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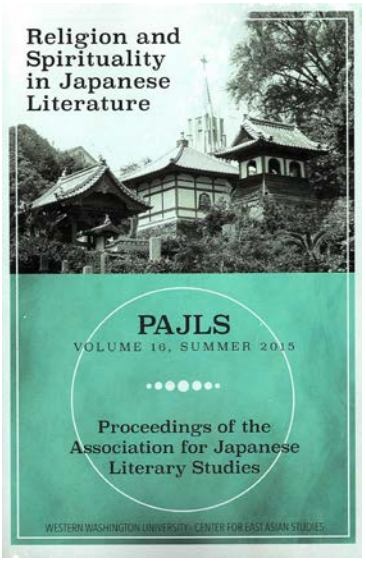

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Mothers with Demon Masks in Yamagishi Ryōko's Shōjo Manga

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Introduction

Recently it has become a trend among mothers and grown up daughters in Japan to hang out and participate in leisure activities together. A survey shows that one in three women between the ages 20 to 39 considers her mother as her best friend. [1] Department stores and travel agencies recognize mother-daughter "friendship" as a new business opportunity and are coming up with various products targeting the so called "M&D (mother-and-daughter) market."[2] It may seem that the mother daughter relationship, which used to be hierarchical, has changed. [3] We must remember, however, the friend-like relationship between mothers [4] and daughters rests on a fine balance of financial and emotional benefits, and is a product of consumer culture. Mothers choose their daughters to do activities with, because they feel that "they can chat more freely with their daughters, making it more fun to go on holidays with their daughters"[5] than with their husbands who are always away from home. Their daughters also enjoy accompanying their mothers, partly because their mothers are usually their financial providers.

Despite this continued complexity in the mother/daughter relationship, the idea of "mother" has long been discussed in terms of the connection between mother and son. For instance, Etō Jun's *Seijuku to sōshitsu* (Maturity and Loss) famously examined the crisis in sons' male identity due to the loss of the

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[1] "Like Mother, Like Daughter," *Web Japan*, February 10, 2004.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Takahashi Masaru states that modern *shōhi shakai* (consumer society) was formed in the mid '70s and flourished in the '80s. See Takahashi, *Bunka henyō no naka no kodomo: keiken, tasha, kankeisei* (Children in Cultural Changes: Experience, Other, Relationship).
[4] These mothers are women in their mid-forties to fifties - the generation of women who experienced the bubble economy in the '80s through early'90s; it is believed that they do not to hesitate to spend money on luxurious goods and leisure activities. Now that their children are grown and the financial burden for their children's education is cleared, these women have time and money.
[5] "Like Mother, Like Daughter," *Web Japan*, February 10, 2004.

nurturing Japanese mother.[6] Plenty of studies have also examined the mother-son relationship from literary and psychological perspectives. The mother and daughter relationship, however, has not been holistically examined in Japan.[7]

Saitō Tamaki's *Haha wa musume no jinsei o shihai suru* (Mothers Control Daughters' Lives) is an important work. Saitō, a psychiatrist, tackles the issue by drawing examples from psychiatric cases. However, his book is noteworthy in that it also draws on material from literature and manga works.[8] The art in these manga, authored by women who have first-hand emotional experience of the issues involved, powerfully delivers a creative projection of human psyche.

How has daughters' psyche been presented in the narrative arts? The world of shōjo manga is a perfect medium in which to examine daughters' views toward their mothers, for shōjo manga, created by relatively young female artists for a young female audience, reflect actual young women's voices and the points of view of daughters.[9] This article will first explore how daughters' struggles in the relationship with their mothers have been expressed in the world of shōjo manga. Then it will focus on a key contributor to that world, Yamagishi Ryōko山岸凉子.[10] Yamagishi, foremost amongst all, has explored the theme of

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[6] Etō Jun's *Seijuku to sōshitsu* (Maturity and Loss) was originally published in 1967. The book examines novels by *daisan no shinjin* (the third generation of post-war writers), which includes Kojima Nobuo, Yasuoka Shōtaro and Endō Shūsaku.

[7] In the West, since Adrienne Rich, in her *Of Woman Born* (1976), demonstrated "the absence of the mother-daughter relationship from theology, art, sociology, and psychoanalysis, and its centrality in women's lives, many voices have come to fill this gap, to create speech and meaning where there has been silence and absence." (Hirsch, "Review Essay: Mother/Daughter," 201).

[8] Saitō states that feminist studies have long focused on relationships between men and women, but the relationship between mothers and daughters has been left understudied (Saitō, *Haha wa musume no jinsei o shihaisuru*, 218).

[9] Mother-daughter relationships have been narrated in the world of Japanese women's literature. Women writers revealed the pressure that mothers endure in patriarchal Japanese families and the strong desire for freedom from home and society that mothers feel. Enchi Fumiko, for instance, delineated not only sadness but also the sexual and mysterious power of mothers using the daughters' perspectives. Ōba Minako, in "Yamanba no bishō" (The Smile of a Mountain Witch) uses the motif of a mountain witch, a folkloric figure, mythologizing the idea of mother. Daughters do appear in their works, however, the main concern of these writers (particularly those writing before the '80s) is the idea of mothers in the context of patriarchal society and domesticity. Daughters tend to appear as observers.

[10] Yamagishi Ryōko (1947 -) is considered one of the most important figures to contribute to the early establishment of the shōjo manga genre. She is the recipient of

mothers and daughters since her debut in 1969. This article will closely examine her short manga, "Yasha gozen" 夜叉御前 (Lady Demon), published in *Puchi komikku* (Petite Comic) magazine in 1982. This work clearly demonstrates a daughter's fear toward her mother, and is raised to the level of art in the way the idea of mother is expressed metaphysically with great skill and creativity in the format of psycho horror.

Mother-Daughter Narrative Tradition and Innovation in Shōjo Manga

The 1950s through the mid-1960s was the formation era of shōjo manga. A dominant theme was mothers and daughters, depicted in "*haha-mono*" (mother genre), and manga were mainly created by male artists because of the shortage of women artists.[11] The pattern of plots and themes that they favored were taken from popular girls' sentimental stories from the prewar era and were mostly about the emotional connection of mothers and daughters. Usually, the heroines are separated from their mothers because of some tragic circumstance. The heroines endure difficult situations and persevere in the hope that someday they will be reunited with their mothers. At the end of the stories, happiness is always given to these heroines as a reward for their endurance and for being good girls. Big shiny eyes were drawn as the representation of the heroines' beautiful and gentle qualities within. Mothers, who also possessed eyes identical to their daughters, were idealized and glorified. The stories were fantasies, teaching readers that mothers provide unconditional love to their daughters, and so are precious. As Oshiyama Michiko considers, these stories, in a way, reiterated through the medium of shōjo manga the lesson that daughters' goal should be to

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many awards and prizes. Her works deal with various themes including homosexuality, the mother-daughter relationship, occultism, and mysticism. Her representative works include *Hi izuru tokoro no tenshi* (Heaven's Son in the Land of the Rising Sun) for which she won the Kōdansha Manga Award for shōjo manga in 1983, and *Maihime Terepushikōra* (Dancing Woman, Terpsichore) which won the Grand Prize for the 11th Annual Tezuka Osamu Cultural Prize in 2007.

[11] Horror manga was also a subgenre. Umezu Kazuo is the forerunner of this genre. Instead of portraying gentle mothers, he revealed frightening images of mothers using mythological or monstrous figures. "Mama ga kowai" (I'm Scared of Mama), published in *Shōjo furendo* (Girl Friend) in 1965, is a story about a snake woman who masquerades as a kind and beautiful mother. The snake woman chases and threatens the heroine, trying to eat her up. Through the motif of a grotesque creature, Umezu visualizes a sense of maternal Otherness for his audience. See Dollase, "Shōjo Spirits in Horror Manga."

become like their mothers in the future, and functioned to psychologically inculcate girls with the idea of conventional womanhood.[12]

The 1970s saw the emergence of young female artists. They, baby-boomers, cherished the post war democratic cultural atmosphere, and witnessed students' movements and various political activities including the women's lib movement (although they were too young to be directly involved). While their parents still adhered to old traditions, the artists embraced and absorbed new cultural values and ideas. They not only transferred shōjo manga from the hands of male artists to their own but also revolutionized that world; they created stories which were true to their hearts and more appealing to the female adolescent audience. A group of artists who emerged in the late 1960s to early 1970s called "24 *nen-gumi*" (Showa 24 group; artists who were born in and around 1949), enriched and revolutionized the world of shōjo manga.[13] They challenged the conventional image of women and the future which was socially prescribed for them – getting married and becoming mothers.

Motherhood is "an institution in patriarchy."[14] The idea of the "modern family," which emerged in Europe in the 16th century,[15] assigned mothers to be the primary operator of patriarchy in society and domesticity. Mothers were expected to be supporters of their husbands and caretakers of their children. Rich states that it is the "mother through whom patriarchy early teaches the small female her proper expectations."[16] In Japan, though superficially mothers today seem less oppressive and authoritative, girls are still taught to be submissive, reserved, virtuous, and *onna-rashii* (lady-like); female behavioral and emotional codes are meticulously defined. According to Saitō Tamaki, female behavioral codes teach a presentation of female sexuality that will help daughters to be chosen by men in the future.[17] Saitō stresses that mothers actually teach their daughters how to make their bodies look beautiful and sexually arousing, while paradoxically oppressing their desires by disciplining

[12] Oshiyama, *Shōjo manga jendā hyōsho-ron* (The Study of Gender Representations in Shōjo Manga), 90.
[13] The roster of 24 *nen-gumi* is debatable, but usually Yamagishi Ryōko, Satonaka Machiko, Ōshima Yumiko, Takemiya Keiko, Hagio Moto, etc., are included.
[14] See Hirsch, "Review: Mother and Daughter," 201.
[15] Hirsch also explains that an entry for the term, "mother," appeared in the Oxford Dictionary in 1597 for the first time (Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, 14).
[16] Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 243.
[17] Saitō, *Haha wa musume no jinsei o shihai suru*, 127.

them with domestic education.[18] Daughters' bodies are, therefore, passive conflicted bodies. Mothers justify how they educate their daughters by reasoning that what they are doing is simply for the sake of their futures. This mental control, called "masochistic control" by Takaishi Kōichi,[19] makes their daughters unable to resist or complain out of a feeling of guilt. Daughters, therefore, view their mothers with ambivalence. While daughters know that their mothers love them and are concerned for their happiness, they were never taught by their mothers how to become independent.[20] They soon realize that their mothers are agents which bond them to domesticity and define their futures. Society understands a young woman's role to be an imminent mother, and on a personal level, a young woman's own mother is a reminder to her of this presumed destiny. The notion of "mother" has oppressed young women on many different levels. Different female artists have dealt with the issue of the mother and pointed out the ambivalence associated with this idea in their manga works.

Ōshima Yumiko, for instance, in her "Natsu no owari no totanchō" (G minor at the end of Summer, *LaLa*, October 1977), portrayed a mother's struggle to maintain a perfect family in order to impress her neighbors and relatives. The mother, a typical *kyōiku mama* (education- minded mother), pushes her sons to study hard to enter prestigious schools.[21] However, the family eventually splits up, and her dreams, ambition, and goals are all shattered. Disillusioned, the mother burns the house down at the end of the story. In contrast to Ōshima's usual soft and delicate drawing style, the portrayal of the mother is harsh and realistic.

Instead of facing realistic mothers, Ōshima sometimes chose to erase mother's existence in order to evade painful reality.[22] In "Shichigatsu nanokani," (On July 7th, *Bessatsu Komikku* [*Special Edition Comic*], July 1976), Ōshima presents a handsome male character who in the guise of a woman plays the role

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[18] Ibid.

[19] See Takaishi, *Haha o sasaeru musumetachi* (Daughters who support Mothers).

[20] Nobuta Sayoko and Ueno Chizuko, "Suraimu haha to hakamori musume" (Slime Mother and Graveyard Watcher Daughter), 78.

[21] In "Kishimojin" (Hariti, *Big Gold*, July 1993), Yamagishi also deals with the idea of *kyōiku mama*. In her case, she presents the difference of treatment between boys and girls. She poignantly depicts a mother's excessive adoration for her son, and disinterest in her daughter. Amongst all manga authors, Yamagishi most keenly deals with mother-daughter issues.

[22] See Yamashita, "Shōjo manga ni mirareru 'haha' no henyō" (Transformation of Mothers in Shōjo Manga).

of a mother and raises an orphan heroine. Through the maternal man, the heroine can receive pure nurturing affection without the pressure of a realistic "mother" as her future model. What girl readers want is maternal affection, regardless of the source. As Sara Ruddick insists, maternal is a social category, where gender can be flexible.[23]

Yamagishi Ryōko's delineation of mother is realistic, complex and harsh. It is presented through various conceptual perspectives and imaginative formats. Her stories are artistically, politically and psychologically rich, and are apparently created based upon her deep knowledge of feminism, classical literature and mythology. Mothers are often portrayed as being sexual, powerful and at the same time horrifying. They are also traditional "Japanese mothers" who live in patriarchal domesticity. Her "Ame no nubuko" (Heavenly Jeweled Spear, *Gurēpu furūtsu* [Grapefruit], no. 27, 1986), reveals the double sidedness of a domestic mother; years after her death, an outwardly calm and gentle mother is discovered to have actually possessed fierce emotion – she used to nail dolls to a cherry tree in the yard, cursing her sister who had slept with her husband. The mother's demon-like facial expression in her daughter's imagination suggests the deep suffering of the woman and the exploration of her emotion which had long been suppressed due to her responsibilities as a wife and a mother. Yamagishi's "Kiraigō" (Descent of Demon, *Duo*, November 1981) similarly portrays a beautiful and sophisticated widow who hides fierce emotion. In the story, readers find out that she punishes and tortures her young son every night, in the mask of *hannya* 般若 (demon mask used in Noh theater), blaming him for the death of her beloved husband.

In Yamagishi's manga, Noh masks are often utilized to express two sides – superficial calmness and hidden emotional darkness – of a domestic mother.[24] "Yasha gozen" optimizes the motif of Noh masks, *onna-men* 女面 (female mask) and *hannya-men* (demon mask). Noh masks are metaphysically and symbolically presented, enhancing the atmosphere of the psycho-horror story.

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[23] See Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking."

[24] These Noh masks have long been treated as motifs representing Japanese womanhood in Japanese women's literature. Enchi Fumiko's *Onna-men* (Woman Mask) is an example.

Representations of M/Other in "Yasha gozen"

The story "Yasha gozen," narrated by Noriko, a fifteen year old girl, starts with a scene in which a family moves into an old-fashioned Japanese style house in the remote countryside. The house is simply built, and has neither gas nor water lines; the family is forced to lead an inconvenient life style. The disconnectedness of the house from modern culture and society creates the impression of timelessness, primitiveness and traditional domesticity. The story takes place entirely within the domestic realm, and readers understand that the story's horrific occurrence has to do with Japanese domesticity. The simplicity of the setting recalls that of the Noh stage as well and makes the eventual appearance of Noh masks particularly visually effective.

Noriko lives with her father, mother, grandmother, little brother and sister (interestingly none of them are given names). The mother is sick in bed; not only does she have no interaction with her daughter, but she is absent from most of the story. It is Noriko's job to clean the house, do laundry, and make meals. All she does every day is to take care of her family (it does not seem that she goes to school nor does she have friends). She is presented as a devoted and obedient domestic daughter. Despite her calm demeanor, however, Noriko's body becomes a site of physical and mental struggle. One night a heavy black entity pushes her down to the floor, and from that time she begins to overeat and vomit, and starts to gain weight. It is obvious to readers that Noriko has been raped and impregnated. Her daughterly body is violated by foreign objects (a man and a fetus); nevertheless, Noriko ignores what is happening to her body, because in order to perform as a perfect domestic daughter, she needs to maintain a calm and peaceful household. She does not see the dangerous trap that the concept of "perfect domestic daughter" embodies; that is, by being in control of the household as a good daughter, she is losing control of herself and losing her own identity. Soon, Noriko realizes that her violated body is constantly watched by a shadowy being in a kimono which sometimes appears with an *onna-men,* a female Noh mask, and sometimes a *hannya-men,* a demon mask. The masked being watches her from the corner of the room, the kitchen, and even from the ceiling of the bathroom, threatening her with its calm yet powerful presence. Masks used in Noh Theater are cultural signifiers, representing "purified intensified emotion."[25] The *Hannya* mask, which has two sharp horns, is used in such pieces as *Aoi* (the story about Lady Rokujō in *Tale*

[25] Lamarque, "Expression and the Mask," 161.

of Genji) and *Dōjyōji* to express dark and demonic female feelings. Historical and literary heroines' inability to contain strong emotions of jealousy, anger, love and obsession make them manifest as demons. Behind their masks, their sorrow and agony are simultaneously hidden. Judging from the fact that a woman mask and a demon mask are often used together to represent a woman's two-sidedness, readers of "Yasha gozen" understand that the masked existence represents a female spirit residing in Noriko's home, trying to send messages or to tell her story to Noriko.

One day, Noriko sees a female demon with two horns and wild hair in a mirror. Its expression slowly changes from calm to fierce, and the demon attempts to attack her. After a short time, it disappears. Noriko is relieved that nobody hears her scream and she states: "Nobody heard my scream. That's good. I should not let anybody know about this incident."[26] In order to protect the home's superficial peace, Noriko, a perfect daughter, cannot let the spirit reveal the reality of domesticity. After that, Noriko decides to ignore the presence no matter how frightening it is. The fact that Noriko ignores the demon implies that she does not want to let the masked persona narrate her "story." In Noh theater, without the on-stage listeners (or the role called *waki*), the story of the central character (*shite*) does not start. The masked being can do nothing but gaze at Noriko.

One night, however, Noriko gives a chance to the masked woman to tell her "story"; while Noriko is fighting against the dark shadow again, the demon woman lurks in the Japanese style closet. Japanese folktales often contain a pattern of the "prohibition of don't look." [27] Looking into the prohibited room symbolizes breaking of a cultural taboo; characters who cannot resist the temptation face tragic consequences. In "Yasha gozen," Noriko looks at the closet. Immediately, the masked woman proceeds toward her; she first kills the black shadow with an ax, and then turns to Noriko. She no longer wears the demon mask, but appears as a realistic woman. She states "You too will die, Noriko!"[28] At this point, the readers learn that the demon is actually Noriko's mother as seen by Noriko, and that the dark shadow killed by her is her husband. In other words, Noriko has been raped by her actual father and is carrying a

[26] Yamagishi, "Yasha gozen," 210.
[27] See Kitayama, *Prohibition of Don't Look: Living Through Psychoanalysis and Culture in Japan*. This book was originally published in Japanese in 1993 as *Miruna no kinshi*.
[28] Yamagishi, "Yasha gozen," 223.

baby created out of incestuous union. The "story" that the mother revealed through her own action is family tragedy and betrayal.

The enraged mother directs her anger not only toward her husband but also toward her daughter, the rape victim. The angry and jealous mother tries to kill Noriko. Interestingly, in this scene, the husband is quickly killed and his face is not clearly depicted. The true target of the mother's anger is her daughter. Without the demon mask, the mother reveals to the readers realistic facial expressions of the agony and fury of a woman. However, in Noriko's eyes, she still wears a demon mask, which indicates that Noriko does not see her as her actual mother. (Yamagishi draws the demon face reflected in Noriko's pupil.) To her, the complicated nature of the familial sexual tragedy has made her mother her uncanny "Other他者," whom she views as a woman, and her competitor. Given the fact that Noriko continues to see the mother as a mere demon with a mask, this demon could also be interpreted as the illusion that Noriko's fear of becoming a mother herself has created. In the final scene, Noriko is chased, naked, through an open field by her mother (or the idea of becoming mother): "I ran, ran and continued to run"[29] from M/Other. The field evokes the image of Adachigahara (a large plain of Adachi), on which *Kurozuka,* a Noh play, takes place.[30] The field also holds an image of primitiveness or even an archaic, pre-oedipal realm.[31] Noriko's rejection of M/Other resembles the moment of violent rapture of abjection by an infant who tries to separate itself

[29] Ibid, 224.

[30] *Kurozuka* is the story of a traveler who one night asks for a night's lodging at the cottage of an old woman. She transforms herself into a demon and eats him. The image of the open field also reminds readers of the film, *Onibaba,* directed by Shindō Kaneto. There is a scene in which a jealous mother-in-law threatens her young alluring daughter-in-law by wearing a demon mask, and chases after her in an open reed field. It is known that *Onibaba* utilized techniques and motifs of Noh theater.

[31] Pre-oedipal indicates "the early developmental period before gender identity is established by a child" (Rubenstein, "House Mothers and Haunted Daughters," 329). Freudian study explained that it is a natural developmental process for a girl child to exit the pre-oedipal phase and to shift her attachment from mother to father. Feminists of the 1970s found that Freudian psychoanalysis creates inequalities, and re-defined the developmental process of girls. Nancy Chodorow for instance, defined that "the basis of female identity . . . lies not in the oedipal but in the pre-oedipal period," stressing female mother-daughter bonding to be the basis of the process of women's development in culture (Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, 132). Western feminists tend to emphasize the importance of sisterhood, finding its roots in mother and daughter's primordial connection. Needless to say, this story does not follow this feminist argument.

from its mother in forming the subject. Here, Noriko attempts to abject Mother: both her own mother and the mother she herself is becoming.

Her flight from her actual mother seems successful, but her flight from herself being mother ends with failure, because she gives birth to a baby girl at a hospital. She realizes that she "has succumbed to the demon (the idea of Mother)."[32] She is now trapped by the notion of Mother. She soon notices that there are two horns on the baby's head; she gave birth to a demon. Noriko thinks that these horns are "the demon's curse."[33] The baby's two horns suggest the fact that her baby is Noriko's Other, as well. Dehumanization is an effective way to express a sense of Otherness, the unintelligibility of others.

Hagio Moto's "Iguana no musume" (Daughter of Iguana, *Puchi Furawā* [Petite Flower], May 1992]) is interesting to compare with "Yasha gozen," for Hagio's work also represents the emotional discrepancies between a mother and a daughter via the mother's imaginary dehumanization of her child, in this case into an iguana. The heroine grows up thinking that she has never loved her mother. Her mother, from the time she gave birth to her, has never seen her as her own child, but has seen her as an iguana instead of a real human, and hated her as being abominable.[34] The story is depicted in a casual tone of voice, but the issue that this work deals with is serious. The image of an iguana is used as a metaphor of Otherness. The story ends with the daughter's becoming a mother herself and understanding her mother, realizing that her mother is imperfect, suffers from an inferiority complex, and is nothing different from herself. With the heroine's marriage and becoming a mother herself, Hagio presents reconciliation between mother and daughter at the end of the story, but Yamagishi's view is harsh. Yamagishi seems to imply that mothers and daughters are perpetually foreign and the reconciliation of mother and daughter will never happen.[35] The story is concluded in Noriko's statement; "Now my home is a mess. . . . That's why I hated this house from the beginning . . . . They will soon take me to the place where my mother is staying (a mental

[32] Yamagishi, "Yasha gozen," 226.
[33] Ibid., 227.
[34] For further discussion of the mother-daughter relationship in manga including "Iguana no musume," see Nimiya, *Adaruto chirudoren to shōjo manga* (Adult Children and Shōjo manga), 62.
[35] Yamada Tomoko considers that due to the creation of manga magazines for mature women, such as *Be Love, Young You,* etc., stories came to show understanding of mothers. She states that "mothers, despite faults, are delineated as attractive" (Yamada, "Haha to musume no monogatari," 213).

institution). . . . I am afraid that I might encounter the demon again."[36] Contrary to the Noh convention, there is not salvation of the demonic spirit here. The ending of the story suggests that all troubles and tragedy originate in the home, Japanese domesticity, and that the struggles there between mothers and daughters never end.

Conclusion

"Adult mother-daughter relationships in Japan are currently in transition."[37] The intimacy of mother and daughter[38] – who are connected through love and affection rather than duties - is portrayed positively in newspapers and magazines. However, some critics do not think the situation is that simple.

Adrianne Rich considers that daughters often possess "matrophobia"[39] – fear of mothers, fear of becoming a mother and fear of identification with (and also separation from) the maternal body. "Yasha gozen" is a good example of matrophobic narrative. It is the story of a domestic daughter's fear toward her actual mother's presence and the idea of becoming a mother. The young heroines that Yamagishi depicts are always obedient, modest and mentally vulnerable. Because of their obedience and selflessness, these domestic daughters are tortured physically and mentally. They are not rewarded for being good, unlike the lesson repeatedly emphasized by early shōjo manga. Domesticity is, therefore, a battleground for daughters in the struggle amongst values of tradition, gender, identity, etc.

Some[40] consider that mothers' excessive emotional reliance on daughters and their reinforcement of their own values and dreams is difficult for daughters to bear, and their excessive care for them deprive daughters from independence.[41] Mothers identify themselves with their daughters, "seeing them

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[36] Yamagishi, "Yasha gozen," 228.

[37] Mizuno-Shimatani, "Changing Adult Mother-Daughter Relationships in Japan," 17.

[38] In 2002, 70% of mothers answered that they would prefer to have a daughter instead of a son if they were to have only one child, according to National Institute of Population and Social Security Research. (qtd. in Mizuno-Shimatani, 17)

[39] Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 235.

[40] Saitō Tamaki and Nobuta Sayoko are examples.

[41] In "Media" (*Amie*, March 1997), Yamagishi cautions against the close, friend-like relationship between mother and daughter, a cultural topic of discussion in the 1990s. The main character, a college student, does everything with her mother. However, she starts to feel annoyed by her mother's attachment and overwhelming affection. The mother is enraged by the daughter's plans to study abroad. Yamagishi demystifies this relationship by ending the story with the mother's murder of her daughter. Yamagishi's

... as extensions of themselves."[42] How can mothers and daughters live their own lives while maintaining harmonious relationships?

Yamagishi's cruel and horrifying manga are, in a way, messages addressed to her young female readers reminding them that mothers are women with their own demons and warning them that without seeking independence from mothers, they will be devoured by uncanny M/Other, the embodiment of Japanese domesticity.

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works are always narrated from the daughters' perspective and portray the twisted psyche resulting from two conflicting emotions – a feeling of obligation to function as a good daughter and a desire to be free from this role.

[42] See Hirsch, "Review: Mothers and Daughters," 206.

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