

When the myth of life began our people shared life with humans, stone to earth, fire to water, trees to sky: Multiplicity and Commonality in Hiromi Goto's

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"When the myth of life began our people shared life with humans, stone to earth, fire to water, trees to sky": Multiplicity and Commonality in Hiromi Goto's Water of Possibility

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For those of you expecting an issue devoted to Japanese children's literature in which to learn more about Japan, an article about a novel by a Japanese-Canadian author might not be what you're looking for. However, this article raises questions about community, belonging, culture, and otherness pertinent to any critical look at a culture and community, whether our own or another's.

(Elizabeth Pandolfo Briggs, editor, Alice's Academy)

Until recently, Canadian children's literature produced by immigrants has not been classified as equal to that written by "the two founding nations" (Seiler 53). This situation has definitely changed, judging for instance from the number of books published in the series under the telling title *In the Same Boat*. As Margaret Mackey has commented, "[i]n terms of multimodal awareness and multicultural understanding, we are in a different universe from that of a generation ago" (97). Still, in the essay "Alien Texts, Alien Seductions: The Context of Colour Full Writing", Hiromi Goto, a young Japanese-Canadian writer, one of the *In the Same Boat* authors, thus defines her practice: "I write well aware of race. I cannot imagine writing outside of this [racialized] context. My subject position and the subject positions of my readers are something that I must (...) incorporate into the integrity of the text. I live in a racialized environment, and the politics of my writing are distinctly Colour Full" (266). As she admits, her strategy is close to that of another member of Canadian visible minorities, Larissa Lai, who speaks "with her world at the centre (...), explains afterwards, if she feels it necessary and desirable" and is always ready "to change and challenge" ("Alien Texts..." 266). This in turn enables Lai, and Goto, for that matter, "to imagine and create new worlds that may not be otherwise written or welcomed" ("Alien Texts..." 266). Goto explains that such a stance is conducive to Colour Full writing, "a site of strength, possibility and change" that is far from providing readers of other cultural backgrounds with "exotic delicacies meant to be sampled" ("Alien Texts ... " 266). Rather, to follow Goto's phrasing, her texts "seduce" "non-alien readership" ("Alien Texts..." 266) and make them abandon the positions of "site tourists" "so that they would take responsibility for their "desire to read the alien" ("Alien Texts..." 268).

In my article I aim to analyze how this subversive strategy functions in Goto's young adult fantasy novel, *The Water of Possibility* (2002), which can be seen as a successful attempt at a narrative depicting a development of identity both within a specifically ethnic context and in more general social terms. I will argue that Goto does not incorporate a range of folkloristic material into her fiction just for the sake of artistic effect, but uses it far more expansively: transforming her story into literary folklore in which "[p]ast and present are often intertwined to cast light on contemporary society" (Inggs 29), she simultaneously addresses social realities, inscribing her strategy in the process of cross-culturation. Goto's protagonist, twelve-year old Sayuri Kato, a Japanese-Canadian, is forced to move from Calgary to the provincial town of Ganola, Alberta, because of economic reasons. Being Canadian-born and attending a public school in which she is most probably taught English history, Sayuri is only slightly aware of her ethnically complicated predicament. By transporting the girl to Living Earth, a secondary world which is nonetheless beset with real-life problems, Goto makes Sayuri face an eye-opening ontological vertigo: the girl finds herself in the position of an undesirable Other forced to question her assumptions about culture, identity, and power, and to see the world from somebody else's perspective. In my discussion I argue that although Goto's novel centers on a hyphenated Canadian's displacement and her finding a place in society through drawing parallels between the new country and the old one, it is also a work focusing on the familiar issue of "a growth towards maturity and a strengthened sense of self-esteem" (Inggs 31). Indeed, the novel's appeal to young readers of variegated cultural backgrounds resides in its simultaneous interest in such themes as intellectual and ethical development of a self-conscious teenager, her awareness of human choices, and a conspicuous ecological agenda. As Peter Hunt explains, despite concrete cultural contexts, children's books may also function at "the 'macro' level", that is, as "an invaluable means of spreading international understanding (...) and expressing the universal belief that children share much in common. And more, their literature offers access to this sharing of values, norms, and experiences, just as it also offers a means of understanding cultural disparity" (110).

Hence, Goto's novel emerges as a tale nudging the reader into reflection on "a possible commonality -- as opposed to universality -- of experience" (Verdyun 10). Still, I hope that by choosing *The Water of Possibility* as a welcome sign in Canadian literature, I am not guilty of "the reductive interpretative policies" that "threaten to neutralize the presence of potentially radical children's literature" (Saldanha 174). As Louise Saldanha notes, there is a

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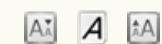
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The control of fire was the first and perhaps greatest of humanity's steps towards a life-enhancing technology.

To early man, fire was a divine gift randomly delivered in the form of lightning, forest fire or burning lava.

Fire-lighting was revolutionized by the discovery of phosphorus, isolated in 1669 by a German alchemist trying to transmute silver into gold.

Impressed by the element's combustibility, several 17th century chemists used it to manufacture fire-lighting devices, but the results were dangerously inflammable. The quest for a practical match really began after 1781 when a group of French chemists came up with the Phosphoric Candle or Ethereal Match, a sealed glass tube containing a twist of paper tipped with phosphorus. The "creation of life from clay" is a miraculous birth theme and scientific study that appears in mythology, literature, and modern theory. In Greek mythology, according to Pseudo-Apollodorus, Prometheus molded men out of water and earth. In Sumerian mythology, the gods Enki or Enlil create a servant of the gods,

"predominant tendency to assign pedagogical value to (...) texts within the conventions of multiculturalism (internalized, at times, by both white students as well as students of color). If a text can be made to fit into an ahistorical, Eurocentric framework, it is bestowed with the rather dubious honour of universalism (...) or, forgiven its rather unfortunate subject matter by representing racism tastefully (...) (174). My reading of Goto's text is rather to tie in with Roderick McGillis's contention that although "[a]dults are colonizers; children the colonized", what postcolonial artistic and critical practices "offer is not merely a discourse (...) forming them [children] in the image adults desire; it is also a discourse that allows for a greater variety in versions of history and social and cultural constructions than was available to earlier generations of children. The young reader has the opportunity to choose between narratives that force questions and choices upon him or her" (*Voices of the Other* xxviii).

The reader meets Sayuri, a Westernized urbanite, as she is lamenting the loss of city conveniences. Instead of looking forward to new friendships, the only conclusion that she reaches about the local people is that they "spend most of the time praying or playing baseball" (3). With her urbanocentric mentality, Sayuri thinks about the new predicament as "a mistake" and "just a bubble (...) [which] will soon pop" (*The Water...* 3). Nor does she care about her ethnic heritage, and in particular, folk tales that she hears mainly from her mother, Kimi. It seems that for a teenager of the twenty-first century folk tales can function merely as a source of bedtime entertainment providing a thrill of exoticism which nevertheless is, as Heather Neff puts it, "amalgamate[d] into a palatable, bland, unsavory soup" (54). Already at the beginning of the book, Kimi tells the girl a folk story about the Yamanba, the old wise Woman of the Mountain [1]. The Yamanba's duty is to look after the fires of the nearby volcano: "Every few decades, the Yamanba would release the beast to feed, for all living creatures must eat. But then she would call the creature back, and so control the balance of life and death" (*The Water...* 39). It was not difficult for the Yamanba to preserve this natural equilibrium until the people forgot about her efforts and expanded their village into a city, "billowing smog and creating islands of garbage" (*The Water...* 40). In the meantime, Yamanba became so enfeebled that she finally "fell into dust and rejoined the forest that had birthed her" (*The Water...* 41). Soon the untamed volcano erupted and destroyed the human settlements. It was only when the survivors of the disaster remembered about the Festival of Fire, a ceremony that could appease the volcano, that Yamanba was resurrected to revive the land. In Sayuri's world there are no more Yamanbas or volcano beasts. It is no wonder that when she wakes up the following morning, she does not care much whether Kimi managed to finish her story or whether she fell asleep and just dreamt its happy resolution. By exposing Sayuri's indifference to tradition as a source of guidance and inspiration, Goto alludes to a failure of Canadian multiculturalism thus defined by Louise Saldanha: " 'Diversity' -- ethnic, racial, cultural -- is contained within a liberal humanist framework that encourages the expression of one's 'difference' as an alternative lifestyle rather than as an oppositional subjectivity. (...) Canadian multiculturalism works to safely tuck difference away into realms of "the folk", fossilizing cultures that are then vulnerable to ghettoization, appropriation, and stereotyping" (167). Interestingly, Goto provides another, very telling, example of superficial multiculturalism, manifested in the Katos' lifestyle: they enjoy typically Japanese food, such as korroke, tonkatsu, or tofu. Nevertheless, for a long time Sayuri is not able to associate her diet with tradition. It is much later that she realizes, for example, the legendary nutritious potential of fried tofu.

Sayuri's lack of ethnic awareness indicates that she is on the point of becoming a cultural outsider, that is, as Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm puts it, an individual who is "lost, drifting, disconnected. When that happens the person loses the spiritual base as well -- a spiritual base which is founded on love and respect. This lost (...) person then becomes capable of all sorts of destructive behaviour (...) that can be internalized or that can be unleashed on the earth" (90). The latter attitude can be exemplified by Sayuri's lack of appreciation for the freshness offered by the countryside, however beneficial it may turn out for Keiji, her asthmatic younger brother. Neither can she feel any compassion for the dry half-dead trees outside her new house. On the interpersonal level, Sayuri's progression in this dangerous direction can be noticed in the treatment of her relatives. She often tries to use her position of the elder sister against her brother, of whom she is jealous and who is for her only "a disgusting little thing" (*The Water...* 2) and a "scrawny" invalid (*The Water...* 87). She is also very worried about what others think of her and her family without any reflection that it is her ethical choices that should be her primary motivation. This is the case with her attitude to Kimi. The girl loves her but can be harshly critical of her small idiosyncrasies concerning clothes or make-up, which, as she believes, "faze" other people (*The Water...* 46). Nor does she respect Kimi's occupation as a horror fiction writer whose "advances and royalties were like Christmas. Not something that came every day" (*The Water...* 7). Sayuri is also very much concerned with the reception she will receive on joining Ganola's swimming team, and in particular, that she may risk humiliation by turning out to be a worse swimmer than the other girls. Still, she should feel (but does not) offended at hearing her coach classifying her as a Japanese-Canadian and promising to protect her in case "anyone give (...) [her] trouble" (*The Water...* 50). Sayuri's insensitivity to her ethnic position, coupled by psychological dislocation, may be interpreted as the Other's being tempted by the possibility of becoming accepted "into the oppressive ruling majority" ("Alien Texts..." 265). Nevertheless, she cannot escape what Goto calls "the sense of despair and futile anger I face when exposed to 'white denial' " (*The Water...* 265), as one of the girls from the team deliberately mispronounces her first name: " 'Sah yer eee?' Sidney wrinkled her nose. Her voice was a hiss of scorn. Like she was talking through a mouthful of razor blades. 'What kind of name is that?' " (*The Water...* 49) [2].

What is missing in Sayuri's ethnic, intellectual, and emotional development is an encounter with something absolutely unfamiliar to her so that she could become more conscious of the fact that what is assumed as normal within one cultural environment may be foreign to another individual or cultural group. In general terms, to both empathize with other people around her and to accept herself, she must, to paraphrase Roderick McGillis, "share a oneness with others" (223). For Sayuri such an experience of participating in the world of the Other means not only listening to an exotic story from the lore of her ancestors but becoming, in effect, one of its participants. This happens as the girl and her brother explore the cellar in their new house and accidentally enter an imaginary world. Significantly, Goto's recourse to such a magical displacement is purposeful, as fantasy is other to realistic literary modes: it does not only depict alien creatures or bizarre experiences, but also centers on the Other so as to explore the everyday and ordinary, against which a given instance of alterity is defined. In his article "Self, Other, and Other Self", McGillis rightly avers that "[t]he thing to insist on when we speak of fantasy is its 'otherness.' Fantasy presents things as other than they are; in this otherness lies fantasy's very familiarity. Fantasy returns us to the theme of the uncanny and its relationship to the unconscious" (222). As McGillis points out, the very act of constructing a story means entering the realm of the Other: to create a character is "to make an imaginative leap into the possibility of other lives. (...) [E]ach attempt at story [be it writing a story or reading it] is an attempt to understand what it is like to be an 'Other' " (220). Simultaneously, through witnessing the amazement of fantastic characters at the Otherness in their own environment, readers are more likely share in their responses. As William Senior argues, "[t]he reactions of characters native to secondary worlds again ally them to us. (...) If the inhabitants of Faerie stand in wide-eyed astonishment at the rivers, mountains, creatures, battles, or magical events of their world, certainly they draw both mortal visitors and readers into understanding the primary and secondary worlds in terms of each other" (118). In other words, a sensation evoked within the text generates an external reaction for readers. It is through such a vicarious participation in the characters' cognitive estrangement with regard to Otherness that readers may experience an even more intense wonder at their own defamiliarization. Goto modifies this writerly strategy by making Sayuri, with whom readers are likely to identify, the very object of such astonishment on the part of the

humankind, out of clay and blood (see Enki and the Making of Man). In another Sumerian story, both Enki and Ninmah create humans from the clay of the Abzu, the fresh water of the underground

fantastic creatures from Living Earth. Having been drawn to their world, Sayuri begins to see things and herself from the inside out. This experience in turn exemplifies what Shaobo Xie defines as "identifying with an 'other's' thought. To speak from an other's thought is to redefine and renarrativize the world" (1). As will be shown, for Sayuri this renarrativization will actually involve not only her Japanese-Canadian identity but also her humanity in general.

Sayuri's own act of retelling begins when she hears the following story told to her by the *tanuki*, one of the races from Japanese folklore:

*"When the myth of life began
our people shared life with humans,
(...) But the spiral turning
saw human break
the pattern
as if they were their own masters.
Instead of magic they wrought death.
They broke the living law.*

*So Great Mother Tanuki,
(...), enchanted humans into story
and they were never seen again.
So many ages of peace
and life
flowed like the mountain stream"
(The Water... 148-149)*

The *tanuki*, for whom the tale is a factual historical account, explains to the girl the principles governing life in Living Earth and why every creature she meets is shocked at the sight of a human being as an evil omen [3]. As the only human being in Living Earth (apart from her brother Keiji), Sayuri feels humbled. She is also aware that she is judged by the alien creatures around her. A very evocative instance of such a critical observation is the first encounter between Sayuri and the *tanuki*: as the girl fell asleep in the sun, her skin became so red that they thought her to be a hairless pig suitable to eat. Aggrieved at such treatment as Sayuri is, she does admit that her "skin was as roasted as the delicious crackling pig she's seen hanging in the restaurants in Chinatown" (The Water... 140-141). In that way Goto subtly encourages her readers to experience a cognitive estrangement by trying to imagine how they could be seen by other creatures.

Even more challenging is her struggle with animal otherness haunting her in Living Earth. Sayuri's conception of humanity is organized by the radical opposition between nature and culture, manifested in seeing animals as the Other. In Living Earth the girl comes face to face with her own edibility as potential meat for animals living in the foreign realm. When she comes across a hospitable hollow in a tree and decides to rest there, she maniacally analyzes its scents and wonders if they do not come from an omnivorous animal that could enjoy human flesh. The abhorrence of animality, so ingrained in her psyche, and coupled with her own spiritual displacement, does not subside much even after her encountering the good-natured vegetarian fox Machigai, whose diet consists of sweet chestnuts instead of fried tofu. As if this was not enough for the confused Sayuri, she experiences the blurring of the opposition between the human and the animal when witnessing various stages of Machigai's metamorphosis into a Japanese girl in a kimono [4]. It takes considerable time before she understands that in Living Earth she represents one more of many species making up its ecosystem, just as her Japanese-Canadian origin is one of many other possible affiliations. Hence, as Goto shows, people must decide whether they are willing to share and co-exist with both the Otherness of the earth and with ethnic and cultural Others, without colonizing them and precluding any friction or challenge. Sayuri's initial experience of exclusion, which then changes into the sense of the continuum of identity, may be seen as Goto's envisioning of fluid interethnicity, which could be defined as the possibility of one's multiple identification with numerous communities, be it animals or people. Just as Sayuri begins to recognize her willingness to participate in several different communities -- her family, her swimming team, the inhabitants of Living Earth -- she notices the subtle balance of simultaneous belonging and alienation, which in turn constitutes her right to be the Other acknowledged by other Others. As McGillis states, "[w]e cannot but be 'Other' to the communities which contain us, and when everyone is an 'Other' then everyone shares an experience that might keep people together not by the bonds of community but by the choice of community" (215).

However, in Living Earth the multi-species diversity is threatened by the unification project of the Patriarch, a self-anthropomorphized fox, who, contrary to Machigai, conceals himself in a human form, thereby defying both his own "ethnic" identity and preventing himself from dynamic interaction with Otherness. Just like a human, the fox can stand on his hind legs and has human hands [5]. His very human-like ambitions are about to cause an ecological disaster in Living Earth: to build and power his own city, which is to become the center of his empire, the fox treats the land as a commodity to be used for his disposal. As the fox justifies his endeavors, he finds inspiration in humans' domination approach to nature and the vision of constant economic, aesthetic, and spiritual progress towards an even more civilized world: "Does a human ask the ants and the beetles if they have hopes and dreams before destroying their homes to build his own? My vision is vast. I am not bound to the insect's details. I am pushing my world into a new existence. Power will feed power, and I will bind the many worlds into my own". (The Water... 261). The Patriarch's conception of the world and his attitude to other animals represents what Heather Neff has called in the context of America "the emergence of one dominant voice, mirrored against the other and virtually defined by the sense of competition engendered by both real and imaginary social adversaries" (57). A vivid example of the ethnic and cultural homogenization imposed by the Patriarch is the platoon of the kappa soldiers, a well-organized group of creatures whose individualities, in Sayuri's eyes, always merge into "the enemy" (The Water... 179). The kappas can be seen as the colonized that have lost their ethnicity under the Patriarch's rule. Sayuri notices that, contrary to their nature, they do not "walk like forest creatures -- they swatted limbs of trees, cracked dry branches beneath their hard boots weighed down by heavy packs" (The Water... 175). Moreover, just as the fox has adopted human ways, the kappas use objects and food brought from the human world, such as tarpaulin or instant dehydrated soup. Sayuri's imprisonment in the fox's city again sensitizes her to her own human Otherness, to imbalances of power and to the struggle between the forces silencing Otherness and those empowering it.

The Patriarch's cynical tirade about people makes Sayuri decide to save the diversity of Living Earth and to expose the falsity of the fox's reasoning about humans by proving her own example that in spite of their greed "[p]eople have dreams and hopes and they love and share!" (The Water... 260-1). Simultaneously, Sayuri's opposition is an attempt at overcoming her own inability to push aside her egocentric motivations for the sake of others. Naturally, the slightly neurotic and self-conscious girl does not find it easy to oppose the Patriarch, who tempts her by appealing to what is perhaps one of the dominating human predilections: the desire to fulfill one's individual ambitions, which often means exercising domination over others. However, with the help from animals of various species, she is able to defeat the Patriarch. Significantly, this combined effort becomes possible partly thanks to Sayuri's new ability to appreciate their intrinsic value: even such seemingly trivial qualities as a spider's weaving spinning talents or a frog's

squeaky voice and tiny size emerge as worthy of respect. Thus, Sayuri learns to acknowledge the interdependence of various selves as essential to the discovery of true identity. Moreover, her commitment to rescue Living Earth also points to her choice of community in the name of the equality of selves and the essential responsibility to act against the silencing of the Other.

Such a resolution of the conflict in Living Earth reflects Goto's belief both in the natural continuity between animals and humans and in the chance of integrating human cultural heritage into the natural environment without endangering the balance of the planet. Nevertheless, Sayuri's awareness of both similarities and differences between the human and the animal may be treated as a metaphor of her realizing that encounters with what is unfamiliar to us may significantly contribute to empathy and tolerance among people of different social and ethnic backgrounds. As Christl Verduyn explains, "some measure of common experience can balance specific instances of experience as mitigated by realities of race, class, gender, and generation" (10). Sayuri's astonishment at the Otherness of Living Earth and the resulting insight into her own alterity allow her to acknowledge the Other within herself. Simultaneously, by trying to prevent the Patriarch Sayuri becomes "a self-reflexive *homo textualis*", engaged, to paraphrase the *tanuki's* tale, in disenchanting human from the realm of story through the process of continuous self-interpretation and the discursive treatment of various Others (Kalaga 63). Sayuri does need alterity to envision herself, but, contrary to usual discriminatory practices, she "is not denigrating others in order to better know and better love herself" (Neff 53). This leads to her acknowledgement of the imperative the ethical relation to the Other based, as Richard Kearny contends, on the respect for "the singularity of the other person", as well as the recognition of the [O]ther "as another self bearing universal rights and responsibilities" towards other Others (80). As Sayuri invites positive reader-identification, through witnessing her struggle with her own Otherness and that of creatures around her, readers are encouraged to reflect on their own attitudes to alterity. In this way Goto's novel prompts reflection on the importance of Otherness for one's development towards an expanded sense of identity, including its ethnic dimension and such values as tolerance, sympathy and altruism.

Sayuri's hands-on experiences with the multiplicity and commonality of Otherness in Living Earth enable her to confront the problems of her Ganola life. First, before she leaves the magical realm, she is confronted with her monster and her good selves when immersing herself in the Water of Possibility, into which one has to reach and take out both something that is good and something that is bad. Making Sayuri face what turns out to be a psychological and emotional trauma gives Goto a chance to encourage both her heroine and readers to reimagine their own moral choices in a more abstract way. Now Sayuri can see in her good self the side of herself full of joy, self-contentment and love for her family, including the interest in her cultural heritage (*The Water...* 306). "The Sayuri Monster" repulses Sayuri, unable to assume a proper spiritual, moral, or ethnic stand in her life (*The Water...* 306). Sayuri finally manages to restrain her monstrosity by declaring it a part of herself that she needs to control. This self-chosen recognition is the final confirmation of Sayuri's potential for a more effective interaction with the Others around her. Having developed "the ability to feel something happening with as well as to an Other" (Keefer 102), Sayuri begins to respect her little brother and her "freak" mother, as well as try to understand that some of the girls from her new swimming team seem unwilling to make friends with her simply because of their own inhibitions, including the inability to acknowledge encounters with Otherness as a vital experience on their lives. To paraphrase Kateri Akiwenzi-Damm, Sayuri is "[s]tanding at this intersection" and she can "develop (...) [her] sense of personal and social identity". As Akiwenzi-Damm puts it, "[w]e come to understand that behind us our ancestors, in front of us our descendants. We come to understand our individual relationship to all others around us, to all aspects of creation" (85). Naturally, it is likely that in the future the girl's behavior may happen to be inconsistent with what she has learnt in Living Earth. Still, one has to remember that, as Shaobo Xie rightly notices, "[t]o rethink the identity of cultural otherness as radical difference", that is, to "strive towards a utopian future of unity that difference has to be celebrated and radicalized in the moment now" (13).

Towards the end of her musings in "Alien Texts, Alien Seductions" Goto herself says: "Am I projecting my own alienation onto an other? (...) Do I imagine that I have the privilege to exoticize aliens without having to negotiate the politics of such an act? Do I imagine myself safe in this space? (...) So many questions you must ask yourself and struggle to answer" (268). *The Water of Possibility* may be seen as a partial answer to these quandaries in that it both describes a self-affirming cultural identification with Japanese traditions and contextualizes Japanese-Canadian experience "within a dominant culture that determines difference and normalcy" (Padolsky 26). In other words, to use Akiwenzi-Damm's phrasing, the book teaches how "to embody, articulate, and share reality, to bring the isolated private self into harmony and balance with this reality, to verbalize the sense of the majesty and reverent mastery of all things (...)" (89). Sayuri is one of the many Canadian young people who "move smoothly through a world of various complex fictions, with ease and grace. Their reading often occurs in a context of multimodal and multicultural sophistication. Understanding the complexity of that context is a major challenge for those adults who work with them" (Mackey 97). Goto's book effectively responds to this challenge as it testifies to the fact that, as Enoch Padolsky puts it, "(e)lements of multiplicity, commonality, and intersectionality in Canadian minority writing do not, in any sense, undercut the weight of individual aspects of minority experience" (35). This book helps young readers learn to interact with other voices and to recognize the transforming power of hybridity by acknowledging the status of Others in the world and reconsidering the existing cultural and political divisions in the world as constructed by various discourses. Having read Goto's story one cannot but agree with Xie that "[i]f children's literature and criticism of children's literature take upon themselves to decolonize the world, they will prove the most effective postcolonial project in the long run, for the world always ultimately belongs to children. If today's children (...) are encouraged to understand and appreciate racial/ethnic difference, that would tremendously expedite the progress towards a globalized postcoloniality" (13).

Notes

1. As Goto herself points out, the correct spelling is "Yama-uba," but "when pronounced out loud, the word 'sounds' more like 'yamanba'" (319). For more information see <http://www.youkaimura.org/yamauba.htm>.

2. Interestingly, Goto also emphasizes Sayuri's alienation by introducing the theme of sexual development. Most males and females are preoccupied with the changes they experience during puberty, but females are often less satisfied with their physical appearance than males. As for Sayuri, on the rational level she tries to convince herself that, as her mother says, one's body is "a mystery" and "a living work of art" (35). Still, she has a sense of losing control over it: she hates her pubic hair and growing breasts and wishes she would never have to wear a bra and have a period. She reasons that the "tender chest" and using tampons when swimming will negatively "affect her efficiency in the water" (34). In this way, Sayuri's developing body becomes another manifestation of the Other within herself which she desperately tries to escape.

3. The real *tanuki* is a badger- or racoon-like, atypical species of dog, with stripes of black fur under its eyes. The mythical *tanuki* are "animals with the power of transformation -- for either benevolent or malevolent purposes" (Schumacher). They are believed to love sake and are often represented with

a sake bottle in one hand and a promissory note in the other. For more details see Mark Schumacher's site "TANUKI, ODANUKI, MUJINA. Magical Raccoon-like Dog with Shape-Shifting Powers. Modern-Day God of Gluttony, Boozing, and Restauranteurs" at <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/tanuki.shtml>.

4. In Japan, foxes are legendary creatures with magical powers for doing both good and evil. They can also metamorphose into any natural objects, including humans, and overhear people's secrets. They are also able "cast illusions, appear in dreams, and read thoughts" (Schumacher). As it is believed that their favorite food is fried tofu, Sayuri is right to conclude that Machigai's diet of chestnuts does not provide him enough energy. See Mark Schumacher's site "INARI or Oinari or Oinari-sama. Shinto God/Goddess of Rice and Food, Associated with the Fox (KITSUNE)", at <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/oinari.shtml>.

5. Interestingly enough, in Japanese folklore, foxes "live a sort of mirror image of human society, with fox lords and ladies, servants and laborers -- standing on hind legs, dressed in human clothes, and carrying out their mystic rituals by lantern light in the middle of the forest." For more details see <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/oinari.shtml>. Perhaps this theme inspired Goto's Patriarch and his city.

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"When the myth of life began our people shared life with humans, stone to earth, fire to water, trees to sky":
Multiplicity and Commonality in Hiromi Goto's *Water of Possibility*"

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The control of fire was the first and perhaps greatest of humanity's steps towards a life-enhancing technology. To early man, fire was a divine gift randomly delivered in the form of lightning, forest fire or burning lava. Fire-lighting was revolutionized by the discovery of phosphorus, isolated in 1669 by a German alchemist trying to transmute silver into gold. Impressed by the element's combustibility, several 17th century chemists used it to manufacture fire-lighting devices, but the results were dangerously inflammable. The quest for a practical match really began after 1781 when a group of French chemists came up with the Phosphoric Candle or Ethereal Match, a sealed glass tube containing a twist of paper tipped with phosphorus. The "creation of life from clay" is a miraculous birth theme and scientific study that appears in mythology, literature, and modern

theory. In Greek mythology, according to Pseudo-Apollodorus, Prometheus molded men out of water and earth. In Sumerian mythology, the gods Enki or Enlil create a servant of the gods, humankind, out of clay and blood (see Enki and the Making of Man). In another Sumerian story, both Enki and Ninmah create humans from the clay of the Abzu, the fresh water of the underground

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