precedents for the main characters in Gegege no Kitarō. Papp draws most of her biographical details from accounts Mizuki has written of his own life; he describes himself as having been interested in folklore and art from an early age. His formative experiences, however, came as a soldier in World War II, when he was posted to New Guinea from 1943 to 1945. During his time there, he claims to have had supernatural experiences in the jungle. While recovering from the loss of his left arm in an air raid, he formed close friendships with local tribes and became fascinated with their folklore. Although Papp briefly mentions the influence of South Pacific masks on Mizuki’s art, she never traces New Guinean folklore in his work but concentrates almost exclusively on Japanese precedents. In the second half of the chapter Papp discusses some generalized precedents for Kitarō in Buddhist tales of babies born to dead mothers or in graveyards and in tales of one-eyed heroes or monks. However, she does not discuss the more immediate precedent, the kamishibai stories of Hakaba no Kitarō from the 1930s. If Mizuki did not wholly invent this character, then what were the twentieth-century sources? This seems to be a significant omission.

The fourth chapter, “Art History Meets Gegege no Kitarō,” is not only the longest chapter but also longer than the other chapters combined. Most of this chapter is a catalog of specific sources for yōkai in Gegege no Kitarō. Mizuki drew primarily on the Edo period codices by Toriyama Sekien published in the 1770s and 1780s. Papp lists twenty-three yōkai that derive from Sekien’s work, with a paragraph description of each and comparative illustrations by Sekien, by Mizuki, and from various seasons of the television anime series. In many cases the images are identical, suggesting that Mizuki looked at Sekien’s work. Papp then lists various other sources for an additional twelve yōkai. Finally, she analyzes the various ways yōkai have been used thematically in Gegege no Kitarō to deliver antiwar and pro-environmental messages.
In the fifth chapter Papp discusses several recent live-action films featuring yōkai, mainly based on Mizuki’s manga but also including brief discussions of Dororo (by Tezuka Osamu) and Nekome kozō (Cat-Eye Boy, by Umezu Kazuo).

In the final chapter, drawing on work by Michael Dylan Foster, Papp argues that yōkai have become mascots; through the success of Gegege no Kitarō and other manga and anime featuring folklore elements, yōkai that once were minor deities or that symbolized humanity’s greatest fears have become cute commodities.

Papp’s book provides a wealth of information on yōkai that has not been available previously in English. It should be of interest to scholars of Japanese folklore, art history, and popular culture. Scholars interested in those topics but who do not speak Japanese, however, may find this a challenging read because of the large number of Japanese words and titles, which are all rendered both in (sometimes inconsistently) romanized and Japanese script.

The book is lavishly illustrated, which is unusual in this age of strict copyright control. Papp’s interdisciplinary praxis, analyzing Gegege no Kitarō in terms of the evolution of images from Edo to contemporary texts, is compelling and original. However, these analytic sections are frustratingly brief. Most of the book reproduces the cataloging tendencies of both Sekien and Mizuki, simply listing yōkai and their attributes. A more balanced and coherent structure would help to highlight the analysis, which threatens to become lost in a collection of details.

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Imagine an all-white stage with its top left corner folded down like a sheet of paper. All the props, including the costumes, are also white, except for the devil’s black clothing, and look as though they were made of pieces of paper folded to appear three-dimensional. Indeed, the whole stage looks like a large piece of origami, the Japanese art of paper folding. The two-dimensional quality of the stage is enhanced further by the use of shadows, presumably influenced by wayang kulit, the traditional Indonesian shadow play. Shadows also act, as it were, as the shadowy doubles of both characters and objects, making the paper-thin originals look even more abstract and insubstantial. This minimalist yet complex visual effect constantly blurs and redraws the boundaries between reality and illusion, truth and
falsehood, and life and death, the eternal conflicts around which the Grimms' two innocent persecuted heroine tales, “The Girl Without Hands” and “The True Bride,” revolve.

Japanese director Miyagi Satoshi’s postmodern staging of the Grimms’ tales creates a surprisingly enchanting harmony between different cultural traditions. Miyagi, born in 1959 in Tokyo, has been known for his experimental intermingling of classic Western texts with traditional Asian theatrical techniques. He earlier developed an acting method in which two actors play one role, with one actor taking charge of physical movements and the other delivering all the lines, a method inspired by the traditional Japanese puppet theater Bunraku. As in Bunraku and Noh productions, Miyagi’s play has musicians playing in the corner of the stage (actors also sometimes join them and play music for a while). The origami-like costumes also evoke those used in Noh theater. Drawing on these and other techniques deriving from Asian theatrical traditions, Miyagi boldly reinterprets French director-playwright-actor Oliver Py’s dramatizations of the Grimms’ tales, which have achieved an international reputation (Py’s Girl Without Hands was first performed in 1993, and his True Bride was performed in 2008). In contrast to Py’s production, which both draws on and deconstructs various Western religious, cultural, and aesthetic traditions, Miyagi’s production makes use of non-Western cultural traditions to shed a new light on the symbolic depths of European fairy tales.

Miyagi’s origami-like stage also evokes a picture book as a physical object; watching Miyagi’s fairy-tale play resembles an act of reading a picture book, especially because the actors suspend their actions while speaking and, when the page is turned, as it were, they move silently to form the next tableau. To complete the picture book effect, all the performances, conducted in Japanese, are accompanied by digital English subtitles on both sides of the stage. As the audience reads the text while hearing it spoken by the actors, they fall under the illusion that the actors are also reading, rather than acting or representing, the unfolding story at the same time as the audience. This effect is intended by Miyagi, who stated in an interview that he told the actors to try not to memorize their lines so that they would sound as though words were coming down from the sky like rain, reaching them and the audience at the same time. Actors, therefore, become puppets through which words—words that belong to no particular individual—flow out. This unusual acting method is related to Miyagi’s intention to subvert what he calls the masculine tradition in modern theater in which words are used as a means of expressing individuals’ minds to impose or, to use his word, dominate the world. His choice of these two
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relatively unknown fairy tales by the Grimms, with apparently passive yet firmly determined heroines, seems appropriate for this partly feminist purpose.

Miyagi’s *Girl Without Hands*, first performed in 2011, is especially notable for its imaginative use of shadows. The shadow of the father, who unwittingly promises to give the devil his daughter and consents to cut off his daughter’s hands, merges with the figure of the devil himself. At the edge of the stage stands a white origami deer whose antlers are cut out so as to cast a shadow in the shape of the pear tree, which feeds the heroine wandering the woods alone without hands. When the deer is killed in place of the heroine’s child, its antlers, now lit from a different angle, cast the shadow of a hut, which gives shelter to the abandoned mother and son. Through this intricate play of light and shadow, dichotomous notions such as good and evil and real and magic are reversed, fused, and transformed, adding further depth to this tale type found all over the world, including Japan. Py’s insertion of an episode (followed by Miyagi) in which the heroine’s father—but not her mother, who disappears after the girl’s departure from home—is forgiven by his daughter near the ending, however, seems to impair the significance of the heroine’s voluntary separation from her parents, which is a key element in this tale type.

Miyagi’s puppetlike, nonexpressive acting method also gives a further twist to Py’s rewriting of “The True Bride,” in which Py introduces a new character not in the Grimms’ original: the evil stepmother’s beloved daughter, who turns out to be an automaton created by her mother. On Miyagi’s stage the heroine and the automaton look identical, except that the automaton does not speak and always has her mother speak for her; the automaton is the double of both the heroine and the stepmother. The heroine, however, gradually develops her own voice with which she tells her version of the story in order to regain her bridegroom, who has forgotten about her; she scripts a metafictional play within a play based on Py’s *Girl Without Hands*, which, like the pivotal scene in *Hamlet*, reveals the true story.

Although in both plays Miyagi foregrounds the culturally constructed nature of the fairy-tale characterization of an evil woman by casting a male actor as the heroine’s (step)mother in the manner of a female impersonator in Kabuki theater, the denaturalization of gender constructions in these innocent persecuted heroine tales is not pursued further. It would be interesting to see how Miyagi might interpret the innocent persecuted hero tale “The Water of Life,” which Py has also dramatized.

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