

very stimulating data about current myth-making processes.⁵

Sienkewicz's Introduction is a good synthesis of a number of fundamental facts concerning mythology and the study of myths. The general public and students may learn much from reading it, while some scholars may sympathize with Sisyphus (the character of Greek mythology), evoked by Sienkewicz to give an idea of what the whole project involves. Endless, slippery, intangible, unrealistic, and self-contradictory, but at the same time truth-revealing, ubiquitous, intersecting with history and affecting historiography, almost without boundaries of any kind, these are among the distinctive traits of that tale-telling that Plato named *mythologia*.

I just want to add a short comment to the fact that, as Sienkewicz says in his Introduction, variation in orthography is occasionally part of the process of myth-making. Even after the arrival of writing systems in many cultures, some variations were made while copying manuscripts, thus providing one pre-text for textual collation and philological criticism. The invention of printing did nothing but change, first in the Sino-centric literary world, then in Europe where the technology has had many unintended variations. One might expect that the advent of computer technology would eliminate misprints. Yet this does not seem to be the case. Surely it is due to a technical oversight that the name of a famous Indian epic appears in the following interesting spelling variant: R3m3yana (280). Are computers opening the way for high-tech philologists to come?

NOTES

1. This quote is taken from Paul Story's translation of *The Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1937) pp. 230-31.
2. Mythological storytelling surely affects scientific disclosures in, for example, contemporary cosmogonic explanations.
3. The uniformity of the English-language material collected in the bibliography is not maintained when the reference for the original texts is given with an English translation, and when Latin words or passages are used for sexual references in old translations.
4. For example, *African Folktales with Foreign Analogues* (New York: Garland Press, 1992) was originally written in 1938 as May Augusta Klippe's doctoral dissertation.
5. The data is relevant mostly to American urban legends, like that of "The Choking Doberman" and "The Vanishing Hitchhiker."

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JAPAN

HARDACRE, HELEN. *Marketing the Menacing Fetus in Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. xx + 310 pages. Plans, maps, figures, tables, bibliography, character list, index. Cloth US\$35.00; ISBN 0-520-20553-7.

Mizuko kuyō—ritual services for those that die in the womb—is a controversial Japanese phenomenon that impinges on such issues as abortion, reproduction, sexual relations, gender issues, ritual performance, religious entrepreneurship, exploitation, and moral ambiguities.

Helen Hardacre provides much information on the practice, showing that it has appeared across much of the religious spectrum in the last twenty years, and with numerous regional variations. According to Hardacre, *mizuko kuyō* is practiced at 40–45% of religious institutions surveyed (92)—a sizeable figure that is slightly at odds with her statement that the practice “only ever found acceptance with a small minority of the people and their religious institutions” (xxii).

She argues against the claim that it is “Japan’s way of dealing with abortion” (100) by showing that there are many conflicts surrounding it, including its rejection by some religious organizations and priests, and often, too, by local parishioners. She especially highlights the controversial aspects of commercialization and the promotion of fearful images that have been used by some institutions, and asserts that the practice is a thoroughly modern construct. In this way her study is at odds with the work of LAFLEUR (1992) who, while treating *mizuko kuyō* as a modern phenomenon, argues that it has historical antecedents and places it in a broader historical context. Hardacre also argues that it is a misogynistic practice that uses “fetocentric rhetoric to stigmatize the nonreproductive sexual activity of women uniquely, shielding their sexual partners from any responsibility” (252) and that asserts “the idea of fetal personhood, the proposition that the fetus has the same moral value as a human being” (3). Such images are designed to make women who have had abortions guilty both for taking life and for failing to procreate, and are, she suggests, used by many Japanese nationalists eager to promote the country by increasing its population. While she touches on the nationalism that is just beneath the surface of the practice (173), she does not go into this in any depth, proceeding more by implication than by documentation. For example, she moves from noting that the right-wing figure Sasakawa Ryōichi was associated with Bentenshū, a new religion that performs *mizuko kuyō*, to stating that “in the shadowy presence in Bentenshū of fascist icon Sasakawa Ryōichi, we see a persistent association of the misogyny of abortion opposition and *mizuko kuyō* with the more antediluvian and unreconstructed elements of Japan’s right wing.” (196). While Hardacre could be right here, she produces no evidence to back her claims and show that the rightist ideology of Sasakawa influenced the development of *mizuko kuyō* in the religion.

Hardacre responds polemically to the “fetocentric rhetoric” discourse. By viewing abortion as a sexual practice revolving around male-female sexual negotiations (102), she negates the possibility that some people might regard the fetus (even in its early stages) as possessing a life force that merits consideration in its own right. While she may be correct in suggesting that images of the fetus have been utilized to produce worries among young women who have had abortions, I would like some substantiation of her argument that such images of the fetus separate it from the mother, divert attention away from men’s roles in abortion, and create the notion that “in abortion, women become ‘murderers’ of the hero-astronaut fetus” (90). Might not the reification of the image as a living being also serve to encourage men as well as women to think of *mizuko* services?—a question of some relevance, given that (as Hardacre shows) there is an appreciable male participation in *mizuko kuyō*.

Hardacre often seems more swayed by emotion than analysis, as when she discusses a temple pamphlet commenting on a media story of a woman who, about to be married, gave birth to a child of another man, strangled it, and threw the corpse into a dustbin. This was the second time she had killed a child borne of this same man (on the first occasion she had asked him to dispose of it). The temple pamphlet draws links between this action (which it depicted as murder) and abortion, and goes on to promote the importance of performing *mizuko kuyō*. Hardacre complains that the pamphlet is an example of misogyny, which “spotlights the woman’s actions and leaves the man uninterrogated” (174). Yet it was the woman who had strangled the baby, and the man does not escape opprobrium: as the pamphlet notes,

the reporter “was obviously disgusted by the insensitivity of these two”(172). The pamphlet also affirms that life begins at conception (a standard Buddhist viewpoint, and one that plays a role in why some temples feel services should be done for those that perish in the womb), and criticizes those who do not regard the fetus as a child (173–74). Whatever one might think of the temple in question (and there is much evidence to suggest it is overly commercialized), I did not see how this particular passage could be criticized quite in the way it was. There is a serious argument to be made about how some priests dress up the commercial sides of their operations in moralistic jargon, but one also has to take account of the underlying beliefs that might be a part of this practice. Hardacre’s failure to address such issues clearly was disappointing since she raises serious questions about gender relations and antifemale bias in the rhetoric of abortion and *mizuko kuyō* that need to be discussed analytically.

It is problematic to deal with *mizuko kuyō* almost entirely in relation to abortion, since not all *mizuko kuyō* are the result of wanted processes to deal with unwanted situations, but the reverse. Indeed, a survey Hardacre cites suggests around 20% of those who seek these services do so as a result of a miscarriage. In such cases it would appear that *mizuko kuyō* services might be helpful, enabling people suffering loss to contextualize it and to give form to the wished for but lost child. When viewed from this angle, *mizuko kuyō* has a potentially rather different ambience that may not sit quite so well with analyses centered on guilt, manipulation, or, indeed, the retribution of angry spirits.

Hardacre, however, focuses on abortion and her main thesis is that *mizuko kuyō* is a product of fetocentric commercialism promoted by religious practitioners and the popular media. Here she makes some interesting comments on religion as a commodity (78–79) and fits *mizuko kuyō* into the rubric of contemporary religious commercialization in Japan. She commences by talking of the “invention and marketing of *mizuko kuyō*” in the 1970s (xxi), and concludes by saying that it “arose in the 1970s, not as an unmediated experience of popular sentiment about abortion, but as the product of an intense media advertising campaign by entrepreneurial religionists” (251) and mentions frequently the “media blitz” associated with it (e.g., 77, 80, 251). However, she backs these frequent assertions with surprisingly little evidence. She gives some examples from magazines of the 1980s of spiritual scare materials that might frighten young women, but given the assertion of a 1970s “blitz” could not some examples be found from this era? The earliest popular media article Hardacre cites, from 1973, discusses a temple in Tokyo that was said to have already performed 300,000 *mizuko* services (79). Nothing further is said about this temple, but given the implications of this article, some investigation of when it began performing *mizuko kuyō* would have been useful. If the article is correct, the implication is that the cult was already active before any article—if this is the first Hardacre can find—existed about it. Hardacre also cites a survey from Kyoto University that shows that 15% of the institutions performing *mizuko kuyō* did so before 1965 (94). I would like to see some explanation of how institutions could be performing a ritual several years before it was (according to Hardacre) invented.

I do not dispute that publicity was a major factor in the development of *mizuko kuyō*. My complaint is about assertions made without adequate corroborative evidence; given that the book is about marketing the fetus, there is very little concrete detail about the processes by which the practice was supposedly invented and marketed, or, indeed, about how such images were received. Did women, after seeing scary *mizuko* images in magazines, go to temples to perform these services? What, indeed, are the motivations of the performers of the rituals? We do not know, for their voices are absent. Here it is worth mentioning an article by Richard ANDERSON and Elaine MARTIN, published after Hardacre went to press, that gives voice to a group of female *mizuko kuyō* practitioners at a Tokyo temple (1997). This suggests a complex picture of motivations and notes that many of the existing statements about *mizuko*

(such as questions of retribution and exploitation) might need to be modified in the light of what participants actually say: the women interviewed, for example, appear not to be (or have been) driven much by reading fearful literature on the subject. By barely focusing on the performers, Hardacre is unable to substantiate her assumptions about the role of fearful media publicity. As such, I was left with several unanswered questions, such as why, given that the media campaign was directed against young (and largely urban) women, are so many of the performers middle-aged or older rural women?

Hardacre's fieldwork also left many questions unanswered. To take one example: Hardacre, commenting on an unused *mizuko kuyō* facility at a temple, notes that the donors were stonemasons, and hypothesizes that *mizuko kuyō* in the area may have originated with local stoneworkers eager to promote their trade (213). She seems not to have followed this assumption up by questioning either the stonemasons or the priest, yet surely such investigations are needed to back up such broad hypothetical comments. Her discussion of existing scholarship is also at times problematic. On page 7 she refers to "existing Western studies," but her footnote (266) refers only to an article by two Japanese scholars. We are told that "Western writers frequently create the impression that *mizuko kuyō* dates from time immemorial" (7), but which Western scholars? We need some evidence to back up a sweeping assertion that does no justice to the various scholars in the field who locate the origins of the practice in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., WERBLOWSKY 1991, HARRISON 1996). Werblosky's article, incidentally, is not a "study of votive plaques dedicated to *mizuko* at a Tokyo temple" (266, n. 6) but a broad overview of *mizuko kuyō* that contains one short paragraph on typical messages on *mizuko* votive tablets (not attributed to a Tokyo temple), and that complains that there has been no systematic study of *mizuko ema* (WERBLOWSKY 1991, 303)! One further error that needs to be noted is that the new religion GLA mentioned on page 60 is the "God Light Association," not "Glad Light Association" as Hardacre has it.

This is a book whose theses are argued passionately and that will add a new voice to the often heated debates on *mizuko kuyō*. While the passion and the polemics of the arguments are not in themselves a problem, there are many places in which the arguments set forth have been insufficiently substantiated or deeply flawed; for me, these weaknesses undermined the book as a whole and left me deeply disappointed in it overall.

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