



Kisaburō, Kuniyoshi and the “Living Doll”

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FOR MANY YEARS NOW, I have been researching different aspects of nineteenth-century Japanese culture, making a conscious decision not to distinguish between “fine art” and “popular culture.” I clearly remember the occasion some twenty years ago that prompted me to adopt this approach. It was my first encounter with the term *iki-ningyō* (“living dolls”), as coined in Japanese. I had absolutely no idea what the phrase meant, nor even how to pronounce the Chinese characters. The majority of modern Japanese, unfamiliar with the term, end up pronouncing it *nama-ningyō*. The impulse to pronounce the first character as *nama* derives from its meaning of something “vivid” or “fresh” (*namanamashii*). In the culinary idiom, the adjective brings to mind not grilled or boiled fish, but raw fish (*sashimi*) at the instant the dish is set down, or even the moments beforehand, as one’s mouth begins to water watching the fish being prepared.

Now I have a little better understanding of what “living dolls” means. In the city of Edo (now Tokyo), a popular form of street entertainment was the re-creation of themes from legends or history with life-size, lifelike dolls—an inanimate counterpart to the European *tableau vivant* of the same period. It is difficult to prove exactly what *iki* meant to Japanese people in the nineteenth century, but the term *iki-ningyō* was a neologism that first appeared in connection with a public spectacle, known as a *misemono*, mounted in Osaka in 1854. In a printed advertisement titled *Intricate Models of Living Dolls: Minamoto Tametomo’s Journey Around the Islands (Iki-ningyō zaiku: Chinzei Hachirō shima-meguri)*, the phrase “intricate models of living dolls” appeared in large characters to catch people’s attention (fig. 1). I interpret it to mean figures so realistic that they seemed to be alive. The display took place in Naniwa Shinchi, an area of newly reclaimed land on the outskirts of Osaka similar in flavor to the Asakusa district in Edo. The master doll makers on this occasion were Matsumoto Kisaburō (1826–1892) and Yasumoto Zenzō, both from Kumamoto on the southern island of Kyushu. The broadsheet refers to them as “makers of intricate models” (*saiku-nin*). The display met with great success, and broke new ground when presented in Edo the following year.

The dolls used in *misemono* were expendable props in these curious novelty displays. Twenty years ago, I had come across only one of these figures, a representation of Kannon (the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara) preserved at Jōkokuji, the temple in Kumamoto City where the grave of Matsumoto

< FIG. 2. Matsumoto Kisaburō. *Tanigumi Kannon*. 1871/1898. Wood, with pigment, textile, glass, horsehair. 160 cm. Jōkokuji, Kumamoto City, Kumamoto Prefecture

The Tanigumi Kannon represents the thirty-third of the “Legends of the Thirty-three Kannon Pilgrimage Sites in Western Japan” (*Saigoku sanjūsan-shō Kanzeon reigenki*). Legend has it that at Tanigumi in Mino province, a gold merchant called Ōkura Tarō Nobumitsu is surprised when the statue of Kannon he carries in a portable shrine comes alive and leads him to the spot where he subsequently finds a temple to the deity, the Tanigumi (or Kegon) temple. This “living doll” was part of a larger ensemble made by Matsumoto Kisaburō to illustrate some of the thirty-three legends. It was completed in 1871 for a display at Asakusa, and then repaired heavily and given a new costume by Kisaburō’s pupil Ejima Ejirō in 1898.



FIG. 1. Utagawa Yoshiharu (1828–1888). *Intricate Models of Living Dolls: Minamoto Tametomo's Journey Around the Islands (Iki-ningyō zaiku: Chinzei Hachirō shima-meguri)*. 1854. Woodblock print; advertising broadsheet (*hikifuda*). 27.5 x 42.2 cm. Osaka Museum of History

The print advertises tableaux by the dollmaker Matsumoto Kisaburō, including scenes of exotic figures from the Land of Hollow-chested People (top center); Land of Long-armed and Long-legged People (far right); Bellyless People (lower right); a figure from the Land of Eye at the Back holding a bow and arrow (top right); a birdlike figure from the Land of the Feathered People (beneath the previous); a figure from the Land of Crossed Legs (center); a figure from the Land of Long Ears (left of crosslegged figure); and a courtesan from the Maruyama Pleasure Quarter, Nagasaki (in the building, top left).

At bottom center, Minamoto Tametomo, the powerful 12th-century archer, is in a trial of strength with inhabitants of the Island of Demons (Onigashima), who are pulling on the string of his bow. Tametomo fought in the Hōgen Insurrection in Kyoto in 1156, but was then exiled to the island of Ōshima in the Izu archipelago. There he built a new power base by taking command of the nearby islands.

Kisaburō, the maker, is located. Although originally used as a figure in one of his public displays, today it serves as an object of Buddhist veneration, receiving the prayers of the faithful (fig. 2). The life-size Kannon, clothed in silk robes and wearing the lacquered cap of a traveling noblewoman, is made of wood; inset glass eyes and ivory teeth add to the sense of realism. It was originally housed in a shrine, or *zushi*.

Kisaburō also presented his stunning tableaux, sometimes including as many as seventy figures, in the precincts of the temple Sensōji at Asakusa in

temporary booths or enclosures accessible to the public for a fee. Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797–1861) documented several of these spectacles in woodblock prints, providing a precious window onto a now-lost art.

PILGRIMAGE TO SENSŌJI

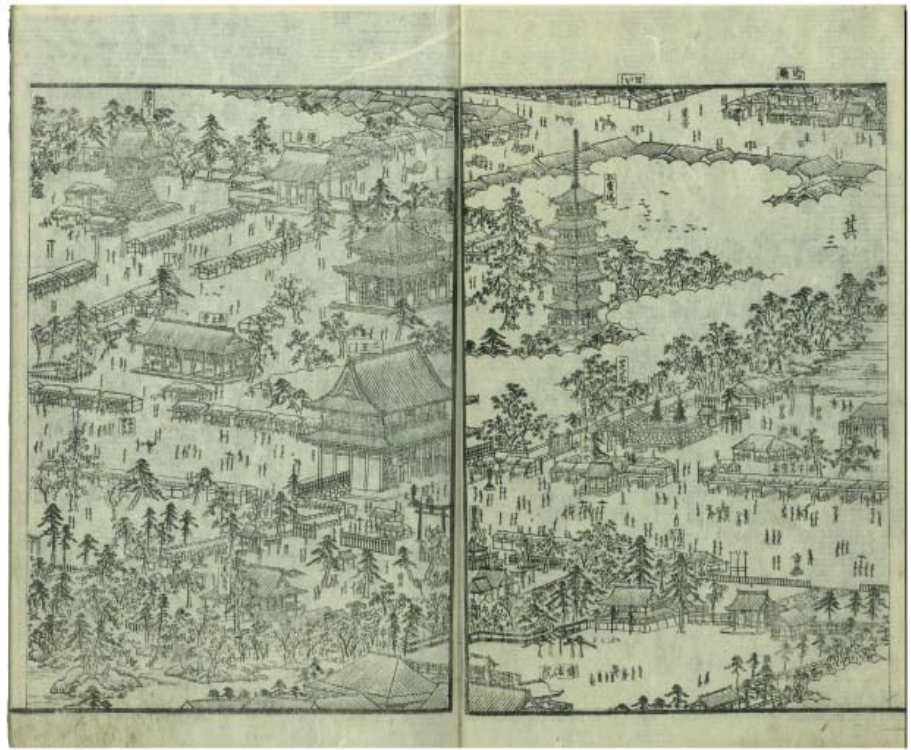
The environs of Asakusa and Sensōji are shown in detail in the most comprehensive guidebook to the city of Edo, *Illustrated Gazetteer of Famous Places in Edo (Edo meissho zue, 1834–36)* by Saitō Gesshin (1804–1878). The seven-part publication describes all the city's famous places extensively, along with the history and condition of shrines and temples. Sensōji appears in part six, where the precincts are detailed in ten pages.

The city faced Edo Bay (now Tokyo Bay) and developed around Edo Castle (now Tokyo Imperial Palace). Running through the eastern limits of the city was the Sumida River. Sensōji faced the Sumida River on the northeastern outskirts of the city. A short distance from the temple, visitors saw farmland stretching into the distance, an area known at the time as the “Asakusa Rice Fields” (Asakusa Tanbo). Sensōji was founded at this spot, it is said, because a local fisherman in the year 628 miraculously discovered a small statue of Kannon in his net. The statue was enshrined and worshipped at the temple. By the early seventeenth century, when urban planning began in earnest in Edo, the temple had already been in existence for a thousand years.

Entering Sensōji, a visitor first passed through the Thunder Gate (Kaminarimon). Along either side of the approach route to the main worship hall, visitors could stop at roadside shrines to venerate various Buddhist and native deities or at one of the many tea stalls. After the Gate of the Merciful Guardian Kings (Niō-mon), they encountered a five-story pagoda, a

FIG. 3a. Saitō Gesshin. *Gate of the Merciful Guardian Kings, Sensōji*, from *Illustrated Gazetteer of Famous Places in Edo (Edo meisho zue)*, part 6. 1834–36. Woodblock-printed book. 26 x 18 cm. Private collection, Japan

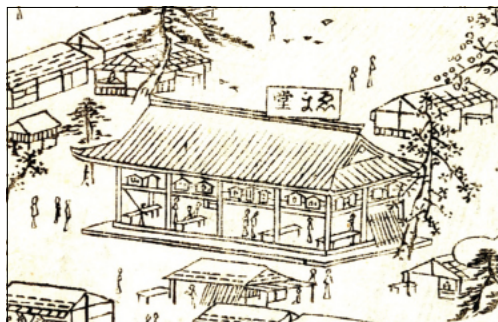
An overview of the temple compound shows the Niō-mon, or Gate of the Merciful Guardian Kings, at left center; the hall for votive plaques (*emadō*) to the left of the gate; the bell tower in the upper left corner, and the five-story pagoda on the right-hand page.



hall for votive plaques and a bell tower (fig. 3a). In and around the main worship hall, there were shrines to Buddhist and native deities from all over Japan. The requirements for any pilgrimage could be satisfied just by visiting Sensōji. Small temporary stalls lining the main path were used by vendors selling medicine, rice cakes, toothpicks, Buddhist rosaries, tea whisks, seaweed, toys, woodblock prints and the like. Lined up at the back of the temple precincts in the area known as Okuyama were galleries for playing miniature archery.

Because Buddhist religious centers traditionally have been located in mountainous regions, temples are thought of as “mountains,” and in Japan have designated “mountain names” (*sangō*). Sensōji was designated Golden Dragon Mountain (Kinryūzan). The front side of this “mountain” functioned as the site of religious faith, while the nearby “deep hills” (*okuyama*) served as a place of leisure, frequently offering *misemono* such as those by Kisaburō. Located behind the temple precincts were also the Shin-Yoshiwara, Edo’s largest brothel district, and the kabuki theaters of Saruwakachō. Together with Ryōgoku, Asakusa was one of Edo’s great entertainment districts.

FIG. 3b. Detail of fig. 3a, showing the hall for votive plaques hung from the eaves of the roof.



Sensōji’s hall for votive plaques (*emadō*) was a relatively large, roofed structure, without walls (fig. 3b). People walked around inside or sat on long benches to rest and admire the framed votive plaques (*ema*) hanging from the eaves. The term *ema* literally means “painted horse.”¹



FIG. 4. Utagawa Kuniyoshi. *Lone House (Hitotsuya)*. Votive plaque. 1855. Pigment on wood. 180 x 310 cm. Sensōji, Tokyo

Since ancient times, horses have been considered vehicles of the gods and were presented to shrines accordingly. The custom is still practiced, notably at the Kotohira Shrine in Shikoku and Shiogama Shrine in northeast Japan. The horse is considered a divine being, a “spirit horse” (*shinme*).

The care of live animals placed a burden on both donor and recipient; eventually, people began donating sculpted and painted horses in the place of live ones. Horse sculptures encountered in shrine precincts are charming exceptions to the canon of Japanese art history. As the practice evolved, it became common to use symbols other than horses on *ema*. A boat might be painted and presented to the shrine to petition the gods for safe travel in a sea-going vessel. Japanese and Chinese legends were adapted for imagery. Today, the term *ema* indicates small plaques offered with prayers for the health and safety of the family, or for success in an examination.

KUNIYOSHI’S VOTIVE PLAQUE

In the spring of 1855, when Sensōji placed its sacred image of Kannon on public display, the owner of the Okamoto brothel in the Shin-Yoshiwara pleasure quarter decided to donate a large votive plaque on the theme of *Lone House (Hitotsuya)*, and commissioned Kuniyoshi to paint it (fig. 4). [For a votive plaque painted in 1882, see Amy Reigle Newland, “An Interview with Toyohara Kunichika: The Sequel,” p. 134 in this issue. Ed.]

The legendary Lone House stood on a wild moor known as Asajigahara around the time the temple was founded. The evil old woman who lived

there would invite travelers to lodge for the night, and then kill them with a stone pillow and steal their gold. One evening, a beautiful boy arrived to stay the night. The woman's daughter exchanged places with the boy, and was killed in his place. The old woman recognized the workings of karmic retribution, and was overcome with remorse. The child was a manifestation of Kannon, demonstrating the benevolent deity's power to convert even the cruelest of human beings.

Kuniyoshi painted the three main characters without any indication of a setting; on votive plaques of the time, it was the custom to show human figures without any background. Diverging somewhat from the tale, he showed a sword blade as the fatal instrument, rather than a stone pillow.² According to Kuniyoshi's student Ochiai Yoshiiku (1833–1904), the artist used three different painting styles to depict the figures: Western-style naturalism for the old woman; the ukiyo-e style of Hishikawa Moronobu (1631?–1694) for her daughter, on the right; and an idealized “Buddhist” painting style for the miraculous child to the left.³

Saitō Gesshin, the author of the gazetteer and a property owner in the Kanda district of Edo, wrote a scathing critique of Kuniyoshi's plaque in his diary: “Saw the *Old Woman of Lone House* plaque painted by Kuniyoshi. Poorly done.” However low his opinion of the workmanship, the fact that he went to see the plaque in the first place shows it had become a subject of widespread discussion. One reason was surely that the hall for votive plaques was an unrestricted space open to the public. The names of the donor and the artist were clearly inscribed in large writing. For both brothel owner and artist, public display served as advertisement.

Votive plaque halls had a social function similar to modern art museums. One decisive difference, however, is that the paintings in votive plaque halls hang from the eaves of a building without walls. Although votive plaques are exposed to the ravages of the elements, it does not really matter; they have been presented to the gods, and human admiration is only a secondary function. The moment of presentation is what counts, and anything that follows represents a kind of afterlife. Even when the pictures have all but disappeared and they no longer have any interest as works of art, votive plaques continue to serve their purpose.

“LIVING DOLLS”

In 1856, the year after Kuniyoshi's *Lone House* votive plaque was donated to Sensōji, Matsumoto Kisaburō created a *misemono* based on the same story, possibly inspired by the popularity of Kuniyoshi's plaque. In turn, Kuniyoshi recreated the *misemono* as the woodblock print *Dolls in the Latest Style* (*Fūryū ningyō*) (fig. 5).

Until very recently, the study of Japanese sculpture has centered on Buddhist statues. When the history of Japanese art was being compiled at the end of the nineteenth century, Buddhist statues were considered the most suitable equivalent to the European concept of “sculpture.” Living dolls did not fit into the category of sculpture, so by this line of reasoning, they were



FIG. 5. Utagawa Kuniyoshi. *Dolls in the Latest Style (Fūryū ningyō)*. 1856. Color woodcut, *chūban* triptych. Each sheet 25.2 x 18.2 cm. American Friends of the British Museum (The Arthur R. Miller Collection) 22216

The print shows the life-size dolls in a tableau of the legend of the murderous old hag in the Lone House created by Kisaburō at Sensōji in 1856. For a description of the print, see Timothy Clark, *Kuniyoshi* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2009), no. 119

FIG. 6. Display with male and female Japanese courtiers by Matsumoto Kisaburō at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Late 19th century. Photo: Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 95, image #2002-10660

not recognized as art. Should Kisaburō's *Tanigumi Kannon* in figure 2 be categorized as a living doll or a Buddhist statue?

Scholars have recently begun to consider Buddhist statues as representations of the human form, or "living body" (*shōjin*), in which the eternal "dharma body" (*hosshin*) manifests itself. Research has expanded to include portrait sculpture of not only holy men, but also ordinary people. Progress has been made in the study of living dolls; examples by Matsumoto Kisaburō and his contemporaries Yasumoto Kamehachi (1826–1900) and Nezumiya Denkichi (d. 1875) have been identified in museums in Europe and in the United States.

Paired models of a male and female courtier by Kisaburō were made to order at the end of the 1870s for Horace Capron (1804–1885), an American who had worked for the Japanese government as an agricultural advisor in Hokkaido. Capron gave them to the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, for a display presenting the customs of Japan (fig. 6). The figures originally wore costumes appropriate to the Heian court, but the clothes have been lost and the female figure discarded. As was the custom, even



the sexual organs were realistically modeled (fig. 7). Denkichī's portraits of a farmer and his wife are also in the Smithsonian, from another display on the customs of Japan.⁴ And Kamehachi's pair of sumo wrestlers, dating to around 1890, were for years in the collection of the Detroit Institute

Fig. 7. Matsumoto Kisaburō. Male Courtier. 1878. Wood, glass, human and mouse hair, copper alloy, gesso, lacquer with pigment. 171.5 x 64 x 31 cm. Catalogue No. E92427, Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution. Photo: D. E. Hurlbert

The artist's signature and *kaō* (cursive monogram) are carved on the bottom of the right foot. In 1878, on behalf of the Smithsonian, General Horace Capron arranged with Matsumoto Kisaburō for the making of this figure of a nobleman and the accompanying woman (shown in figure 6). During a 1979 inventory, this mannequin was found unnumbered and without clothing. The accompanying woman had by then been discarded. A farmer and his wife by Nezumiya Denkichi have survived with clothing intact.

Horace Capron (1804–1885) was an American businessman and agriculturalist, a founder of Laurel, Maryland, a Union officer in the American Civil War, the United States Commissioner of Agriculture under Presidents Andrew Johnson and Ulysses S. Grant and an advisor to Japan's Hokkaido Development Commission from 1871 to 1875.

The life-size figure is anatomically correct and realistically modeled. An Anthropology Conservation Lab Condition Report in 2004 determined that it is carved from wood (Japanese Arborvitae; *Thuja standishii*) and made to be assembled and disassembled with the legs, arms and head all secured to the torso with notched mortise and tenon joints. There are two rectangular holes in the bottom of the heels that would have been used as an original support. Both the rectangular holes in the feet and the mortise and tenons are lined with a copper alloy sheet coated with lacquer.

The body has a very particular hunched posture, slightly convex belly and well-muscled legs and arms, with slightly protruding veins in them. The torso and head are hollow, with wooden plugs fit into the base of the neck, arms and thighs. A plain woven fabric covers the wood. Next, a thin gesso layer (calcium carbonate, or *gofun*) was applied over the whole surface and painted. The hair and underarm hair all appear to be placed individually and randomly, and adhered and painted to match the skin tone. The eyelashes are made by attaching individual mouse hairs to a thin strip, most likely paper, which is then affixed to the interior of the eyelid.





FIG. 8. Yasumoto Kamehachi. Sumo Wrestlers. c. 1890. Wood with pigment, glass eyes, human hair, textile. 170 x 150 x 160 cm. Courtesy Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto City, Kumamoto Prefecture

of Arts (fig. 8). They were recently deaccessioned and sold to Kumamoto City, Kamehachi's hometown. The rediscovery of these various works has again brought to life the "living doll."

A triptych by Ochiai Yoshiiku shows that Kisaburō's 1856 representation of the Lone House story consisted of an omnibus montage in many scenes (fig. 9). The Lone House story appears at lower right in the print. Kisaburō's display opened in the spring, exactly one year after Kuniyoshi's votive plaque went on view. The previous fall, Edo had suffered a major earthquake that caused tremendous damage. The display incorporated references to those current events, including the good deeds of Mayuzumi, a Yoshiwara courtesan who gave aid to persons suffering as a result of the disaster.



FIG. 9. Ochiai Yoshiiku. *Living Dolls (Iki-ningyō)*. 1856. Color woodcut, *ōban* triptych. National Museum of Japanese History, Sakura

Nine scenes, with three each, top to bottom, right to left: the strong woman Okane of Ōmi province subduing a horse; the archer Minamoto Tametomo in exile on the Island of Demons engaging in a contest of strength; the old hag of the Lone House; the courtesan Mayuzumi of the Yoshiwara; three heroes of the *Water Margin (Suikoden)*, namely Guan Sheng (J. Daitō Kanshō) with his scimitar, the “Green Dragon” (right), Ruan Xiaowu (J. Tanmeijirō Genshōgo) struggling with an underwater opponent (left), and Hu San (J. Ichiyōsei Kosanjō), a female warrior who fights with two swords (top); *Treasury of Loyal Retainers (Chūshingura)*; Kume the Immortal and the washerwoman; *Treasury of Loyal Retainers*; *Kagamiyama*, a kabuki drama about rivalry and revenge in the women’s quarters of a samurai mansion.

At the upper-middle section of Yoshiiku’s print, Mayuzumi appears seated in front of a mirror stand, half-naked. Hanging in the display alcove to the left is a scroll that depicts a mushroom, symbolizing the male sexual organ. Sexual signifiers such as bare breasts are scattered throughout this scene. Kuniyoshi featured Kisaburō’s *misemono* figures of Mayuzumi and her group in his 1856 triptych *Dolls in the Latest Style (Fūryū ningyō)* (fig. 10).

In a diptych published in 1856, Kuniyoshi illustrates the *misemono* scene that appears in the upper left corner of Yoshiiku’s print (fig. 11). It is the story of the Daoist sage Kume the Immortal, who at one time had the power of flight, but fell tumbling from the sky when he saw the comely legs of a woman, robe raised, stomping on her laundry to clean it in a stream. As shown in the prints, the startled woman falls backward, her legs splayed open in a revealing pose.

Soon after the *misemono* opened at Sensōji, at least three of its living dolls were banned from the display. The episode is mentioned in the 1856 *Fujiokaya Diary (Fujiokaya nikki)* by Sudō Yoshizō (the book seller and print publisher Fujiokaya).⁵ No reason is given for this official action, but there can be little doubt that the expression of blatant sexuality was the main problem. A ban was also placed on a doll representing a half-naked, panicking maid appearing in a version of *Treasury of the Loyal Retainers (Chūshingura)*, the famous story of samurai of the Akō fief avenging the murder of their lord.

Fujiokaya Diary is filled with such stories and rumors. Another episode recounts that when the Lone House *misemono* was shown at another location—without the three naked figures—people living nearby were so terrified in the middle of the night to hear what sounded like the old woman shouting as she attacked her daughter that they burned the two figures and scattered the ashes in the Sumida River. The vignette suggests that the



FIG. 10. Utagawa Kuniyoshi. *Dolls in the Latest Style (Fūryū ningyō)*. 1856. Color woodcut, *chūban* triptych. Each sheet 25.3 x 18.4 cm. American Friends of the British Museum (The Arthur R. Miller Collection) 21105

dolls were lifelike enough to be thought to speak and move. Sexuality and a taste for the cruel and the bizarre are common to many *misemono* of this period.

Kisaburō had his debut in Edo in 1855, timed to coincide with the exhibition of temple treasures at Sensōji. Judging from Kuniyoshi's *Living Dolls from the Okuyama District of Asakusa* (fig. 12), published in the same year, Kisaburō's spectacle titled *Minamoto Tametomo's Journey Around the Islands* must have been even more sensational than the one he presented in Osaka in 1854, as shown in figure 1 on page 102. Kuniyoshi's exquisite print commemorating the event is itself testament to the great popularity of the display.

The "foreigners" in Kuniyoshi's print include three men from the fictional Land of Hollow-chested People (*Senkyōkoku*) on the right sheet.⁶ Two servants transport an aristocratic gentleman by passing a pole through his chest. The man has no need to walk anywhere, just as rulers and politicians are transported in black limousines today. He has a cushion in his chest to keep the pole from causing damage when his hanging body sways. Even an absurd picture such as this one is based on the manner the upper echelon of society traveled in East Asia at the time. In China and Korea, the aristocrat would sit on a plank placed on top of a pole; in Japan, he would be carried in a palanquin suspended from a pole. The inhabitants of the Land of Long-armed People (*Tenagakoku*) got along well with those of the Land of Long-legged People (*Ashinagakoku*), and so the two are always depicted together, as on the left sheet. Because they cooperate, they are able to catch a fish, as shown in the print.

However much these grotesque figures owe to a "Chinese" worldview which regarded other peoples as barbarian to the degree that they were distant from the Chinese metropolitan center, their replication as living



FIG. 11. Utagawa Kuniyoshi. *Simulated Dolls in the Latest Style: Kume the Immortal* (*Tōsei mitate ningyō no uchi: Kume no Sennin*). 1856. Color woodcut, *ōban* diptych. Kawazoe Yū Collection

FIG. 12. Utagawa Kuniyoshi. *Living Dolls from the Okuyama District of Asakusa* (*Asakusa Okuyama iki-ningyō*). 1855. Color woodcut, *ōban* diptych. Each sheet 36 x 24.8 cm. American Friends of the British Museum (The Arthur R. Miller Collection) 18202



dolls indicates a growing popular interest in exotica and the outside world. The year 1854 was when Japan agreed to open its ports under military pressure from the United States. After that time, Americans were featured in prints of foreigners, the so-called Yokohama prints. Kuniyoshi's diptych of the spectacle at Okuyama includes an elephant tucked behind the title cartouche. In *Edo Chronology* (*Bukō nenpyō*), Saitō Gesshin reports that this was "a large model of an elephant" produced by Takeda Kamekichi, a master of mechanical devices who collaborated with Kisaburō on this display.⁷ Other broadsheets and prints give the elephant even greater prominence, reflecting its actual crowd appeal.



FIG. 13. Hanegawa Tōei. *Parade of Edo Townsmen in Korean-style Costumes*. Mid-18th century. Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper. 69.7 x 91.2 cm. Kobe City Museum

EDO FESTIVALS

Recent research into festivals of the early modern period indicates that not only *misemono* but also urban festivals were packed with imagery of assorted foreigners, including the Dutch, Koreans, Chinese, Portuguese, Spaniards and their Indian and Southeast Asian servants. A painting formerly thought to depict a Korean embassy parading through the streets of Edo actually represents Edo townsmen in Korean-style costume (fig. 13). Festivals and *misemono* were extraordinary events that appealed to an unofficial desire for an outer world, expressed in foreign appearance, clothing and behavior.

Edo's two major festivals, taking place in alternate years, were the Sannō Festival in June and the Kanda Festival in September (today, the latter is staged in May). The festival floats were permitted into the precincts of Edo Castle. Both festivals included costumed processions; even an elephant joined the happy throng making a tour of the neighborhoods of Edo.

FIG. 14. Kanda Festival, Tokyo, with Elephant Doll. May 9, 2009. Photo: Tsuchida Hiromi

The costumed figure second from left is the author.

Today, attempts are being made in small ways to revive the Kanda Festival as originally performed in the nineteenth century. Two years ago, a costume parade was organized around the story of the *Victorious Return from Ōeyama*, highlighting the rescue of the princess captured by the demon of Ōeyama, and the display of the slain demon's head. In 2009, a fabricated elephant was introduced to the pageant (fig. 14).



* * *

Elaborate processions of this kind were only possible during the Edo period on festival occasions; they disappeared as the city of Edo evolved into Tokyo, and Japan entered the modern period. Votive plaques and living dolls died out in the same way. Display moved from the street to the museum, where Kuniyoshi's pictures now remind us of an aspect of Japanese culture that we would otherwise not know. ☸

Essay adapted from a lecture translated by Alfred Haft

NOTES

1. In Kuniyoshi's time, the terms *gaku* and *hengaku* (framed object) may have been more widely used than *ema*, but the term *ema* has continued to the present.
2. In about 1840, Kuniyoshi illustrated the story with the decaying house and the wilds of Asajigahara in a print titled *Divine Spirit of Kannon—Ancient Story of the Lone House* (*Kanzeon reigen—Hitotsuya no furukoto*). A similar scene appears in his *Lone House at Asajigahara* (*Asajigahara Hitotsuya no zu*), published in 1855, around the time he painted the votive plaque. For illustrations of both, see Suzuki Jüzō, *Kuniyoshi* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1992), nos. 218, 219.
3. Yoshioka Hōryō, “Asakusa Kannon hokora no meiga” (Famous paintings from the Asakusa Kannon Shrine), *Taiyō* (The Sun) 8, no. 14 (1902): 179.
4. Denkichi indicated sexual organs, but with nowhere near the degree of realism of Kisaburō. The male mannequin is made of wood and papier-mâché, with glass eyes, human hair and thin sheets of keratinous material for the finger and toe nails. It is labeled on the bottom of one foot: “Tokei Ningiocho” [Tokyo Ningyōchō] and “Nedzumiya Denkichi.” For more on the subject of “living dolls,” see Kinoshita Naoyuki, “Iki-ningyō no misemono to tenrankai ni tsuite” (Public displays and exhibitions of living dolls), in *Iki-ningyō to Matsumoto Kisaburō* (Living dolls and Matsumoto Kisaburō), exh. cat. (Kumamoto City: Contemporary Art Museum Kumamoto, 2004), 104–9. This catalogue has excellent color photos of the mannequins. See also the extensive essay on this subject by Alan Scott Pate, “Iki Ningyo: Living dolls and the legacy of Matsumoto Kisaburo,” available online at Alan Scott Pate Antique Japanese Dolls <http://www.antiquejapanesedolls.com/pub_artinfocus/pub_iki/iki.html>.
5. “Ansei sannen nigatsu nijūgo-nichi, Asakusa Okuyama niku-ningyō, Mito-Chūgen kenka ikken” (Twenty-fifth day of the second month, Ansei 3, Asakusa Okuyama *iki-ningyō*, and the scuffle involving Mito Chūgen), in Suzuki Tōzō and Koike Shōtarō, eds. *Fujiokaya nikki* (Diary of Fujiokaya), vol. 7 of *Kinsei shomin seikatsu shiryō* (Documents of the life of early modern townsmen) (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1990), 139–40.
6. For further discussion of this subject, see Kinoshita Naoyuki, *Bijutsu to iu misemono* (The spectacle called art) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1993).
7. “Ansei ninen nigatsu jūhachi-nichi yori hachijū-nichi no aida, Sensōji Kanzeon kaichō” (Eighty days from the eighteenth day of the second month of Ansei 2, the unveiling of the Sensōji Kannon sculpture), in *Bukō nikki* (Edo diary), vol. 3 of Imai Kingō, ed., *Teihon Bukō nenpyō* (Edo chronology) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2004), 63.

FIG. 1. Okumura Masanobu (1686–1764). *Large Perspective Picture of the Kabuki Theater District in Sakaichō and Fukiyachō*. c. 1745. Woodcut, hand-colored, *beni-e, ōban*. 43.8 x 64.5 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, William Sturgis Bigelow Collection, II.19687. Photo © 2010 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Here are two of eighteenth-century Edo's three principal theater districts (*shibai*

machi), namely Sakaichō and Fukiyachō. Each “district” is only a block long. The gateway seen in the middle ground separates one block from the next. The third district was located a short distance away. In front of each theater, above its entrance and just under its roof, is a boxlike drum tower (*yagura*) draped in curtains; the drum towers indicated that the theaters using them were licensed. The drum tower denoting the Nakamura Theater—apparent from the gingko-leaf crest dyed

on its curtain—is on the right side of the street, along with its various billboards (*kanban*); the Ichimura Theater is farther up the street on the right, in the second district. On the left are two puppet theaters. In 1842, the theater districts were forced to move to Asakusa, then on the city's fringes, in a section newly named Saruwakachō.



Edo Kabuki: The Actor's World

SAMUEL L. LEITER



JAPAN'S OBSESSION WITH ACTORS during the Edo period (1615–1868) is among that era's most distinctive characteristics. One of its clearest demonstrations is the remarkable preoccupation with kabuki theater of the great ukiyo-e artists. Prints and paintings memorialized nearly every play produced, and reveled in depicting the stars, both onstage and off. These pictures circulated throughout the country, where the actors' names were legendary, even if the locals may never have seen them perform.

Kabuki was predicated on the existence of godlike stars. Many admirable plays notwithstanding, a playwright's principal motivation was to write scripts that provided brilliant actors opportunities to demonstrate their talents, looks and personalities.¹ Today, when kabuki playwriting is essentially moribund, these plays live on through the hereditary traditions of the acting families. Many of these actors' names thrive as the twelfth, fifteenth or even eighteenth in their line. Rarely does an actor with a new name gain fame. Old kabuki stars never really die; they glow in their sons, grandsons and great-grandsons, whose careers are dedicated to keeping the flame of their traditions burning, while also seeking ways to introduce new life into their heritage.

A kabuki actor often holds multiple names during his career, the taking of each name being celebrated as a mark of the actor's growing skills. Most names (not all) have been held by a previous actor, the distinction between actors of the same name being marked by an ordinal number; the present Nakamura Kanzaburō (b. 1955) is the eighteenth in his line. It is very rare (although not without precedent) for two actors to hold the same name simultaneously. Usually, a name does not become available until its previous holder has died, or given it up to take yet another name. While the actor who inherits the name is typically the adopted or biological son of the earlier actor of the same name, this is not always the case; some names remain in abeyance for many years until a suitable candidate is found. On the other hand, actors with even the most admired names have been known to present their heirs with their names in mid- or late career (usually the latter), the older actor taking another, lesser name (or possibly a new one created for the occasion) so his designated heir can have the more glorious name without waiting for the previous holder to die. Nakamura Utaemon III (1778–1838), for example, gave up his name to Utaemon IV (1796?–1852) (his adopted son) in 1836, taking for himself the name of Nakamura Tamasuke.

Many of today's traditions were established during the Edo period. The story is rich with incidents, personalities, rivalries, customs and legal issues. In this paper, I would like to introduce a few of the lesser-known aspects of that world.

Japan had two chief theatrical production centers during those years, one in the west—the Kyoto–Osaka region, which I will refer to as Kamigata—and one in the east—in Edo, the future Tokyo. Although there was considerable cultural intermingling—as well as rivalry—between them, Edo, on which I will focus, could actually claim to have the dominant theater at the end of the eighteenth century.² An American parallel is New York's taking the lead from its chief theatrical rival, Philadelphia, by the 1820s.

Kabuki was one of Japan's four chief forms of theater. It was born in Kyoto in 1603, the same year that Tokugawa Ieyasu became shogun in Edo, and around the same time as the puppet theater we call bunraku was originated. (Some sources prefer 1600 or 1603 as the starting date for the Edo period, others, as here, use 1615.) The other important theater genres, *noh* and *kyōgen*, were created a couple of hundred years earlier and had become closely associated with the samurai class. Although they had many samurai supporters in the seventeenth century, kabuki and bunraku became popular theater with a principal fan base of the rising townsman class. As such, they developed into well-organized, thoroughly regulated, highly commercial forms of entertainment. Kabuki's principal attraction was its charismatic stars, who, on the one hand, were officially considered so low on the social scale that they were dubbed “riverbed beggars,” and, on the other, earned fortunes in salaries, lived in luxury and attained iconic—even deific—status in the hearts of the men and women in the street.

Until 1714, the government restricted the number of licensed theaters in Edo to four: the Nakamura Theater, the Morita Theater, the Ichimura Theater and the Yamamura Theater. Each was named for its licensed actor-producer (*zamoto*); the names and professions of Nakamura Kanzaburō, Morita Kanya and Ichimura Uzaemon have continued into modern times, although the last Kanya died in 1975.

Edo's sex symbols were its actors—all of whom were male—and its prostitutes, who were male and female. The involvement of actors in sex scandals was not uncommon. The most famous example occurred in 1714, when Ejima, a lady-in-waiting at the shogun's court, while presumably on an outing to a temple, actually took her entourage to the Yamamura Theater so she could carry on with the handsome actor Ikushima Shingorō (1671–1743). When news of this reached the court, all parties concerned were severely punished, and the Yamamura Theater was closed forever.³ Thenceforth, Edo had only three official theaters, the so-called Edo *sanza*, which arrangement prevailed until 1873, soon after the downfall of the shogunate.

Also during the Edo period, theaters often went bankrupt and were forced to close down, sometimes for years. Times of national economic distress were especially hard on the theater. Edo couldn't do without kabuki,

however, so a unique arrangement was devised, whereby temporary managements could take over until the licensed producers were able to go back into business. As a result, Edo was never at a loss for kabuki, even though the theaters' names were different from those of the official three. Records show considerable activity at theaters such as the Kawarasaki Theater, the Kiri Theater and the Miyako Theater.⁴

Edo's audiences also had access to smaller, unlicensed theaters operating mainly on shrine grounds at a special time of the year for shrine fund-raising, but those operated under various restrictions. The licensed theaters were the "large theaters" (*ōshibai*), accommodating an audience of around fifteen hundred, while the unlicensed theaters were the "small theaters" (*koshibai*), also called "shrine theaters" (*miyajishi*). Actors at "small" theaters were even lower on the social scale than those at "large" ones. While it was possible for a "small theater" actor to move up to a "large theater," any "large theater" actor choosing to work for a "small" one would be excommunicated from his master's "house" (*ie*).⁵

The *sanza* were restricted to certain districts, or *shibai machi*, just as the nearby brothel quarters, like the Yoshiwara, were designated their own locations by the authorities (fig. 1). Although they often flouted the laws, actors and other theater personnel were required to live in these theater districts, which were a block or so long. Isolating actors from the general populace allowed the repressive government to monitor their behavior. The *shibai machi* originally were located in central Edo, not far from the site of today's Kabukiza, but in 1842, as part of the Tenpō-era reforms, all Edo theaters and staff were forced by government decree to move to what was then the city's outskirts in Asakusa, in a district newly dubbed Saruwakachō, named for a comic figure from kabuki's early years. It wasn't until 1872 that a kabuki theater made the bold move back to central Tokyo.⁶

If an entire theater district could be banished, one can imagine how easily the same could be said of actors. Actors were often in trouble—including being placed in shackles—for living beyond their status and breaking the sumptuary laws. They often snubbed their noses at antiluxury laws by wearing forbidden fabrics on- and offstage, living outside the theater districts (even keeping vacation villas) or using prohibited props. The most notable punishment for such infractions fell on Edo's top actor, Ichikawa Danjūrō VII (1791–1859) in 1842, when he was banished from the city for seven years for his excessive lifestyle, and, especially, for using real armor and weapons onstage, equipment he had received as gifts from samurai patrons.⁷

Producers sought any means they could to fill their houses, including ceremonial performances, but nothing drew the public like a great actor. Stars didn't need agents to convince producers how critical they were to a theater's success. By the end of the seventeenth century, superstars were commanding fabulous salaries. While a person could live on one or two gold pieces (*ryō*) for a year, Danjūrō I (1660–1704) earned up to 800.⁸

Successful productions, no matter how good their dramaturgy, were rarely referred to as "dramatic hits" (*kyōgen atari*) but always as "actor hits"

(*yakusha atari*). Producers and their financial backers kept increasing the salaries and benefits of their stars, which led to a vicious cycle in which expenses too frequently failed to match income, forcing theaters into bankruptcy. When companies lacked stars with drawing power, producers had to come up with all sorts of strategies to stay afloat. The ideal situation was for a team of first-rate actors to be combined with a smart producer. As the actor Matsumoto Kōshirō V (1764–1838) once said, “If you have a good producer and good actors, even a nitwit can put on a show.”⁹

Each theater was home to a resident company that was contracted for a full year. The year began in the eleventh month of the old lunar calendar and ended in the tenth. At the top of a company’s hierarchy was the actor-producer, or *zamoto*; the financial backer, or *kinshu*; the business manager, or *chōmoto*; and what we may call the artistic director or actor-manager, the *zagashira*.¹⁰ The actor-manager was usually the company’s most honored, gifted and popular actor. The *sanza* system meant that there could be only three actor-managers at any one time, so in periods when acting talent was abundant, actors had to be especially noteworthy to gain this rank. Ninety-nine percent of the time, they were the scions or leading disciples of major acting families, Edo’s most outstanding being the Ichikawa Danjūrō line. Even a Danjūrō still in his teens could become an actor-manager, so powerful was the name’s aura. The Danjūrō line created, and was the acknowledged guardian of, the religiously tinted acting method called *aragoto*, or rough style, a method that depended on flamboyant makeup, wigs, costumes, props, vocalizations and movements to portray samurai heroes of superhuman power.

Edo graced actors named Danjūrō with godlike powers.¹¹ Danjūrō I was proclaimed a devotee of the Buddhist deity Fudō, worshiped particularly at the Fudō temple in Narita. His *aragoto* style borrowed elements of the Fudō image of a fearsome superhuman, also seen in Niō temple-gate guardians. Danjūrō’s signature *kumadori* makeup of painted lines on body and face was probably inspired by the heavy musculature of those statues. Even the cross-eyed stare, the *mie*, employed in *aragoto* acting and in so many ukiyo-e prints, replicates the intense stare of Fudō. When Danjūrō I appeared onstage as Fudō, played as an *aragoto* character, fans threw money on the stage as votive offerings. Some scholars have likened him to the Shinto *arabito-gami*, a part-human, part-god, best known for its application to the emperor before 1945. The religious element remains associated with all the actors in the line; the present Danjūrō XII (b. 1946) and his son are closely associated with the Narita temple.¹²

In the two-and-a-half centuries of Edo kabuki, only two actors lacking distinguished family roots rose from the lower ranks to become actor-managers. One was Nakamura Nakazō I (1736–1790), who achieved the position in 1776. Nakazō did not come from theatrical stock, but he was adopted by a secondary actor and his wife, a professional dancer. The other actor-manager from an unconventional background was the Edo-born Ichikawa Kodanji IV (1812–1866), who first made his mark in Osaka before returning to Edo in 1847 and rising to stardom.



FIG. 2. Okumura Masanobu. *Ichikawa Danjūrō II as Ike no Shōji*. 1725. Woodcut, handcolored *hosoban*. 32 x 15.9 cm. Clarence Buckingham Collection, 1925.1830, The Art Institute of Chicago. Photo © The Art Institute of Chicago
 Danjūrō appears in *Oguri Chūseiden* (*Oguri and the Hall of Immortality*), the season-opening production at the Nakamura Theater, eleventh month, 1725. The character is a young samurai in disguise as a radish seller, as indicated by the prop he wields and those in the baskets behind him. The traditional Danjūrō crest of three concentric squares appears on his sleeve.

Although he was not the actual producer, the responsibility for a run's success sat squarely on the actor-manager's shoulders. The life or death of his company lay in his hands, whether or not he was supported by a generous backer or a team of worthy actors. The actor-manager was intimately involved in planning each production, helping to choose the play's "world" (*sekai*), which was its all-important dramatic background, casting the parts and overseeing the production details. Aware of his contributions, the actor-manager commanded a much larger salary than his costars.

By the early eighteenth century, actor-managers began to earn as much as 1,000 gold pieces, a fantastic sum tantamount to fees earned by major movie stars. The first actor to receive this amount was not an actor-manager, however; he was the Kamigata *onnagata*, or female-role specialist, Yoshizawa Ayame I (1663–1729), sometime between 1711 and 1715. Only a handful of female-role specialists became actor-managers, which suggests that female-role experts, despite their artistic prestige and popularity, nevertheless encountered the same glass ceiling that women in general did in Japan. The first Edo player to receive 1,000 gold pieces was the *tachiyaku*, or male-role specialist, Danjūrō II (1689–1758), who reached this plateau in 1722, although he eventually earned the record-breaking figure of 2,000 gold pieces for a season in Osaka (fig. 2). Danjūrō II also was rewarded with an annual month-long vacation at a time when other actors worked a twelve-month year. Later in the eighteenth century, the 1,000-gold-piece salary was another sign of the heights to which the low-born Nakazō I had risen. The amount was so monumental that it spawned the moniker "1,000-gold-piece actor" (*senryō yakusha*). Box-office magnets were fully aware of their sway

over their struggling producers; in the vicious cycle to improve their failing ticket sales, producers too often gave in to the superstars' selfish salary demands, which also created animosity among their costars, deflating company morale.

During the Kansei era (1789–1801) at the end of the century, the national economy was in such trouble that shogun Tokugawa Ienari's chief adviser, Matsudaira Sadanobu (1759–1859), instituted the Kansei Reforms. Many of the measures were aimed at curbing luxury, which drew attention to the high salaries of kabuki stars. In 1794, Matsudaira forbade any salary over 500 gold pieces, still five-hundred times the average wage. For a time this helped the Edo *sanza* to remain solvent, as the then-top earners, Segawa Kikunojō III (1751–1810) and Iwai Hanshirō IV (1747–1800), saw their salaries drop from 900 to 500 gold pieces. Slightly lower down the scale Matsumoto Kōshirō IV (1737–1802) and Danjūrō VI (1778–1799) dropped from 700 to 300 gold pieces. The reforms, however, were eventually abandoned; salaries returned to prereform levels, with Nakamura Utaemon III earning 1,100 gold pieces by 1815 and 1,400 by 1827.¹³

Since even the lowest-ranking actors made more than the average townsman, salary costs for these large companies wreaked havoc on the managements. In 1769, the Morita Theater had 211 employees, the Ichimura Theater 323 and the Nakamura Theater 346.¹⁴ By 1828, the situation was so fraught that the producers petitioned the city magistrate to take action, saying that if this was not done, the *sanza* would go out of business. Their complaint stated:

For over ten years the major actors earned 1,000 or more gold pieces a year and sought even more money than that. For example, if they weren't paid for the first company reading of the play they said they wouldn't rehearse, which put us at a disadvantage.

Even if we took in 8,000 gold pieces in a year, the salaries of the actors, playwrights, and musicians would eat up 9,000 gold pieces, so, in the end, there were no profits.

Actors would lie that they were sick so they could dally on excursions, forcing the postponement of opening day and decreasing the number of days of performance; another ploy would be to say they weren't feeling well, then arrive late backstage and delay the opening.

The more they earned in salary, the more they owed because they borrowed money to maintain their luxurious lifestyles.¹⁵

The petition specifically cited nineteen stars for their selfish behavior. The magistrate ordered the following: "Reduction in salary. Luxury forbidden. No travel to other provinces."¹⁶ Three months after the complaint had been registered, the top salaries were capped at 500 gold pieces. Moreover, the actors were forbidden to travel, which was intended to prevent them from fleeing the Edo regulations by going to Kamigata to perform.

In addition, the producers soon abandoned their traditional struggle to obtain the best actors for their annual season, in favor of allocating the talent by drawing lots. However, Danjūrō VII and Utaemon IV were so popular that no one wanted to chance losing them in a lottery; instead, the producers agreed to have these stars alternate from season to season among the three theaters.

Salaries were paid according to a standardized system. The first salary to be determined was that of the actor-manager, who received a contract saying, "Salary: such and such; payment method: such and such" early in the ninth month. The other actors' salaries were set by the seventeenth day of the tenth month, when the first meeting of the entire company, the "first gathering" (*yorizome*) was held. At this time, everyone received one-third of his annual salary, which allowed rehearsals to commence. If the business manager hadn't raised sufficient funds, rehearsals were postponed until he did. The remaining two-thirds were paid out in equal parts over the following five annual productions. An actor earning 300 gold pieces a year thereby received an advance of 100 gold pieces for the season's opening production, and a remainder of 200 gold pieces, divided into five payments of 40 gold pieces over the course of the season.

A hefty third or more of this salary went for costumes, as, for most of the

Edo period, stars paid for their own stage wardrobe, much as did leading players in the West at that time. Because drawing crowds was enhanced by how one looked onstage, this led to extravagance of dress, which the government often chose to consider a violation of sumptuary laws. From the 1830s, actors received a special costume allowance on top of their salaries. Actors could also earn bonuses for playing roles outside their specialty. A number of stars earned additional money by operating their own retail shops as a sideline, selling their own lines of hair pomade, makeup, decorative hair combs, rice cakes, incense and so on, often making personal appearances when they weren't required at the theater. Some actors inserted commercial announcements in their stage dialogue.¹⁷

The annual contract system dissolved in 1849 during the final program of the season at the Ichimura Theater "farewell production" (*nagori kyōgen*) starring Utaemon IV. It was intended as Utaemon's farewell to Edo before traveling home to Osaka, from which he had been absent for a dozen years. The show lasted only twenty days, though, leaving the theater in the red. Utaemon and the business manager negotiated with the other theaters, the Nakamura Theater and the Kawarasaki Theater, to create a new company and offer a season-opening production, the *kaomise*, the following spring, rather than in the traditional eleventh month, with that month dedicated to a new farewell production. This approach disrupted the annual producing schedule, and soon led to the elimination of the annual contract system.¹⁸

The opening day of a new season in the eleventh month was an annual Edo highlight. Approaching that day, the leaders of each theater followed a protocol of preparatory gatherings, each with its own name and purpose. On the thirteenth day of the tenth month, each theater published the names of the actors in their respective troupes on a one-sheet broadside called a "face-showing poster" (*kaomise banzuke*).¹⁹ The main purpose of a season's opening production was, literally, to show the faces of the new acting team. Edo's thousands of rabid fans lost sleep waiting for these announcements, which required a tremendous amount of care to select just the right size fonts and name placement for each actor. People waited up all night for them, the way fans line up nowadays to buy tickets the night before a concert.

On the night of the seventeenth day of the tenth month, the first of these gathering ceremonies was held, the male-role players congregating at the home of the actor-manager, and the female-role specialists at the home of their leading representative, the company's chief *onnagata*. Then everyone, carrying lanterns, paraded to his respective playhouse. The entire company, including the musicians and management staff, assembled in the large third-floor dressing room to toast the newly constituted troupe. Outside the theater, gifts from fans and sponsors were piled high, including gorgeous curtains dyed with images celebrating specific actors. Then a standardized set of rehearsals began.

Despite the fame and fortune many actors attained, they continued throughout the Edo period to suffer legal restrictions and to be ghettoized, with strict limits on their concourse with average citizens. There were those

actors who thought that preoccupation with money was detrimental to the actor's art, and that artistic concerns should supercede those for personal gain. On the other hand, the ability to earn such large sums was also a way for this despised class to garner a sense of empowerment and equal footing with its fan base. Recompense gave them pride in their work and spurred them on to greater artistic heights. Danjūrō IV (1712–1778) was such an actor, although his son, Danjūrō V (1741–1806), for all his success, was so self-conscious about being a “lowly actor” that he retired in 1796 to practice a hermitlike life writing comic poetry (*kyōka*) in a humble cottage (fig. 3).²⁰ Ironically, it was his very success that allowed him this unusual privilege.

Kabuki actors—who, for years, were officially designated as “non-persons” (*binin*)—may have been considered outside the Confucian-based class system that divided society into four distinct ranks (samurai, peasants, artisans and merchants, in descending order), but they couldn't escape the larger society's tendency to organize people hieratically. The same was true of the world of prostitutes.²¹ Actors fell into two broad categories of *nadai* and *nadaishita*, literally, “title” and “below title.”²² Actors in the rather limited former group—also called *tate mono* or “leading players”—were entitled to have their pictures represented on the billboards outside the theater that showed the play's title—its *nadai*; *nadaishita* meant they were beneath such exalted status. During the Edo period, the principal system of classifying “below title” actors (also called *shitamaruari*, or “going around below”) was to divide them into the two categories of *chūdori*, or “mid-range actors,” and *shita tachiyaku*, or “first-floor male role actor,” because of the location of their dressing rooms, but they were also popularly called by several other names, one of which I'll discuss shortly. “First-floor actors of male roles” were extras in crowd scenes, filled in the background in court scenes, cavorted as animals, including being the fore or rear legs of horses, and served as stagehands. Child actors whose parents weren't stars belonged to the “child roles” (*koyaku*) category, and joined the ranks of the “first-floor actors of male roles” when they were old enough. “Mid-range” actors, who mainly fought in the acrobatic combat scenes and occasionally played small supporting roles, could also be called *ōbeya* and *sangai*: *ōbeya* refers to the “the big room,” their communal dressing room on the third floor, *sangai* means “third floor.” Another important rank, *aichū*, which we might loosely translate as “secondary,” was added between “title” and “mid-range” in the late Edo period. The nuance differentiating *aichū* from *chūdori* escapes translation, but *aichū* played named characters, and were featured in the curtain raisers that began each day's program in the early morning, before most spectators had even arrived; we can call them supporting actors. A free rendition of the four ranks in the late Edo period might be “title,” or lead, “secondary,” or supporting actor, “mid-range,” or bit player, and “first-floor male role actor,” or walk-on.

One “first-floor male role actor” term that has stirred interest is *inari machi*, or “Inari Town,” which probably derives from the placement of the actors' shrine to the Inari rice deity opposite their first-floor dressing room. Actors prayed here for stage success and for protection from fire, and there was an annual Inari Festival on the first zodiac day of the horse (*hatsu uma*) in the

FIG. 3. Katsukawa Shunkō (1743–1812). *Ichikawa Ebizō IV (Danjūrō V) in the Shibaraku (Stop Right There!) Role.* c. 1797. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. 85.7 x 27 cm. Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Bequest of Richard P. Gale, 74.1.114

The poem, signed with Danjūrō’s poetry name, Ichikawa Hakuen (White Monkey) “in his fifty-seventh year,” signals Danjūrō’s retirement from the stage in 1796 (he had used the name Ebizō since 1791):

*Ebizō wa
yakusha o yamete
shiman to ka
waga mi nagara mo
oshii mono ka na*

Hearing that Ebizō is quitting,
even though he is myself,
I, too, will miss this actor.

(Translation by Matthew Welch)



second month, which was overseen by these low-ranking actors. Because the walk-ons were attached to a theater permanently and didn’t change companies annually, they may have been nicknamed “*inari*,” “staying in place,” a pun on the deity’s name, and this may be how the term came about.

The “below title” female-role specialists, by the way, were not counted among the members of either the third-floor or first-floor “below title” groups; they were segregated into their own dressing room. This was on a level between the first and third floors but, because of regulations against three-story buildings, called the “mid-second floor” (*chūnikai*), or what might be dubbed the “mezzanine.” “Mid-second floor” thus became one of the alternative terms for female-role specialists. From the outside, the theater indicated a two-story building. The logic of having a “third floor” but not a second, as well as the exact architectural arrangements, remain a puzzlement.²³

The social distinctions among actors affected every aspect of their theatrical lives, including whether they sat on cushions, tatami matting or the wooden floor, and, as we shall see, even where they bathed. The “title” actors’ dressing rooms also were arranged according to each actor’s status.

Just as in society at large, there was little or no upward mobility for “below title” actors. Most were forced to spend their entire lives in the lower ranks. On the other hand, children of the great stars, like those in the Danjūrō line, were allowed to debut as “title” actors, and to be cast in important roles even when their skills were undeveloped. Only a dozen or so Edo



FIG. 4. Toyohara Kunichika (1835–1900). No. 3. *The Subscription List (San, Kanjinchō)*, from the series *One Hundred Roles of Ichikawa Danjūrō (Ichikawa Danjūrō engei hyakuban)*. 1893. Color woodcut. 36 x 24.5 cm. Arendie and Hank Herwig Collection
 Ichikawa Danjūrō IX appeared as the heroic mountain priest Benkei in this kabuki dance-drama.

abandon his birth lineage for that of another family, the possibility of eventually rejoining one's birth family remains.²⁴ A famous example is the Meiji-era superstar Danjūrō IX (1839–1903), son of Danjūrō VII, who was adopted in infancy by Kawarasaki Gonnosuke VI (1814–1868) (fig. 4). (Danjūrō VIII and IX were both sons of Danjūrō VII. Danjūrō VIII [1823–1854] died young, and his brother eventually became Danjūrō IX.) Danjūrō's four older brothers were in line for the name of Danjūrō, so there was little chance of his being promoted. Nevertheless, his adoptive parents provided him with one of the harshest training regimens ever experienced by a kabuki actor, so harsh, in fact, that Danjūrō VII felt obliged to intervene on his son's behalf, although the child did not know at the time that this was his actual father. Gonnosuke and his wife forced the youth to study from morning to night, berating him constantly. Once, when he was fifteen, the boy had an excruciating headache

actors in the two-hundred-fifty-year period demonstrated enough grit, ambition and talent to rise to "title" status without a star father. A sampling includes Kikugorō I (1717–1783), son of an usher; Utaemon I (1719–1791), son of a doctor; Kikunojō IV (1782–1812), son of a teahouse proprietor; and, of course, the only low-ranking actors to become *zagashira*, Nakazō I, son of either a ronin or a ferry guard, and Kodanji IV (1812–1864), son of a seller of fuse cords for smokers' pipes. In most cases, at least one parent was somehow connected to the theater.

If one wanted to be an actor, one had to find a patron actor willing to accept a disciple into his "house." One had to train rigorously and be prepared to spend his entire life at the bottom of a harsh hierarchy, where effort yielded very little respect. Some actors made their way to the top by virtue of being adopted during early childhood by a leading actor without a son of his own, as most actors wished to continue their line by handing on their name to a successor. This practice, which was common in Japanese society at large, persists in the kabuki world. It always has been common for one actor's son to be adopted by another.

While that may mean an actor has to

and asked Gonnosuke if his understudy could replace him. Gonnosuke was furious: “You son of a bitch! Aren’t you an actor? An actor goes onstage like a samurai goes to battle. Get onstage and die there!”²⁵ Suddenly, the boy’s headache weakened and he made his entrance. In time, the deaths of those older brothers who might have become Danjūrō IX pushed him into the limelight, and he returned to his natal family to receive the great name. Gonnosuke’s training proved perfect preparation for his elevated status.

The backgrounds of many female-role specialists, notably in kabuki’s earlier years, were more socially questionable, as they began their theater careers while working at the homosexual brothels (*kagama jaya*) located in the theater districts, and often managed by theater people.²⁶ Seven such brothels were available at the end of the eighteenth century, some with staffs of over a hundred boys. Two of the greatest female-role specialists, Ayame I and Kikunojō I (1693?–1749), both came from such milieux. The boys worked at these brothels between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, leaving when their voices changed. Although referred to by a number of different terms, their chief appellations were “stage boys” (*butaiko*) and “shadow boys” (*kagama* or *kageko*). Those who acted in kabuki used their appearances as advertisements for their sexual services. Since the brothel owners earned money from their encounters, they paid for the boys’ costumes and wigs.

The earnings of the lower ranks were rather good by contemporary standards. A “mid-range” actor could earn 25 gold pieces in the 1840s, while a “secondary” actor could earn 50. Exceptional work might even bring a raise of 10 gold pieces. Whereas stars paid for their own costumes, wigs and makeup, the company costume storehouse provided for the lesser ranks. However, promotion to “secondary” status, although still in the “below title” division, meant the actor had to take on additional financial requirements for which even a salary hike might prove insufficient. He now had to purchase his own costumes and wigs, hire a manservant to reflect his newfound status and assume a host of other minor, but accumulative, expenses. Still, “secondary” status was necessary for the ambitious who had aspirations of becoming “title” actors.

“Title” actors were extremely concerned with their ranking among their fellows, a determination marked by their salaries, their ratings in the annual actor critiques and their billing. Just as in the West, the placement of an actor’s name in show publicity was a matter that sometimes required delicate negotiations, and remains so today. The National Theater of Japan (Kokuritsu Gekijō) avoids such controversies by billing everyone alphabetically.

Program billing has unusual conventions, one of which corresponds to the time Jimmy Durante and Ethel Merman vied for top billing in the 1936 Broadway musical *Red, Hot and Blue!* A third star, Bob Hope, was not yet famous enough to make any demands. The solution was to print Durante and Merman’s names in an X pattern, intersecting each other, with the order of the names switched in weekly newspaper ads (fig. 5).²⁷ In 1818, the Nakamura Theater producer had a similar problem when his company included the longtime rivals Utaemon III (who had recently become Nakamura Shikan II) and Mitsugorō III, as well as the popular Iwai Hanshirō V

FIG. 5. Advertising flyer for the Broadway production of *Red, Hot and Blue!* Alvin Theater, New York, 1936. 22.9 x 15.2 cm. Hope Enterprises, Inc.

To ensure that Jimmy Durante and Ethel Merman shared top billing, the designer placed their names on criss-crossed banners that alternated weekly. “Above-title” stars on Broadway now entitle theatergoers to a refund or ticket exchange if said star does not perform on a given date. Understudies going on *must* be posted in the lobby for each performance. Tickets are never refunded or exchanged when an understudy goes on for a “below-title” actor.



(1776–1847). The convention was to list all names horizontally, with the actor-manager’s at the extreme left and that of the actor closest in prestige at the center. Mitsugorō was the actor-manager, but Utaemon demanded that his name go in the actor-manager’s slot. Because each of the stars was playing multiple roles, the producer devised an anomalous arrangement that placed all the actors’ names and their accompanying character names at the extreme left, in three successive groupings, with the sequence of characters and actors’ names alternated so that all three got to see their names in the actor-manager position (for a poster for the Ichimura Theater, see fig. 6).²⁸

Status consciousness among actors also contributed to the widespread practice among them of taking poetry-writing pennames, even if they didn’t write poetry. These pennames were called *haimyō*, and were associated with *haikai* poetry, a literary art of immense popularity among Edo’s townsmen,



FIG. 6. A “face-showing poster” (*kaomise banzuke*) for the season-opening program at the Ichimura Theater in Edo, 1712. Woodcut. 28.5 X 39.9 cm. The Tsubouchi Memorial Theater Museum, Waseda University, Tokyo

There were various kinds of theatrical posters used during the Edo period; this one belongs to the *kaomise banzuke* category. It was designed to advertise the theater’s lineup of actors and musicians for the coming season. The Ichimura Theater’s mandarin orange (*tachibana*) crest is at the top center. Directly beneath it, in large characters, is the name of actor-manager (*zamoto*) Ichimura Takenojō. The top half of the poster lists the names of the actors and musicians in a carefully calibrated manner based on the performers’ standings; the bottom half shows the actors in performance, each labeled with his name.

samurai, courtesans, artists and literati, who often gathered socially for *haikai*-writing events.²⁹ Leading actors often participated, despite restrictions on the mingling of classes. Some actors without the gift of poetry, but wishing to appear fashionable, even resorted to using ghost writers. The *haimyō*’s importance is indicated by its being printed instead of his stage name on the cover of the lead actor’s personal script (which contained only his lines).

Although the practice of actors taking *haimyō* began as early as 1679 in Kamigata, it soon spread to Edo, the first example being Danjūrō I, whose *haikai* writing began in 1694 while he was touring to Kyoto, where he studied with the master Shiigamoto Saimarō. Danjūrō signed his poems Saigyū. “Sai” was from Saimarō, and “gyū” was from a character named Kengyū, a role he recently had acted to acclaim.

Sometimes an actor’s descendants used the same *haimyō*, and sometimes it lasted for just one generation. A number of actors even assumed several *haimyō*. A book published in 1774 lists 225 actors, 186 having *haimyō*.³⁰ Actors were also known by *yagō*, or “shop names,” associated with their predecessors’ place of origin or business. Even before the mid-eighteenth century, fans commonly shouted out the actors’ *haimyō* or *yagō* during a play rather than their stage forenames. It was the height of uncool to shout out “Ichikawa” or “Onoe.” Eventually, actors started to borrow a predecessor’s *haimyō* as their own stage name, and this then became hereditary.

To read up on a favorite star during the Edo period, one consulted the actor critiques (*yakusha hyōbanki*) published every year in Edo, Osaka and Kyoto for each city's respective theaters.³¹ These small illustrated guidebooks, modeled on similar publications devoted to courtesans, first appeared during the seventeenth century, and were initially concerned with the personal appeal—including sexual tastes—of the performers. The style and format changed over the years, but, in general, they provided critical comments and background on each actor. In the early days, an actor was rated according to whether he was “upper-upper-excellent” (*jō-jō-kichi*), “upper” (*jō*) or “middle” (*chū*). By the late seventeenth century, these three had grown to five similarly standard ranks. However, the critique writers found even five categories limited, and various new terms were added, such as the ultimate praise, “head of all arts in the three cities” (*sanga no tsu soge gashira*), and slightly lesser accolades. Even this wasn't sufficient, it seems, because, while an actor may have been considered worthy of one of these high-sounding tributes, he may still have been somehow lacking, so one of the characters used in writing the grade—or only a portion of the character—was printed only in outline, rather than in solid strokes; alternatively, one part of the character would be eliminated and the remaining part given only in outline. And if this were not nuanced enough, a new laudatory character might be added just before the normal ranking.

As mentioned earlier, a formalized rehearsal system preceded a show's opening. Once the run began, an actor's day was a long one, since the play, which was a full-day affair, began at six in the morning (four in the summertime) and ended around four in the winter and five in the summer. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, an actor signed in (as they still do) by placing a peg in a hole next to his name on a wooden board containing the names of everyone in the company. Occasionally, a functionary had to run to the home of a tardy actor to wake him up.

A typical Edo program began with two ritualized dance performances, normally done by the lower-ranking actors, for whom it was a training exercise. Most spectators didn't start to show up until around eight in the morning, so the first two hours or so were for a mostly empty auditorium. Then followed what usually was a long, five-act play, each act based on a conventional formula, with its own terminology, title and dramaturgic function in the all-day play. When the play ended, the actors bathed. The lowest-ranking actors were not allowed to use the communal bath, but had small wash basins in their group dressing room. Because the female-role specialists, even the stars among them, could not enter the communal bath, they had to have hot water brought to the tubs in their dressing rooms.

There may not have been actresses, but women nonetheless played a significant role as the wives, mistresses and students of kabuki actors. Invariably, the women whom actors married came from theater families, merchant families associated with the theater or the geisha world. Marriages were arranged affairs based on strengthening artistic or social alliances.³² Curiosity about the actors' domestic lives even extended to the publication in 1759 of what was popularly referred to as an “actors' wives' critique” (*yakusha*

nyōbo hyōbanki), which informed the public of their special interests, looks, jealousies and sexual peccadilloes, and was written anonymously by “someone familiar with life behind the scenes in the Pear Garden,” the world of theater. The Pear Garden, or *rien*, is an allusion to the school for entertainers supported by the eighth-century Chinese emperor Ming Huang (Xuanzong). The term became a euphemism for the Chinese theatrical world, and came to refer to the Japanese theater as well. It is still used by both traditional Chinese theater and kabuki. The wives’ critique, entitled *The Meichō Story* (*Meichō banashi*), took its name from a rare imported horse displayed at a sideshow in the Nihonbashi district, and was meant to suggest that the actors’ spouses were something of a sideshow themselves.

* * *

Ever since the first kabuki sketches, in which a young rake visits a teahouse in search of female companionship, Edo kabuki reflected and influenced the townsfolk’s customs and preferences, down to the smallest aspects of daily life. Like latter-day stars of the silent screen, the actor functioned as a demigod with attendant privileges and devotion. I would like to conclude by quoting an 1830 book on contemporary manners that summarizes how huge a role the actor, both as artist and individual, played in the everyday lives and dreams of the Edo populace:

All the women and girls in the city today love kabuki, and the thing they like best is the actor. . . . The theater today doesn’t imitate life; life imitates the theater. Even the things people say, anything eye-catching, or the clothes worn by prostitutes, get the comment, “That’s just like the theater.” When we praise a nobleman or some man of distinction, we say, “He’s like such and such an actor.” Officialdom may not look kindly on it, but everyone takes this tone. Costume patterns become all the rage, goods are widely sold with actors’ names attached to them . . . and people even talk the way the actors do. Clothing, even ornamental hairpins, is imprinted with actors’ crests and everyone knows where the actors live, their family names, their genealogies, and how old they are.³³ ☞

NOTES

1. The traditional kabuki word for actor is *yakusha*, while the modern term for actor is *haiyū*.

2. Conrad Totman notes that “during the eighteenth century, Edo displaced the two great Kamigata cities as [the] primary source of cultural creativity.” *Early Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 381. Theater lagged a bit behind other forms of cultural production in this regard, the shift not really gathering steam until the 1790s when playwright Namiki Gohei I (1747–1848) moved from Osaka to Edo.

3. A good description of this incident is in Earle Ernst, *The Kabuki Theater* (New York: Grove Press, 1956), 7–8.

4. The system was called *hikae yagura* (alternative drumtower) or *kari yagura* (temporary drumtower), because the *yagura* over the theater’s entrance was the official symbol of the license to produce. See Taguchi Akiko, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha* (Edo-period kabuki actors) (Tokyo: Yūsankaku, 1998), 34–37. The *yagura* were thought to have religious significance as places from which the gods could be welcomed to view the performance. Hattori Yukio, *Edo kabuki* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993), 76. One other alternative management, the Tamagawa Theater, had a brief existence as a backup for the Nakamura Theater. According to Kōike Shotarō, this name appears in many old records, although little is known about it. In 1818, Tamagawa Hikojūrō of the shrine

theater at the Kanda Myōjin Shrine replaced Miyako Dennai of the Miyako Theater as producer and ran the theater as the Tamagawa Theater. He was successful for a time, with Tsuruya Nanboku IV (1755–1829) as his chief playwright and Ōkubō Imasuke and Kishimoto Yuzuru as his backers. He produced sporadically until 1821 when the Ichimura Theater was able to resume management, after which nothing more is heard of the Tamagawa Theater. *Kōshō Edo kabuki* (A study of Edo kabuki) (Tokyo: Miki Shobō, 1993), 17.

5. See Faith Bach, “Breaking the *Kabuki* Actors’ Barrier: 1868–1900,” in Samuel L. Leiter, ed., *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 152–66.

6. The theater was the Morita Theater, renamed the Shintomi Theater when it moved to Shintomichō in 1872. For an examination of this theater’s early Meiji history, see Yuichirō Takahashi, “*Kabuki* Goes Official: The 1878 opening of the Shintomi-za,” in Leiter, *A Kabuki Reader*, 123–51.

7. At the time, Danjūrō VII was known as Ebizō VI, having given the name of Danjūrō VIII to his son in 1832. Among sources discussing the banishment in detail, see Nishiyama Matsunosuke, *Ichikawa Danjūrō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1960), 198–210.

8. Hattori (*Edo kabuki*, 95) points out that the average Edo-period merchant earned anywhere from 1 *ryō* 2 or 3 *bu* to 2 *ryō* a year. In the 1840s, according to Susan B. Hanley, a tenant farmer in charge of a large operation earned 12 *ryō* while a Kyoto carpenter around this time earned half of that. See Hanley, *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 20. By comparison, in 1711, a high-ranking bannerman (*batamoto*) in service to the shogun earned 483 *ryō*, although his expenses came to twice that much. Totman, *Early Modern Japan*, 292. Calculating these sums in today’s terms is always difficult, especially as currency valuations changed frequently. That is why I suggest what the earnings were for people of different positions. A *ryō* was equal to about \$150 in today’s economy (see <<http://everything2.com/title/ryo>>). One *ryō* purchased enough rice for a year. Four *bu* equaled one *ryō*, so a *bu* would be about \$37.50. In terms of Edo-period expenses, someone could live

acceptably on a couple hundred dollars a year. An actor earning 1,000 *ryō* was earning the equivalent of \$150,000 a year, a huge sum, especially when related to the cost of living in those days.

9. Quoted in Hattori, *Edo kabuki*, 96.

10. See Hattori, *Edo kabuki*, 97–100, and Taguchi, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha*, 38–40, for useful background on the responsibilities of the *zagashira*.

11. For an overview of the line’s founder actor, Danjūrō I, see Laurence R. Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki: Their Lives, Loves and Legacy* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1997), 34–107.

12. Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, chapter 2, provides considerable detail on Danjūrō I’s religious associations and how he integrated them into his performances.

13. This information on actors’ salaries is based on Taguchi, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha*, 57–64.

14. Hattori, *Edo kabuki*, 83.

15. Quoted in Taguchi, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha*, 62.

16. Taguchi, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha*, 63.

17. For background on actors’ shops, see Taguchi, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha*, 233–38.

18. See James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, eds., *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Darkness and Desire, 1804–1864*, vol. 3 (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002), 27.

19. The various kinds of *banzuke* are described in Samuel L. Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia: A Revised Adaptation of “Kabuki Jiten”* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), 42–43.

20. Danjūrō’s behavior reflected that of Edo-period literati (*bunjūin*), who often retired in order to follow their artistic pursuits at their leisure. See Totman, *Early Modern Japan*, 405–7. Wealth was a necessary prerequisite to such an aesthetic life.

21. See, for example, J. E. De Becker, *The Nightless City or the History of the Yoshiwara Yūkwaaku*, 5th ed. rev. (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1970), 44–49, and Cecilia Segawa Seigle, *Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1993), 229–32.

22. The following is derived largely from Hattori, *Edo kabuki*, 117–24, and Taguchi, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha*, 73–77.
23. For detailed illustrations and commentary on backstage arrangements at an Edo theater, see Hattori Yukio and Ichinoseki Kei, *Yume no Edo kabuki* (Dreaming of Edo kabuki) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001).
24. Kabuki's proclivity for the adoption of sons to carry on a family line closely reflects practices in the wider society. See Hanley, *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan*, 138–39.
25. Taguchi, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha*, 97.
26. The world of male-male sexual relations in early kabuki is described in Ihara Saikaku's novel, *The Great Mirror of Male Love*, trans. by Paul Gordon Schalow (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). See also Gary P. Leupp, *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Taguchi, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha*, 76.
27. Samuel L. Leiter, *Encyclopedia of the New York Stage, 1930–1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1989), 664.
28. Ihara Toshiro, *Kabuki nenpyō* (Kabuki chronology), vol. 6 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1961), 47–48.
29. Both Hattori, *Edo kabuki*, and Taguchi, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha*, provide useful background on the *haimyō* practice in kabuki.
30. Taguchi, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha*, 238–39.
31. The complete *yakusha hyōbanki* may be found in Kabuki Hyōbanki Kenkyūkai, ed., *Kabuki hyōbanki shūsei* (Compilation of kabuki actor critiques), 10 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972–77).
32. This discussion of women in kabuki actors' lives is indebted to Taguchi, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha*, 127–50.
33. Quoted from *Seji kenmon roku* (Record of worldly affairs) (1830) in Taguchi, *Edo jidai no kabuki yakusha*, 203–4.

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An Interview with Toyohara Kunichika: The Sequel

AMY REIGLE NEWLAND

< FIG. 2. (Detail; see page 138) Toyohara Kunichika. *Ichikawa Danjūrō IX as Ōmori Hikoshichi*. Poems by Gyokkōan and calligraphy by Chinoyō (?). November 1897. Color woodcut, *surimono*. 22 x 57.5 cm. Private Collection

Danjūrō stars in the role of the 14th-century warrior Ōmori Hikoshichi in the dance drama of the same name, first staged in October 1897 at the Meiji Theater in Tokyo. In *Ōmori Hikoshichi*, the title character rescues Princess Chihiya, daughter of Kusunoki Masahige, when she is threatened by Dogo no Saemon. Hikoshichi holds the precious sword of his vanquished enemy and performs a dance for the slain general's daughter. She is suspicious of Hikoshichi, however, since he is her late father's enemy, and tries to attack him disguised as a demon, wearing a menacing noh mask. After fending off her attack, he offers an explanation of her father's death that exonerates him of guilt, after which he presents her with her father's ceremonial sword. The sword tip seen in the image may be that used by Princess Chihiya during her attack on Hikoshichi.

The genre of living history plays was created by Danjūrō IX to depict historical characters using their real names (not the fictional ones kabuki had to use in the Edo period) and authentic historical behavior/clothing (or as close to it as scholars could reconstruct). Most such plays were boringly pedantic, and the genre soon ran its course, but a tiny handful remained in the repertory. Danjūrō's costume, which he designed himself, was based on historical research.

IN OCTOBER 1898, the Tokyo daily newspaper *Yomiuri Shinbun* published an interview with the artist Toyohara Kunichika (1835–1900) in four installments entitled “A Meiji-period child of Edokko” (*Meiji no Edokko*). [For the first two installments, see Newland, “An Interview with Toyohara Kunichika,” *Impressions* 29, 2007–2008. Ed.] The joie de vivre conveyed in Kunichika's stories, as well as the lively language that he uses to tell them, assist us in constructing an image of Kunichika the artist, and the man—whether this constructed image is reliable or not. But perhaps it does not matter. In the twenty-first century, and with advances made in the last few decades toward a fuller understanding of Meiji prints, we nevertheless acknowledge Kunichika as a master of kabuki actor portraits at a time when the entire tradition of ukiyo-e begun in the Edo period was in its twilight. Kunichika, too, must have understood his place—and saw the waning of ukiyo-e—when sharing clips from his life just two years before his death. We can only suppose that this is the image, his own “portrait,” that he wanted us to remember.

A NIGHT ON THE TOWN

The reporter starts the third installment (October 26, 1898) with the observation that Kunichika is “seated at ease, wearing a broad grin, speaking in a lively manner”:

This funny thing happened to me when I was living in Mukōjima. The doctor Kaneko of Hitachi and a big spender (*daijin*) named Suda came to my place together. Both were wealthy men; the year before they had commissioned work from me. “Where shall we go drinking?” they asked, so we went up to the Chōdatei in Shinobazu.¹ Well, we drank and ate our fill and as they said, “Let's go engage a prostitute,” I said, “Yeah, that's OK with me.” So, with me as a guide, we went from the Hatsuneya in Nakanochō to the Shinagawarō.² The woman I engaged was a very pretty, second-rank *oiran* (a ranked prostitute) named Kinshū.³ She was snooty, and because I played *ken* [similar to the “rock, paper, scissors” game] and told jokes, she must have thought I was just a silly male entertainer.⁴ She had a stuck-up air, and once she turned away, I went to the room alone. Since it was just summer, I climbed under the mosquito net. Then she and her attendant (*shinzō*) came in and said, haughtily and offensively: “Who are you?” Holding my temper so I would not be seen as a boor, I said, “Who am I? I am an artist, you know,” to which Kinshū said, “An artist, huh? If that's so, then draw me a picture.” She



FIG. 1. Toyohara Kunichika and Toyohara Chikaharu (1848–?). *Washing the Rice*, vignette from *The Process of Brewing Sake* (*Shujō issbiki no zu*). 1882. Pigment on wood. 41.5 x 51 cm. Narita Reikōkan, Narita, Chiba Prefecture
This is one of sixteen vignettes that comprise a large votive painting (*ema*) illustrating the various stages of sake brewing, commissioned as an offering to the Fudō myōō at Naritasan Shinshō Temple in Narita. While Kunichika oversaw and is thought to have produced the majority of the commission, he was assisted by his student Chikaharu, who has signed this image *Chikaharu jobitsu* (Assisted by Chikaharu).

ordered the attendant out, and when she returned with beautiful gold-flecked paper, I poked my neck out of the mosquito net.

The reporter notes that Kunichika then casually made the motions of tucking up a mosquito net.

So then she says, “All right, mix up the ink.” The attendant did so making a scratching noise, and when I took the brush, Kinshū sidles up to me, as if to say, “Show me your stuff, since I don’t think you can.” I regarded her as a pain in the neck, but then thought, “Wait a second; if I draw a picture, it won’t be interesting.” So I filled my brush with ink and instead brushed the kana character “no” on the paper and then this verse:

<i>Noshi no mama</i>	The wrapper still on
<i>kaze kokoromiru</i>	testing the breeze—
<i>uchiwa kana</i>	a flat round fan.

As I had improvised, the work wasn’t great. Then Kinshū said, “Dear me, is this supposed to be a joke? You’re really uncouth, you know!” That cut short any good time I might have had there, so I went home on my own before anyone else.

Only three days later, I overheard an older woman of forty-five or so at my

neighbor's house asking, "Where is the house of Mr. Kunichika, the art master?" I said to my wife, "Ohana, there is someone next door right now asking about us; perhaps she is the debt collector. If she comes by, tell her I'm not here." Then, suddenly, the woman opens the outside door and comes into our entryway. I couldn't hide, so when I asked, "Where are you from?" she responded, "Oh, is that *sensei*?" It was the attendant from the Shinagawarō.⁵ She laid out a large box of sweets. "This is a gift from *oiran*; she directed me to ask that you accept her apology for the other night in her complete failure to recognize you. Please accept these, and we seriously entreat you to please come see us again—please, by all means, and on no account will you have to pay for anything . . . *sensei*, even tonight, you'd be welcome." She probably thought, "Damn, he is some kind of country bumpkin and is trying to make a fool of me." When an Edokko is invited to call on prostitutes, he generally paid double or triple the amount of money . . . but not saying this, I said nonchalantly, "Yes, in any case, if I have a chance." The wife beside me was miffed. Then the woman presented something in a cloth wrapper (*furoshiki*), saying with delight, "After showing the work you did for us the other day to the head of the house, there was no doubt that this could only be a work by Kunichika-*sensei*. *Sensei* has done many pictures, but because those with characters are truly unusual, we thought it best to treasure it by having it mounted.⁶ For that reason, we had it done like this without any further ado." Then she unwrapped the *furoshiki*, and I saw my wildly written characters in a beautiful mount. I thought to myself, "*So now you get it, you know who I am—you must have been surprised when you found that out!*" Anyway, I felt a bit vindicated. Bowing on both hands, she says, "Well, it is certainly a pity that *sensei*'s seal is not included on this mount, so please excuse me, but if you could seal it, we would be most grateful . . ." This time I said, "All right, that's fine, that's fine." Then, with an arrogant air I sealed it with a red seal. After that, I can't explain it, but it goes without saying that Kinshū would very much have pined for me.

CELEBRATION AND BANKRUPTCY

The reporter hints that Kunichika has been drinking throughout the interview, "beaming with delight he sets his sake cup on a tray." Kunichika continues:

I am really a great drinker, the type who really hates to lose. At one time, I was living well in Manabegashi—again, it was just summer and the actor Tokizō [Nakamura Tokizō I (Karakō III), 1849–1919] had two or three roofed pleasure boats launched on the Ōkawa (the Sumida River); an absurd amount of money was laid out for the event, and twelve or thirteen Yanagibashi geisha had also been engaged. The merrymaking was so loud that I heard it from my house. Gosh, these actors behave like they are so important. Even though I had no money, I was not in the habit of being outdone, so we rushed to Tokizō's boats, boarded and left on five or six boats. Really top-class geisha and male entertainers (*taikomochi*) gathered together and noisily competed at one-upsmanship. How an artist could ever beat an actor at spending, I don't know. No matter, we celebrated in grand style, but in two or three days, I had a heap of debts. In the end I was beaten and bankrupt—I had lost everything. Kitaoka Bunhei gave me three hundred *ryō* as security against my house. I asked for other loans to pay other debts, but I was broke

and for whatever reason it was the second time this happened to me in Tōkei [Tokyo]. To settle it, I paid out one *ryō* three *bun* for a written bankruptcy order, and offered a bamboo votive plaque; it hung conspicuously before the house. It became the subject of talk, and the house was really popular.

This bankruptcy did not result from the Tokizō affair, but it certainly contributed to it. At that time, the mistress of Hayashi Daigaku no Kami lived in Ikenohata.⁷ Her big brother was Uta, the *kagatobi* performer, who was extremely well known.⁸ There is no rhyme or reason for it, but this guy spread the rumor that I had been sent to jail. He collected and used money from [the actors] Sōjūrō [Sawamura Sōjūrō VI, 1838–1886], Kodanji [Ichikawa Kodanji V, 1850–1922], Hanshirō [Iwai Hanshirō VIII, 1829–1882] and Kikugorō [Onoe Kikugorō V, 1844–1903]. He was a nasty piece of work. I do actor portraits, so he used that fact to swindle money out of them.⁹ When I heard this later I was shocked. Uta seemed like a nice guy, so I thought he wouldn't have been the one responsible. When I made the rounds to return the money to the actors, Sōjūrō would not take the money back. Well, because that's the way things go, and as I had to bear the brunt of this Uta affair, I had trays of sushi delivered around using this money— with this and that—then, all the money that had been borrowed was used up for food and drink. But having said that, I also received a loan from Ogawara Kengyō of Yushima. Kengyō is not blind, but he is still a bit of an oddball.¹⁰ He had a high opinion of himself because he had piles of money, and had even met the emperor.¹¹ He liked to brag, but when he heard that I displayed a notice in front of my house announcing that I had gone bankrupt, he said he would give me all the money everyone had given me. He then wrote a “crazy verse” (*kyōka*) for me on a sheet of Chinese paper, as if to say, “For whatever reason, Kunichika has come to appreciate what it is like to live freely, and I can really understand where he's coming from”:

<i>Yokutoku no</i>	How you navigate
<i>yo wataru fune no</i>	through this world of greed,
<i>kashijidai</i>	depends on your rudder;
<i>dōse Amida ni</i>	in the end our fortunes
<i>makasu mi no ue</i>	lie in the hands of Amida Buddha.

Although it was not a particularly impressive verse, I was grateful that my debts had been paid off, so I took it, saying, “Failing to be a true Edokko, I built a rich storehouse.” Because I flaunted my worldly desires, I made a mess of everything. I'm not saying I regret it, no, but being without money is a lot easier and, hey, even without money, you will not be short of rice or sake.

THE BREWERY COMMISSION AND KABUKI ACTORS

The anecdotes in the fourth and final *Yomiuri* installment (October 28, 1898) provide concrete evidence of the types of commissions that Kunichika undertook (paintings, for example) and shed light on his rapport with other kabuki actors, poets and entertainers of the day, in particular, the doyen of Meiji kabuki, Ichikawa Danjūrō IX (1839–1903). He begins:

Speaking of being short of rice and sake, there is this funny story. When I had used up the money, I was living at the expense of someone named Takino at Umamichi 7-chōme, but I found it boring, so I went to take the cure at the

hot springs at Kusatsu in Jōshū province [now Gunma Prefecture]. There, I became friendly with Suzuki Yoshisaburō of Iwatsuki in Bushū [now in Saitama Prefecture].¹² He was a big sake brewer (*tsukurizakaya*) who said to me, “I want to offer a votive painting (*ema*) with a detailed illustration of the sake brewery to the Narita Fudō-sama [Fudō myōō], so would you mind coming to the house and doing a painting for me?” Thankful for this rain shower after a drought, I jumped at the opportunity; the brewery was a large place with at least one hundred workers going about brewing sake, batch after batch. “Well, *sensei*, please come this way,” and with that, I was directed to the best room in the house and treated like a guest. The votive painting that I did is even today in Narita (fig. 1).¹³

The day before returning, I drank from sunrise to sunset—perhaps even as much ten or eleven liters of sake. The lanterns were lit and I had another bout of drinking, and when the trays were changed, the owner brought out a set of sake cups in three sizes, the lucky numbers of three, five and seven *gō* respectively [1.14, 1.9 and 2.6 pints].¹⁴ First, the smallest of the three cups was filled, and I drank a viscous, aged sake, then I had the “five” and “seven” cups, and I drank them all with great skill—even the owner was surprised at the amount I drank. Well, I received two hundred yen for the work, and as I was thinking of returning to Tokyo—my daughter was tired of waiting for me—when I fell into a deep sleep. A fire then broke out and even I carried out tatami mats. The fire had little effect because it was such a large place, and later I found somewhere else really nice to stay. Anyway, as I was getting ready to leave in the morning, the owner said, “*Sensei*, because you like sake, please take this,” and he gave me a sake cask containing about twenty-seven liters. I was thankful for it, and put it in a hand-drawn cart where it dangled around—it looked just like a festival float. After we had gone just about four kilometers, I was able to draw out two cupfuls from the cask tap. The cart driver and I drank; you can imagine the amusing results. I danced on top of the cart, humming a tune while I noisily marked the time—tap, tap, tap. Passersby thought this funny and waved at us, and a group of kids gathered around and followed behind—it was all good fun. We loudly made our way to Ōsawa, but a number of ropes on the cask broke and we lost it. I had thought I had taken great pains to dance back to Tokyo in style, and well, it just wouldn’t do that I would have lost this expensive sake. The driver retraced our tracks, but to no avail. We reported the incident to the police and came up with this ridiculous argument: “I have just come from Iwatsuki and on the way, we lost a cask of sake. Naturally, if it is a question of money, it is quite trivial—this sake made us exceedingly drunk, as you can see. The proof is that I drank it and acted like a madman. The worst-case scenario would be if, by chance, someone drank it and did something violent; I would feel responsible, and that is why I reported its loss.” The police thought this funny and snickered, saying, “If it is found on the road and turned in, I’ll make sure to let you know straight away,” but in the end, this didn’t happen. So, in the end, I gave Tokyo the cold shoulder, went to Kusatsu where I made a friend and had great fun working for a month, for which I received two hundred yen.¹⁵ I could always anticipate about that much for a fee; I think that being in straitened circumstances is a cowardly or spineless excuse, but the only time I really regretted it was when I lost the sake cask.

Kunichika next turns his attention to actors:

I am an artist of actor portraits (*nigao-e*); therefore, I have kept company



FIG. 2. See page 133

with all the actors (fig. 2). From the very beginning, I did not take to Danjūrō; once when he gave a performance of the character Akatsuki Hoshigorō, I drew him in that role and Kikugorō as Oguri no Umakichi.¹⁶ At that time, Danjūrō had gone to Kikugorō's place and moaned . . . "It's a given that all these print artists make actors rich by doing their portraits—it might be a bit harsh, but Kunichika is really arrogant."¹⁷ He

had gone too far, and then when there was a performance of Saigō Takamori, well, I knowingly drew Danjūrō with bulging eyes, and I didn't include any of Takamori's young followers from the story.¹⁸ Danjūrō got wind of this, and because he was in such a huff about it, I finally decided never to design a triptych with the single figure of Danjūrō. Regardless of who asked, I turned them down. When Arashi Kichiroku—today he is known as Bandō Kichiroku [Mori Kichiroku, d. 1902]—heard about this, he voiced his opinion, and even my publisher(s) said, "Well, you should just put up with it and do it," so I did start doing them again.

This Kichiroku is an extremely shrewd character; he is also a good writer and has some flair. He has quite an unusual ability with words, something that I don't have, and is something limited to actors like Danjūrō and Kichiroku and others like the late Danroku. Danroku was a very charming guy—in fact, I supported him to a degree and gave him the poetry name Seishōan Hien, which is actually from the late actor's own verse: "A jumping monkey, the single green branch of the pine on the summit" (*saru tonde/hito eda aoshi/mine no matsu*); it's a good verse. He had a knack in grasping things, as in the following verse:

<i>Kaze yamite</i>	The breeze quietens,
<i>tanishi no ugoku</i>	the pond snails crawl
<i>mizuta kana</i>	in the paddy field.

I am not going to explain the story behind this haiku, except to say simply that a dog's birth into the world is easy; it is hard, though, for the pond snail—when a pond snail gives birth, it leaves its shell to lay its young on grasses or on the end of a pole to untangle itself. If the wind is strong, we say that it will scatter the shells, and the snails will have no home to return to. Even though we might understand this, no one would be able to compose a poem like this. A long time ago, Danroku lived in a shogunal area. At that time, a fire broke out in the neighborhood and burned everything to the ground as far as Ryōgoku Bridge.¹⁹ Danroku was burned out of house and home, and he trembled with fright next to only the luggage he managed to carry away with him. The teacher Shōro came and said, "So, here you are Danroku; you won't come up with a good one now, eh?" When he heard this, Danroku came to his senses and recited:

<i>Furukusa ya</i>	The old grasses
<i>yakete sawarazu</i>	were charred,
<i>tsukuzukushi</i>	the horsetails are unhindered.

Even Shōro was moved to respond:

<i>Shirauo no</i>	Are there tears
<i>me ni mo namida ka</i>	in the eyes of the whitebait, too?
<i>kono hikage</i>	Smoke from the fires.

I thought it remarkable for this type of thing to happen in the midst of a fire, and that my efforts would have fallen well short of his. Even Kichiroku had one, but then he is so talented and really better at witty passages. Around this time, some guests were invited to a restaurant, since the raconteur (*kōsbaku*) master [Shibata] Nankoku was leaving for Echigo. There was an impressive group of government officials there, and geisha were also engaged. One man of about seventy swaggered around, boasting about being in the presence of a high personage.²⁰ Nankoku is wondering, “Who is this old guy?” and when he had a good look, he realized it was Bandō Kichiroku. He thought this bizarre—this guy is quite worldly wise. Kichiroku then calls to Nankoku in the other room: “Oh, what a rare treat; let’s the two of us drink a cup of sake together for old time’s sake.” So we sat cross-legged and began to drink. Kichiroku lowered his voice and then says, “In my case, my daughter has had her name removed from the geisha register, and by coming here, can move up the social ladder as if a *kita no kata*.”²¹ Nankoku is not the type to tell lies and if so, then Kichiroku’s daughter is without a doubt a former geisha from Shinbashi named Suzume. Anyway, he is a clever man. Danjūrō might be more learned, he can draw a bit, but his many attempts at haiku are undistinguished, and after all is said and done, there is nothing that can be done if he is completely stuck-up about it.

The interviewer ends with this *nota bene*: “Moreover, from the time of the former government, Kunichika had the honor of producing masterworks to be sent to places like France, Austria and the United States.”²²

* * *

In the *Yomiuri* interview, Kunichika affords us what seems to be an intimate, if only fleeting, glimpse of his world, which thrives on his exchanges with other artists, literary figures and actors, and that ultimately molds his own personality and influences his art. Despite his versatility as an artist—working as both print designer and painter—it was his connection to the kabuki theater that defined him during his life and ever since. “I am,” Kunichika states in the interview, “an artist of *nigao-e*.” Writing Kunichika’s obituary in the *Yomiuri* (July 20, 1900), the print scholar Iijima Kyoshin (1841–1901) proclaimed, “Now that Kunichika is gone, actor portraits, too, will die out and this is truly lamentable.” The tradition of actor portraits would, however, undergo a revitalization in the early twentieth century in the work of *shin-hanga* (“new print”) artists such as Yamamura Kōka (1885–1942) and Natori Shunsen (1886–1960). ☞

This translation is based on my Ph.D. research at the University of Auckland, and I would like to thank Dr. Lawrence Marceau for his continued guidance, and the Naritasan Reikōkan, Narita, for its generosity in providing illustrative material.

NOTES

1. The Chōdatei inn was also a venue for gatherings hosted by artists and writers, and possibly a regular stop for Kunichika en route to the Yoshiwara pleasure quarter, where he was a frequent visitor.
2. The Hatsuneya, a *hikite-jaya* (literally, “led-by-the-hand tea shop”) was on the main boulevard (Nakanochō) in the Yoshiwara, where guests would gather and drink, and, if desired, would be escorted to first-class brothels (*ōmise*). *Hikite-jaya* also provided diversion by geisha and male entertainers (*taikomochi*). The brothel Shinagawarō (later Shinagawaya), on a main avenue (Ageyachō), was one such first-class house. The top prostitutes there received fees of one yen, among the highest price in the district. If Kunichika’s companions were indeed “big spenders,” it is not surprising that they would be visiting this brothel.
3. Kunichika’s use of “second rank” (*nimaimé*) points to Kinshū’s place below the top courtesan of the house. The name “Kinshū” is most likely an error; it was probably “Kinryū,” who is documented heading the list of women at the Shinagawarō in the early 1880s.
4. Kinshū could not be faulted for thinking that Kunichika, with his buffoonish behavior, and in the company of big spenders, was a talentless male entertainer, who often tagged along with rich men. Perhaps that would explain her aloof stance toward him.
5. Kunichika describes Kinshū’s attendant as being an older woman, who might have been a courtesan, now freed under the Prostitute Emancipation Act of 1872. With nowhere to go, perhaps she chose to remain in the quarter as an attendant to a higher-ranking prostitute. After 1872, women opted to become or remain prostitutes, and were apparently not sold into service as had earlier been the case.
6. Her statement about the rarity of Kunichika’s calligraphic works contains an element of truth, since to date, all documented paintings by Kunichika are figurative compositions or outdoor scenes.
7. “Hayashi Daigaku no Kami” is a hereditary title for the heads of the Hayashi-school lineage of Neo-Confucian scholars who operated their official academy, Yushima Seidō (Sage’s Hall) during the Edo period. The Academy was eventually relocated to the Shōheizaka in Yushima and renamed Shōheizaka Gakumonjo (Shōhei Academy). Kunichika is most likely referring to the last in the line, Hayashi Gakusai (1833–1906), who succeeded to the title Hayashi Daigaku no Kami XII in 1859.
8. *Kagatobi* (Kaga roofer) refers to the men and their squads who were responsible for the protection of the Edo estates of the Maeda daimyo of Kaga (present-day Kanazawa Prefecture) as well as the Yushima Seidō. They were especially admired for their striking regalia and acts of firefighting, including acrobatic bravura atop ladders and poles.
9. Kunichika uses the colorful expression to describe Uta’s deception: “*akai ifuku o kiseru*” (to don a red robe).
10. The name-suffix “*kengyō*” indicated someone allied with the highest tier of blind court musicians.
11. Even though Kunichika does not specify whom he means by the term *kintei-sama*, the implication is that of the emperor.
12. Iwatsuki corresponds today with Iwatsuki Ward in the eastern part of Saitama City in southeastern Saitama Prefecture; it was a stopover on the *onaridō*, the route used by the Tokugawa shogunate when making pilgrimages to their mausoleum, Nikkō Tōshōgū.
13. *The Process of Brewing Sake (Shujō isshiki no zu)* painting is now housed in the Narita Reikōkan, a museum affiliated with the Naritasan Shinshō Temple to which it would have been offered. Of the sixteen brewery vignettes, the eleventh is no longer extant. A painting of the courtesan Takao, also dated “1882 Iwatsuki” and signed by Kunichika, verifies that he took on other commissions during his Iwatsuki trip (see Amy Reigle Newland with Makuuchi Tatsuji, “The Courtesan Takao’ by Toyohara Kunichika,” *Andon* 83 [2008]: 30). Judging from the rather naive style of some of the Iwatsuki votive paintings, it could be that Kunichika left the less-important aspects of the work to his student Chikaharu while he was engaged with other commissions like the Takao painting, not to mention the bouts of dedicated drinking that he colorfully describes in the interview.
14. One *gō* equals about .381 pints (180 ml), so they would have been approximately 1.14

pints (540 ml), 1.9 pints (900 ml), and 2.6 pints (1230 ml), accordingly.

15. Kunichika's mention of the fee he received is revealing. A comparison of salaries of around the same period indicates that in 1881, for example, a professor at Tokyo University could expect to receive a monthly salary of from three hundred to four hundred yen; an assistant professor earned about half that sum. A look at the earning potential of Kunichika's contemporaries shows that his drinking mate Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831–1889) earned about as much as one hundred sixty yen or as little as fifty yen in 1887. Thanks to Shigeru Oikawa for providing the source.

16. The print referred to by Kunichika of Danjūrō IX as Akatsuki Hoshigorō (this should read Akatsuki Hoshiemon) and Onoe Kikugorō V as Oguri no Umakichi could be among the triptychs dated 15 October 1878, which coincided with the opening performance on that day at the Shintomi Theater in Tokyo of the seven-act play by Kawatake Mokuami (1816–1893), *Jitsugetsusei kyōwa seidan*, a dramatization of the Enmeiin affair of 1803. Examples appear on the website (<www.enpaku.waseda.ac.jp/db/enpakunishik>) of the Tsubouchi Memorial Theater Museum, Waseda University, Tokyo (e.g., 101-4604-4606).

17. An item in the *Yomiuri* newspaper of November 15, 1893, reports that Danjūrō IX, not wanting to be outdone by Onoe Kikugorō V in the 1893–94 print series *One Hundred Roles of Baikō* [Onoe Kikugorō V] (*Baikō hyakushū*, illustrated by Kunichika and with verse by Shin (Kikakudō) Eiki, 1823–1904), approached Kunichika and offered him twice as much money to produce a set of his own one hundred roles. [For a print from the series *One Hundred Roles of Ichikawa Danjūrō*, see figure 4 in Samuel L. Leiter, “Edo Kabuki: The Actor's World” in this issue. Ed.] Seen in the light of the *Yomiuri* news item, Danjūrō's comments about *nigao-e* masters as a supposed “necessary evil” suggest that until the advent of other reprographic forms of portraiture such as photography for marketing their “brand” image to the public, actors were quite dependent on woodblock-print designers as conduits for public exposure. The *Yomiuri* news item also demonstrates that actors vied openly with each other in securing print commissions to promote their image and outdo others. Certainly by 1893, when Danjūrō commis-

sioned Kunichika, the artist would have been recognized as the most accomplished *nigao-e* master in the field, and to have a set designed by him could only have augmented Danjūrō's celebrity status in a play of one-upmanship with his colleague Kikugorō.

18. The mention of the character of Saigō Takamori (1827–1877) and his three child retainers invites an association with another Kawatake Mokuami play, *The Morning East Wind Clearing the Clouds of the Southwest* (*Okige no kumo harau asagochi*), which dramatized events from Japan's internecine Seinan War (1877). It debuted in March 1878 at the Shintomi Theater. At that time, illustrations of the play dominated Kunichika's actor *nigao-e*, but performances appeared *before* the *Jitsugetsusei kyōwa seidan* mentioned above and, therefore, does not follow Kunichika's chronology of events as told in the interview. Examples appear on the website (<www.enpaku.waseda.ac.jp/db/enpakunishik>) of the Tsubouchi Memorial Theater Museum, Waseda University, Tokyo (e.g., 101-5307-5309).

19. Kunichika's description suggests it was the conflagration of January 26, 1881, one of the most destructive in Meiji-period Tokyo. It broke out in the Kanda district and spread to the Ryōgoku Bridge, jumping across the Sumida River to the eastern wards. In its wake, over ten thousand buildings were destroyed.

20. Kunichika uses the expression “*gozen-gozen to iwarete*,” to mean a person of high standing. It could imply a Meiji politician or perhaps, but less likely, someone affiliated with the imperial house.

21. *Kita no kata* (the northern side) refers to the primary wife of a court noble, who enjoyed greater status than other wives, and whose domain was the northern pavilion. Perhaps Kichiroku's daughter Suzume, a former geisha, was now married or for other reasons somehow became accepted in the elite circles of Meiji politicians. Why she was welcomed at these soirees is unclear, but it was not unheard for geisha to be released from their contracts or for them to marry Meiji political leaders.

22. For example, Kunichika is thought to have been among a group of artists selected to exhibit paintings in the 1867 Exposition Universelle de Paris, and one of his works from the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exhibition is housed in the Tokyo National Museum.

REVIEW ARTICLES

The Third Mind

RYAN HOLMBERG

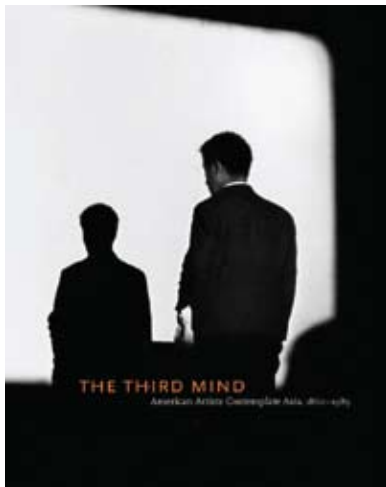


FIG. 1. Catalogue cover

The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989.

By Alexandra Munroe. New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2009. 439 pages, including appendices (chronology, artist biographies and bibliography). 7-page index available online at <<http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/exhibitions/publications/exhibition-titles>>. 99 color and black-and-white figure illustrations; 169 color and black-and-white plates; 29 black-and-white illustrations in chronology. Cloth \$85; Softcover \$55

“Affirmative Orientalism” was a phrase used by intellectual historian J. J. Clarke to describe episodes in the consumption of Asia and the Middle East by Western powers that do not necessarily correspond to the dynamics of colonial or imperial control typically associated with the term Orientalism in postcolonial discourse (p. 26). It is also a phrase that Alexandra Munroe, Senior Curator of Asian Art at the Guggenheim Museum, found resonant for *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, her gigantic survey of the impact of Asian art and thought on American artists from Aestheticism in the nineteenth century to performance and video work in the 1980s (fig. 1). In between, the exhibition considered Asian influences upon, among other figures and movements: Stieglitz and his *Camera Work* associates; Arthur Wesley Dow; writers from Pound to the Beats; mid-century abstract and nonfigurative painters from the East and West Coasts; John Cage and the Neo-Avant Garde; Ad Reinhardt and Minimalism; and modern experimental music. *The Third Mind* was no doubt ambitious, setting out to trace, over a period of one hundred and thirty years, “how the art, literature, and philosophical systems of ‘the East’ became known, reconstructed, and transformed within American cultural and intellectual currents, influencing the articulation of new visual and conceptual languages” (p. 21). To this end, the exhibition mounted approximately two hundred and seventy objects from over one hundred artists across almost thirty-five thousand feet of exhibition space, including an extensive performance and screening program. The budget was surely in the multiple millions, made possible by substantial grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities; The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation; Terra Foundation for American Art; The Rosenkranz Foundation; Henry Luce Foundation; and other philanthropic powerhouses. *The Third Mind* promised comprehensiveness and had the resources to deliver. Yet, the story it told of American art and Asia was partial to such a degree and

in such a way that ultimately, the exhibition can be judged to have mainly reinforced popular clichés concerning Asia, and to have confirmed for the viewer that the Asia factor in modern and contemporary Western art is either an innocuous formal or iconographical issue or, worse, an embarrassment best ignored. “Our challenge has been to remain critical of the process of constructing the East as a reductive suit of aesthetic, philosophical, and cultural concepts,” Munroe writes in her introduction (p. 26). In this, the exhibition failed, and “affirmative Orientalism” can stand as a cipher for all that is wrong with *The Third Mind*.

The seven sections of the exhibition proceeded more or less chronologically from the second floor up. “Aestheticism and Japan” covered familiar



FIG. 2. Arthur Wesley Dow. *August Moon*. c. 1905. Color woodcut. 13.5 x 18.5 cm. Collection of Edgar Smith, New York. Photo: David Heald, Courtesy the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

ground: comparisons between the Nocturnes of Whistler and the landscapes of Hiroshige; the Utamaro-inspired prints of Mary Cassatt; and John La Farge’s stained glass flora and watercolor sketches from his trip to Japan in the late 1880s. In the same side gallery, “Landscapes of the Mind” focused on the impact of Arthur Wesley Dow’s teaching and writing on artists such as Arthur Dove, Georgia O’Keeffe and photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn (fig. 2). This part of “Landscape of the Mind” was clear in its presentation, but its

next forty-plus years were fuzzy. The Photo-Secession—one of the greatest popularizers of Japanese compositional conventions in the early twentieth century—was represented by a handful of photographs in which Japanese elements were tenuous at best, despite available alternatives. The facing wall was hung with a random smattering of paintings spanning four decades and created in diverse locations: San Francisco, Seattle, New York and expatriate Paris. The best-known names here were Marsden Hartley, Mark Tobey and Yasuo Kuniyoshi, the last represented by *This Is My Playground* (1947), an oil painting depicting a Japanese flag (the sun painted black) hanging from a singed branch in a bombed-out town—the *only* work of art in the entire show to take on social or historical themes directly. Nearby were works by painters whose retreat to Fauvism, graphism and expressionism explain their marginality in the historical record.

The next section of the exhibition, “Ezra Pound, Modern Poetry, and Dance Theater,” was an interesting one. It included various texts and documents—Ernest Fenollosa’s posthumous *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* (1918), Pound’s *Cathay* (1915), a video of Martha Graham’s *Frontier* (1935)—that attest to the varied adaptations of East Asian writing, poetry and theatrical modes in American avant-garde art between the 1910s and 1930s. The works of this section were as much a

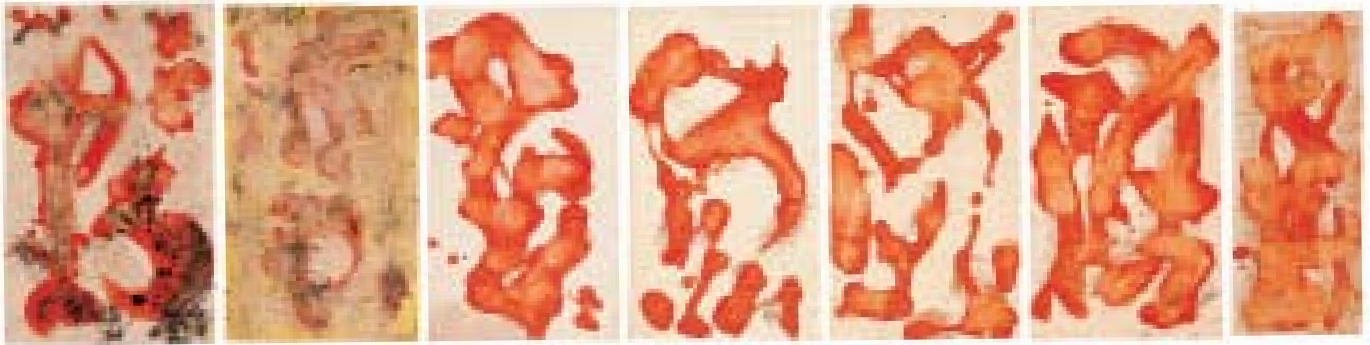


FIG. 3. Jackson Pollock. *Seven Red Paintings*. c. 1950. Oil on canvas, in six parts, and enamel on canvas. Each, minimum 50.8 x 20.3 cm; maximum 54.6 x 33 cm approx. Private collection, Berlin. © The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Jochen Littkemann, Berlin

FIG. 4. Mark Tobey. *Crystallizations*. 1944. Tempera on board. 45.7 x 33 cm. Iris and Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, Mabel Ashley Kizer Fund, Gift of Melitta and Rex Vaughan, and Modern and Contemporary Acquisitions Fund. © Mark Tobey Estate/Seattle Art Museum. Photo: M. Lee Fatherree Photography



prelude for literature and performance of the postwar era as evolutions of nineteenth-century Orientalism. Granted, it is difficult to articulate literary and performance theory and genealogies within the context of an art exhibition. But the layout of *The Third Mind* served to strand them fully. For immediately following was a section with which Pound or Graham had little to do: “Calligraphy and Metaphysics: The Asian Dimension of Postwar Abstract Art.” It presented the familiar story of Asian influence on American visual artists after World War II, focusing on the New York School and its (sometimes conflicted) admiration of East Asian calligraphy and ink painting. True, sculptor David Smith and painter Franz Kline were preceded in their interest in the Chinese grapheme by Fenollosa and Pound, but Imagist condensation and the polyglot *Cantos* are far cries from explorations of gesture and facture by the New York School. An obscure Pollock series was included here: *Seven Red Paintings* (c. 1950). Consisting of seven pseudographs in red house paint on white primed canvas, the set argued well the show’s thesis (fig. 3). Yet, as the lone Pollock, it gave the false impression that East Asian calligraphy was at the center of Pollock’s practice rather than, as was the case, grafted onto already established interests in expressionism and automatism. There were four more Tobey’s, a statement within a section otherwise dominated by New York-based artists (fig. 4). One wonders why other Northwest painters such as Kenneth Callahan and Paul Horiuchi, just as fitting for this segment, were instead consigned to a back corner of the earlier “Landscape of the Mind.” A critical mass of West Coast expressionists would have created a welcome counter to Manhattan as sole crucible of mid-century adaptation of East Asian art to the language of modernist abstraction.

At this point, one entered the heart of *The Third Mind*: “Buddhism and the Neo-Avant-Garde.” The term Neo-Avant-Garde was used loosely to include not just those American artists who reworked the methods of the historical avant-garde for postwar concerns—John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg and Fluxus—but also Beat authors and Bay Area conceptual artists. The prime Asian source in all of this was Zen, particularly as interpreted and popularized by D. T. Suzuki in his many published writings and in his lectures at Columbia between 1952 and 1957. John Cage and his adaptation of Zen was emphasized in the exhibition didactics and catalogue. Despite his monumental significance for postwar art in general, and

the dissemination of Zen-ist ideas within that community, Cage got short shrift in the display. His work was stuck in a back corner of a side gallery, and his music scores were blocked from full view by pillars. *The Third Mind* gave greater space to his lesser acolytes. Fluxus-related work is never much to look at, and despite the movement's centrality to *The Third Mind* and the number of works exhibited, I suspect its objects failed to register for most visitors. This is a moment in the history of postwar art better represented through writing, and indeed, the catalogue's treatment of the Cage effect is the longest of all.

The final outpost of historical interest was a small room that held a thin offering of Beat documents: Allen Ginsberg's *Mind Breaths* collection (1978);



FIG. 5. Jack Kerouac. *Face of the Buddha*. c. 1958. Pencil on paper. 16.5 x 20.9 cm. Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. © John Sampas, The Estate of Stella Sampas Kerouac

FIG. 6. Jordan Belson. *Samadhi*. 1967. 16mm color film, with sound. 6 minutes. © Jordan Belson, courtesy Center for Visual Music

a funny photograph of him standing naked with a bamboo spear on the shoals of the Sea of Japan (1963); a pencil drawing of the *Face of the Buddha* by Jack Kerouac (c. 1958) (fig. 5); and labyrinthine “cut-up” collages by William Burroughs and Brion Gysin (c. 1965) first published in a book from which Munroe took the exhibition's name: *The Third Mind* (1978). The remainder of “Buddhism and the Neo-Avant-Garde” fused imperceptibly with the last two sections of the exhibition. A run of Bay Area conceptual artists and their versions of mainly Buddhist motifs preceded the most gratuitous inclusion of the show: Andy Warhol's *Sleep* (1963). According to the exhibition catalogue, the sleeping subject of this famous five-and-a-half-hour experimental film, the minor Beat poet John Giorno, was a “Tantric Buddhist practitioner” (p. 213). But the film's duration and lack of incident can only, by a long stretch of the imagination, be linked to Asian-inspired modes of perception and consciousness.

“Art of Perceptual Experience: Pure Abstraction and Ecstatic Minimalism,” which came next, focused on artists such as Ad Reinhardt and James Turrell for whom unmediated optical experiences are analogous to exalted mystical ones. These post-Beat segments of *The Third Mind* were both the largest and the most difficult. Difficult not because of the intellectual demands of the work, but because the world it represents is just plain dull. *The Third Mind* did bring to a wider audience obscure work—from



FIG. 7a, b. Ann Hamilton. *human carriage*. 2009. Installation views: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2009. Photo: David Heald

Jordan Belson’s film *Samadhi* (1967) (fig. 6) to Bay Area conceptual artists Tom Marioni and David Ireland—that has otherwise been shunned for its over-earnest derivations of Hindu and Buddhist metaphysical concepts and ritual practices. Still, the number of works exhibited was out of all proportion to their interest or importance. Instead of rebalancing the art historical record, the large volume tipped over the revisionist boat. The second half of *The Third Mind* drowned in kitsch figurations of “the mystic East.”

The final section, “Experiential Performance Art: The Aesthetics of Time,” had little narrative or thematic coherence. It focused on video and performance from the 1970s through 1980s, injecting a shot of identity politics into a show otherwise allergic to such issues. As a whole, the concluding section had the effect of a footnote to the concerns of the previous decade. The culminating works were particularly disappointing. In the first of two large galleries on the top floor of the Guggenheim was Bill Viola’s *Room for St. John of the Cross* (1983), a mixed sound and video installation that is intended to be a meditation on the sixteenth-century Spanish Christian mystic. The work was produced soon after Viola’s eighteen-month trip to Japan between 1980 and 1981 to study Zen meditation and ink painting. The work speaks of the impact of that trip, but in a code unexplained by the exhibition. It represents something that recurs throughout Viola’s career and that is the generalization of mystical traditions under the guise of cultural ecumenicalism. At times, *The Third Mind* was guilty of a similar universalist approach, which in art might generate compelling forms and metaphors, but in scholarship opens the door to imprecision and a policy of anything-goes. A case in point is Tehching Hsieh’s *Punching the Time Clock on the Hour, One Year Performance* (April 11, 1980–April 11, 1981), in the second and last of the top-floor galleries. It consisted of photographic documents, punch cards, and various relics of the performance described in its title. The work is a monument to performance endurance and the absurd sacrifices made in the name of art, but what it had to do with Asia, aside from the artist’s nation of origin (Taiwan), is anybody’s guess.

Tying *The Third Mind* together, and intending to symbolize its core themes, was Ann Hamilton’s *human carriage* (2009), specially commissioned for the show. It began at the top of the balustrade of the Guggenheim’s rotunda,

circled down upon the walls of its spiral and terminated at the show's entry. At the top was a long metal bookshelf with packets of book pages bound, cut and feathered to look like fronds or dusters. Printed on these pages were various texts on Asian art and philosophy that have been important to American artists over the years (fig. 7a). At regular intervals, a group of these packets was loaded by an employee of Hamilton's studio onto a giant scale overhanging the central void of the rotunda (fig. 7b). When the calculated volume was reached, the packets were sent down a spiral track, first fast, then slowly as they approached bottom, whereupon they entered a netted, canopylike space, and with a ding upon a Tibetan cymbal were released in a pile into the emptied rotunda pool. While a good use of the rotunda space and a clear crowd pleaser, *human carriage* as a cultural statement is less satisfying. With its mound of unread and unreadable printed texts, it repeats the fetishizing of books in contemporary culture, in which, from loft apartments to shop windows, books are handled and installed methodically and prominently as cultural capital, without measure of relation to knowledge, ideas or creativity. According to the catalogue, *human carriage* included texts from books on "Asian philosophy, religion, and aesthetics" (p. 342). These may be fields most important to the artists included in *The Third Mind*, but they are not the only sources available or read by American artists. What of history, politics and the social sciences? Therefore, what Munroe writes of Hamilton in the catalogue—"Her insight offers a key to seeing and understanding the art presented in *The Third Mind*. It does not illustrate its textual sources; it embodies them"—(p. 33) does not necessarily bode well for the show. Ending at the beginning of the ramp, *human carriage* was likely the first work one saw entering the show. Beginning at the end of the show, it was one of the last works one saw exiting. The intermittent coursing sound and its concluding chime reminded one of its presence—and the persistence of a very specific kind of learning from Asia—throughout.

The Third Mind was long overdue. Its ambition is worthy: to prove the centrality of Asia in understanding modern and contemporary art, and thereby to revise the Euro-American bias of the mainstream art-historical record. This is a tall order, demanding the kind of expansive panoply that Munroe was able to marshal. But the show had two fundamental flaws. First, there was a lot of work, but not always the best, and too much for a viewer to process in reasonable time. The significance or Asian factor of the exhibits was not always well explained in wall or catalogue texts, leaving one awash in a sea of general impressions and names. Second, *The Third Mind* was marred by manifold imbalances: geographical, ideological (both in the type of art and in the political worldview privileged) and racial. These flaws constitute a missed opportunity; when will there ever be another exhibition or catalogue of this magnitude on this subject? The legacy is more serious. Given the prominence of the Guggenheim, *The Third Mind* is bound to shape conceptions of Asia within modern and contemporary art for some time. Alexandra Munroe's preeminence in the field of modern and contemporary Asian art ensures that the show's framing of individual works and representations of wider historical trajectories will perpetuate within future

scholarship and exhibitions. So while its razzmatazz might have made *The Third Mind* look, to its detractors, like nothing more than a harmless good time, its immense authority means otherwise. For better or worse, *The Third Mind* is now *the* statement on American art and Asia.

The most benign criticism that can be made of *The Third Mind* is that it was Japanocentric. In her introduction to the catalogue, Munroe defines the geographical bounds of Asia as extending as far west as Pakistan and as far south as Indonesia (pp. 27–28). But given the almost complete neglect of these regions in the show, naming Islamic and Third World Asia is a token gesture. The Japan focus is justified by the relative influence of Japanese art on modern and contemporary American artists, from the obsession of American aesthetes like Whistler and Dow with Japanese woodblock prints, to the popularization of Zen among artists after World War II. Hindu and Himalayan Buddhist sources were also prevalent, particularly as the show moved into the late 1960s, but never are they treated with the focus or specificity of those derived from Japan. The rest of Asia was subsumed within a generalized *mélange* of Asian mysticism.

The core prejudice is suggested in the show's subtitle. *The Third Mind* was to consider artists who “contemplate” Asia over those whose work represents other types of cognitive relationship. The closest Munroe gets to a concrete definition of the verb is a citation of Ad Reinhardt's exclusionary definition of art making and art viewing as “the contemplative act—continuous, absorbed, attention” (p. 289). Reinhardt would have admitted that most modern American art does not accord with this “contemplative” ideal, crisscrossed as it was, in his time, by other concerns—Depression-era leftism, wartime surrealism, postwar existentialism and burgeoning consumer culture—in which the act of making or viewing art emerged from fractured or impulsive modes of attention versus continuous and absorbed ones, or from a political perspective that, whether earnest or ironical, did not distinguish between perceptual experience and social concerns. Nonetheless, in describing moments of American artistic engagement with Asia, the application of the “contemplative” model is justified in many cases. As *The Third Mind* demonstrates, much of what one finds is work more or less in accord with an aesthetic comportment of absorbed disinterest, whether it be of a formalist nature (Aestheticism or 1950s expressionist graphism) or of an experiential nature (the Transcendentalists, the Beats, Bay Area conceptual art).

In all of this, the nineteenth-century “mystic East” perseveres, in which Asia is conceived, not as a place with a complicated and diverse modern history, but rather (as is often pointed out in postcolonial critique) as a timeless and more or less homogenous “ideal” of metaphysical propositions and aesthetic self-conduct. The archive of such material is extensive, as *The Third Mind* demonstrated. But there are reasons Asian-inflected works of art have been dropped from the mainstream record. *The Third Mind* did not take on the challenge of detractors, who are legion now, and were at the time. *The Third Mind* might have argued for the importance of Asia in understanding American art, but it did not argue persuasively for why

one should care about the “contemplative” mode, which now, as then, looks more mystified than mystical.

It is important to mention that the “contemplative” has long been Munroe’s choice description of artists’ engagement with the world. Through her many exhibitions, she has favored artists for whom art practice accords either with a romantic idea of introspection and self-expression or with an idealist abstraction of the body in time and space divorced from historical, social or political determinants. *The Third Mind* was not the first Munroe exhibition in which this preference for certain varieties of aesthetic experience led to imbalances in art historical representation. “Scream Against the Sky: Japanese Art Since 1945” (1994, at the former Guggenheim Museum SoHo), for example, gave cursory treatment to reportage painting and socially engaged photography, neglected the erotic and the middle-brow and low-brow as defining categories after 1970 and heavily emphasized Fluxus (repeated in *The Third Mind*) and the Zen and phenomenology-inspired Mono-ha group. In the *Third Mind* catalogue, Munroe upholds “the contemplative experience and self-transformative role of art itself” (p. 22) as if these were art’s only important functions. She writes of the mid-century shift from “the conception of art as an object of visual delight to an experiential activity that unfolds in time and space”—as if the entire social and political vocation of modernism had never existed (p. 22). She pictures the 1960s through the 1980s as if the various political strains of protest art, identity politics and postmodernism were a minor and negligible hum below a dominant chord of expanding “experiential” modes into new media and new visual and performance terrains. In sum, vast tracts of artistic production that diverge or dissent from the narcissistic “contemplative” tradition—mainly ones motivated by social or political interest—were curated out of *The Third Mind*.

The Third Mind spans one hundred and thirty years of work, but the concentration of the exhibition was the late 1950s to early 1970s; of the approximately two hundred and seventy works in the show, a third came from this period. The earlier segments of the exhibition and catalogue were more or less allowed to run on auto, introducing a few new works and connections, but otherwise plying established art historical narratives. The prime curatorial target was the much vaunted 1960s, the present heart of modern and contemporary art studies. Yet, it was precisely in its presentation of this period that *The Third Mind* was most problematic.

Part of the problem was simple inconsistency and lack of interpretive subtlety. For example, in her introduction, Munroe reprimands existing scholarship for reducing Cage to Zen, but in her essay on “Buddhism and the Neo-Avant-Garde,” does just that. She credits Cage’s ideas on silence, duration, focalization and chance to contact with Zen, with passing or no mention of Schoenberg, Henry Cowell, Satie, African percussion, the I Ching, Daoism, Indonesian gamelan and (late in his life) the classical Japanese instrument the *shō* (compare p. 22 with pp. 199–208). Musicologist David W. Patterson’s catalogue essay on “Asian Structures in Modern Composition” provides a rounder view, emphasizing the South and Southeast

Asian derivation of most Asia-inspired experiments in modern Western music. Likewise for Rauschenberg, Johns and Warhol, all of whom are introduced as products of Asian influence; but *how* is not always exactly clear, and even when it is, it is on the most superficial or tenuous terms, again with no mention of indispensable European or American foundations to their art like collage, the found object, the readymade or the monochrome. Again, I think the exhibition's aims are commendable, but the execution was wanting and its eagerness produced a picture that struck anyone with an elementary knowledge of contemporary art as reductive.

THE CATALOGUE

Has there been an exhibition catalogue in which the lead contributors undermine the curator's perspective? In his essay "Orientalism, South Asia, and the Discourse of World Religions," Richard King, author of *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and "The Mystic East"* (1999), describes the process by which devotional practices in South Asia were distilled and homogenized within Western scholarship from the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries to better conform with Protestant notions of religion and its emphasis on "the interior life of the individual" versus "the outer life of ritual" (p. 40). King recounts how the creation of a "universalistic and all-embracing Hinduism" in the nineteenth century served ultimately instrumental ends for a European and later American audience seeking "a curative to what some saw as the nihilism, decadence, and materialism of modern Western culture" (p. 41). As the legacy of this reductive regard of South Asia, King points to "the development of the humanistic and transpersonal psychologies that took root in American popular culture, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century when Orientalist assumptions about the spiritual East flourished as an integral part of countercultural movements such as the Beats and the hippies as well as New Age spiritualities and alternative therapies" (p. 42). From this perspective, the intellectual pedigree of most of the artists in *The Third Mind*, and particularly that of the Beat generation and after, makes them look like neither the free thinkers nor revolutionaries Munroe makes them out to be, but as nineteenth-century Orientalists.

Japanologist Harry Harootunian's contribution, "Postwar America and the Aura of Asia," is more devastating. Though a welcome change of theme in the ongoing deconstruction of postwar Zen-ism, Harootunian's essay presents the Beats and Neo-Avant-Garde, with their emphasis on personal "experience," as the height of political regression. He picks up where King leaves off, describing how after World War II the "mystic East," though revised in some of its details, continued in its earlier therapeutic capacity against the negative effects of Western modernity. This old dynamic, Harootunian argues, should be understood in the postwar period in relationship to efforts promoted in American religious and philosophical debates, beginning with F. S. C. Northrop's influential *The Meeting of East and West* (1946), "to imagine a world without conflict and to configure a new cultural order capable of overcoming the particularisms of nation-

states and civilizations that had driven the world toward self-destruction” (p. 45). For Harootunian, the “valorization of the spiritual” in this context is not to be embraced, for as it spread among generations of postwar Americans, it “came to bracket the very historicity of the Cold War conflict people were living daily” (p. 47). D. T. Suzuki—otherwise a hero in *The Third Mind* for his galvanizing influence upon the Beat generation and Neo-Avant-garde—comes under massive fire. On Suzuki’s famous espousal of “pure experience,” Harootunian writes: “The real thrust and effect of Suzuki’s popularization of Zen Buddhism in postwar America was to empty—to depoliticize—the everyday of considerations of politics and ideology, turning people’s minds away from both attributes because they were seen as characterizing the ‘false consciousness’ and distortion of Soviet Union communism” (p. 50). As for the Japanese “cultural liberalism” that underpinned Suzuki’s Zen, a defanged liberalism of the 1930s that promoted the tranquil and self-fulfilling fusion of art and private life over public civic commitments and engagements, Harootunian describes it as fitting well with “the postwar and Cold War American emphasis on ‘normative’ values and consensus rather than politics and ideology” (p. 50).

It is welcome but surprising to find such sentiments in *The Third Mind*, given Munroe’s support of the turn to “experiential and contemplative modes” of art practice in the 1950s and 1960s. The recommended picture is quite at odds with what Munroe offers: postwar American art as a monumental resurgence of Orientalist assumptions and a thorough depoliticizing within cultural practice. Munroe’s essays register faint recognition of the ramifications of the critiques harbored between her catalogue’s covers. Like the spiritualists of the 1950s and 1960s, Munroe is guilty of bracketing out “politics and ideology” in favor of idealist notions of bodily and perceptual experience.

This brings me to the title of the exhibition and book. *The Third Mind* took its name from William Burroughs and Brion Gysin, writer, visual artist and inventor of the stroboscopic cult object, the “dreamachine.” They first used “third mind” in the mid-1960s to describe the greatness of “cut-ups,” a method derived from collage in which found texts are cut and spliced arbitrarily, regarded by Burroughs as a breakthrough for literary form, capable of generating fresh syntax and narrative far superior to any working process based in intention. Related texts were collected and published in 1978 under the title *The Third Mind*. For Burroughs and Gysin, the phrase describes the higher creative state achieved specifically by the cut-ups, but possible in many situations of collaboration, where two minds—as the case of the cut-ups show, the second collaborator need not be present—dissolve into a higher third mind. Munroe explains her adoption of the phrase as follows: “This idea evokes the eclectic yet purposeful method by which American artists often appropriated material from Asia to create new forms, structures, and meanings in their own art. Misreadings, misunderstandings, denials, and imaginary projections emerge as important iterations of this individual, transcultural process” (p. 25). This is a poor application of Burroughs and Gysin, who conceived the “third mind” as stemming from collaboration or the withdrawal of authorial intention,

precisely against the sort of unilateral appropriation and pedestrian networks of influence that the Guggenheim show represented.

What the catalogue does not tell us is that Burroughs and Gysin themselves took the name and concept from somewhere else: Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich* (1937), a financial self-help book of enormous commercial success, remaining in print in multiple editions to the present. Supported by Andrew Carnegie, Hill interviewed scores of the world's (and especially America's) most powerful and successful entrepreneurs, businessmen and politicians, among them Edison, Ford, Rockefeller, Roosevelt and Stalin. Based on the experiences and advice of these eminent men, *Think and Grow Rich* aimed to provide a formula for financial success for everyman. Hill came up with various preconditions, notably burning desire, total self-confidence, iron persistence and collaboration. Out of the last, Hill argued, emerged a superior "third mind" capable of things greater than isolated minds could ever achieve. In a line cited by Burroughs: "No two minds ever come together without, thereby, creating a third, invisible, intangible force which may be likened to a third mind."¹ For Hill, the "third mind" had no mystical or emancipatory connotations; it was a device for innovation, growth and accumulation within a capitalist context, desirable for the explicit ends of financial gain and power. Clearly, the phrase came to mean something different for Burroughs and Gysin, and something different still for Munroe. But given the association of "the mystic East" with money-making tactics since the New Age 1970s, created here is a disconcerting resonance between the entrepreneurial capitalist and the vanguard artist.

The Third Mind was "thirdless" in another, more pressing way. After the essays by King and Harootunian, there should have been an additional discussion of Asia as a political rather than aesthetic and spiritual model for the Cold War scene. With the Orientalist underpinnings of the West's appropriation of the "mystic East" established by King, and the Cold War ideological context of "experience" by Harootunian, what was next needed was an assessment of Asia as frontier of the Second World and brethren of the Third World. The catalogue essays hold to the standard East–West division, articulated largely in nineteenth-century terms of a spiritual and intuitive East versus rationalistic and materialistic West, and rarely in its Cold War rearticulation of Red East versus Capitalist West. As for the North–South axis, it functionally does not exist in *The Third Mind*, with the result that South and Southeast Asia fail to appear as the Third World. Indian Independence, the 1955 Bandung Conference, the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam are thereby left off the dossier on Asia's role in global politics and culture.² This is all the more striking given the title of the exhibition. Since the late 1960s, the idea of "thirdness" has described cultural practices opposed to the very worldview dominating *The Third Mind*: that of supposedly apolitical, self-contented white men of the First World. There has been, for example, an activist Third Cinema, a postcolonial Third Text of cultural criticism and a Thirdspace urbanism considering the links between physical space and power. Against this, *The Third Mind* offers a thoroughly "thirdless"

Asia—even a “secondless” Asia given its deletion of Communism from the historical record—that is the perfect image of the Western reduction of the world to depoliticized reflections of itself, precisely the manner of monocular examining that the critical theory of “thirdness” has long opposed.

To represent this Third Asia, a curator could take various tacks. First, the relationship between the antiwar movement and 1960s mysticism could be better fleshed out, if only to describe the introversion as a flight or dissension from participation in American state-sponsored violence. One might explore the impact of Gandhi’s nonviolence upon postwar American politics and art. Thomas Merton, an important figure in the “Buddhism and the Neo-Avant-Garde” and “Ecstatic Minimalism” (within “Art of Perceptual Experience”) sections of the exhibition for his writings on Buddhist and Hindu mystics, edited and introduced a popular anthology of Gandhi’s words on the subject in 1965. It would be instructive to show how something as iconic as Yoko Ono and John Lennon’s “Bed-in” (1969) represents a creative distortion of Gandhian principles. Performance-art historian Kristine Stiles gestures in this direction by mentioning the importance of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) for the American Civil Rights Movement in the closing essay of *The Third Mind* catalogue, but she does so just in passing—a sentence and an endnote—reflecting the more general marginalization of political and social issues in *The Third Mind* (p. 334).

Second, some recognition could be made of art in direct response to the Vietnam War, a large body of work in which the American artist’s relationship to Asia is clearly not one of “contemplation” but of moral concern or outrage. Relevant material is published in Lucy Lippard’s *A Different War: Vietnam in Art* (1990), an exhibition for the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington, that looked at how American artists have responded to the Vietnam War from the commencement of hostilities in 1965 to 1990. The art historian Alexander Dumbadze has recently proposed some interesting connections in this context, linking the early 1970s performances of Chris Burden and their use of fire to political acts of self-immolation in protest against American military actions in Vietnam and the widely disseminated images of Vietnamese burned with napalm.³ *The Third Mind* inadvertently acknowledges the Vietnam theme by including Allen Ginsberg’s *Mind Breaths* (1978), opened during the exhibition to the poem “Mind Breaths” (1973), which narrates the infinite expansion of mind and transcendence of body in breathing meditation. Twenty pages earlier in the same collection, “Thoughts Sitting Breathing” (1973) is constructed around the mantra “Om Mani Padme Hum.” The mantra is written thrice, each syllable followed by a typical Ginsberg rant on the moral degeneracy of the First World. Third World poverty and oppression in Asia figure centrally. “Ah! How jealous they are” (smug Pentagon militarists) “of the thin stomached Vietnamese boy” . . . “screams rise out of thousands of mouths in Hanoi” . . . “got no rupee for rice ain’t got no land I got hunger in my gland my belly’s swollen potatoes my knees got cut on the Tanks,” and so forth, climaxing with the verse, “United States armies march thru the past / The Chinese legions rage / Past the Great Wall of Maya / And scream on the central stage / I loose my bowels of

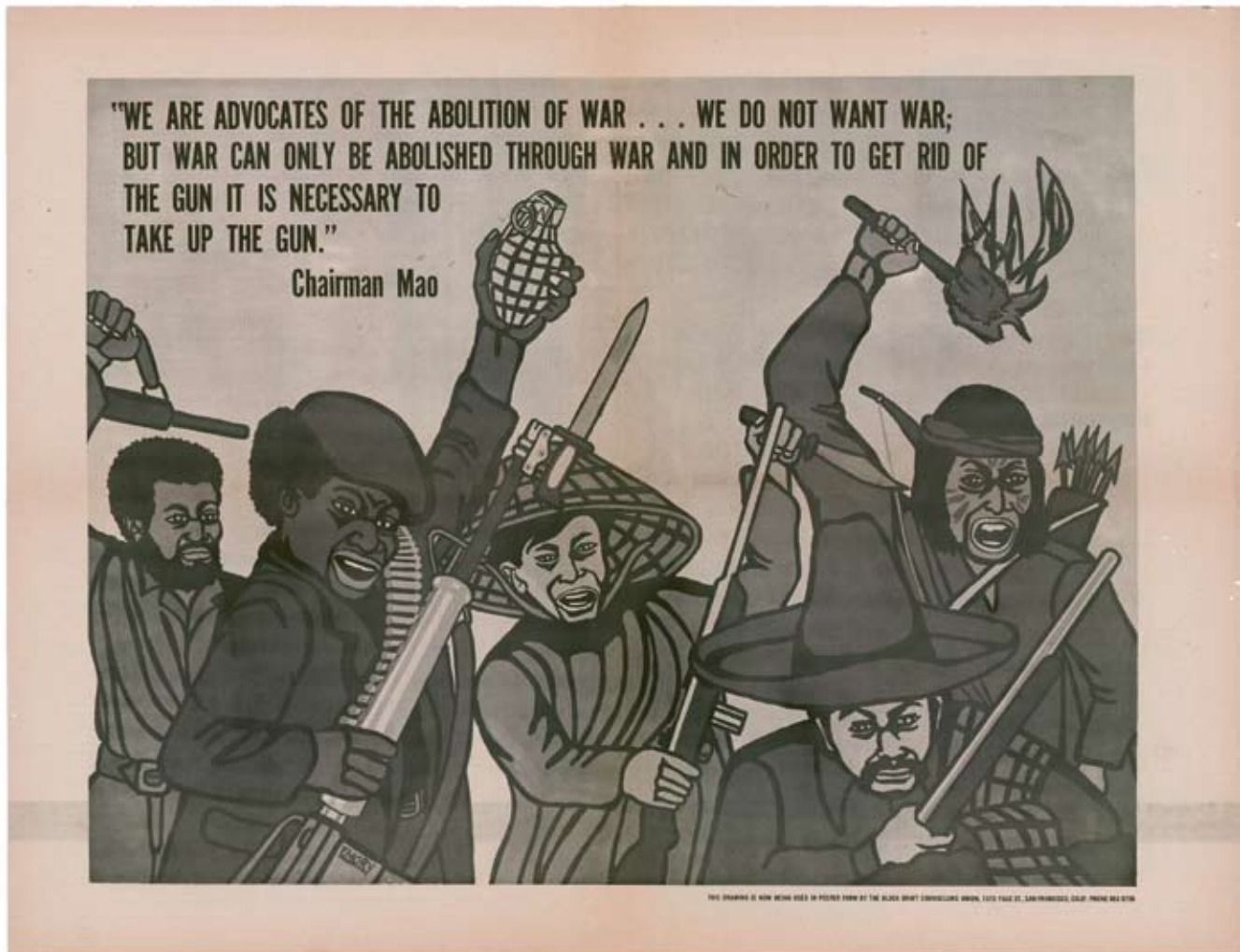


FIG. 8. Emory Douglas. "We are Advocates of the Abolition of War," from *The Black Panther* (Sept. 28, 1968). Offset lithograph on newsprint. 44.5 x 57.2 cm. © 2009 Emory Douglas/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Asia, / I move the U.S.A. / I crap on Dharmakaya / And wipe the worlds away."⁴ Here we have an "embodiment" of Asia radically different from that on display in *The Third Mind*: visceral, abject and pained, not an idealist abstraction of pure mind and unmediated perception. The Ginsberg mantra poem is useful also because it exposes what, aside from the suggestions of King and Harootunian, *The Third Mind* hides—"Sacred Emptiness to fix your angry brains," Ginsberg writes—that is, "the mystic East" helping to quell passions inflamed by the American cause of suffering in Third World Asia. The panoply of *The Third Mind* is analogous to a fantasy pharmacy, lined with sugar-coated curatives for a Third World Asia of the bowels, otherwise distempered from poverty, atrocity and Cold War machinations.

Third, consider AfroAsianism. Within the American black freedom movement, and especially within its more radical factions, the idea of AfroAsian unity was a central ideological concept. The suffering in Third World Asia was regarded not only through the lens of universal humanist ethics—an object of lament and an instrument for denouncing American injustices—but also as a constituent of a revolutionary political bloc that linked the oppressed in Africa, Asia and the American ghetto against white racism and imperialism.⁵ In American art, this is illustrated by the

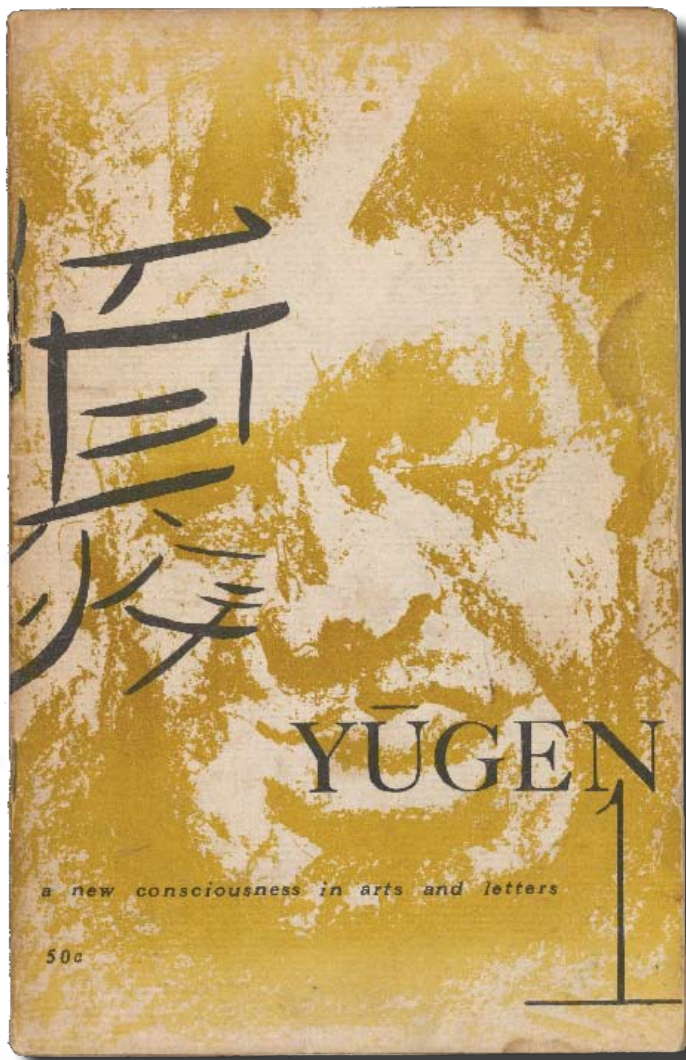


FIG. 9. Cover of *Yūgen*, no. 1 (1958). Calligraphy by Rachel Spitzer; drawing of man's head by Peter Schwarzburg. 21.5 x 14 cm. Offset print on paper. Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

work of Emory Douglas, appointed Revolutionary Artist and then Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party from 1967 to its demise in 1979 (fig. 8). Douglas was in charge of the design and graphics of the Party newspaper, and his images state over and over again, and in the strongest terms, the importance of Third and Second World Asia for the political ideology of the black freedom movement, and the importance of the propaganda graphics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, and activities in Cuba (conduit for Maoist thought in the West) for the American revolutionary artist.⁶ Within the frame of *The Third Mind*, Douglas's "seeing Red" looks indecent; it advocates direct political engagement and legitimates violence in contrast to an art world premised on nonviolence, if not political disinterest. Munroe's embrace of Reinhardt, Cage and the Californian counterculture betrays a preference for artists who keep their art (if not their lives) distinct from their politics. Against the dominant Orientalist image of Asia as a land of temples, holy mountains and ashrams, Douglas projects an Asia of a radically different utopia, in hindsight benighted given the realities of the Cultural Revolution, but certainly no more skewed than the work of his "contemplative" contemporaries. Angry Asia, Communist Asia, Third World Asia; none of these was confronted in *The Third Mind*.

The Third Mind's blinders against the politicized black art world show themselves particularly in the neglect of the influence of "the mystic East" on African American artists of the 1950s and 1960s. The selection of Adrian Piper as the exhibition's sole artist of African American descent is ironic, considering the subject of her race-based work of the early 1980s of a light-skinned black woman passing for white. Piper should have been a central figure for this show, given her longstanding study of Hindu texts and rigorous practice of Yoga, which Stiles details in her catalogue essay. Stiles also points to the political dimension of Piper's relation to Indian philosophy and practice, and the importance of Asian spiritual and political models for the civil rights and black freedom movement during the 1960s and 1970s (pp. 333–34), but the discussion is brief and politics is clearly a subordinate issue.

Similarly, while mesmerized by Kerouac and Ginsberg, *The Third Mind* fails to mention that, from 1958 to 1962, Amiri Baraka (then LeRoi Jones) coedited with then-wife Hettie Cohen an early and important Beat journal titled *Yūgen*, a medieval Japanese aesthetic term for profound mysteriousness, and defined in the first issue as "elegance, beauty, grace, transcendence of these things, and also nothing at all" (fig. 9).⁷ Aside from some Beat haiku in its pages and mangled Chinese characters and gestural ink drawings on

its covers, the Asia factor is weak in *Yūgen*. In light of Baraka's imminent exit from the beatnik community and of the fact that Hinduism and Maoism, not Zen, were the Asian touchstones for radical black art and politics, *Yūgen* can paradoxically serve to highlight the irrelevance of Japan for truly politicized American art in the postwar period.

Thankfully, John Coltrane gets some representation in both Munroe's catalogue introduction and Patterson's informative essay on modern music. Patterson makes it clear that without Coltrane's exploration of North Indian musical structures, instrumentation, improvisational techniques and devotional themes, 1960s music would have been a different world (p. 282). Still, both exhibition and catalogue presented neither music nor image from the important and ongoing movement of Indo-Jazz. The catalogue stays with musical structure and theme, without mentioning that, at the time, experimental jazz was understood by many in direct relationship to Black Nationalism and Third World solidarity.⁸ With all the talk of liberation, emancipation and transcendence in *The Third Mind*, how could the exhibition and catalogue not address the political articulations of those terms? Where does one find a more "affirmative Orientalism" in postwar America than in the appropriation of "the mystic East" within the context of a movement toward achieving political emancipation?

The Third Mind is not alone in its biases. It is typical of accounts of the impact of Asian thought upon the modern West to ignore or downplay Asia as political model in the late twentieth century. In his *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought*, J. J. Clarke, Munroe's ally in "affirmative Orientalism," introduces Asia as a political model for the West within the context of the eighteenth century, when French *philosophes* were of the opinion that laissez-faire Confucian good government represented just what the Enlightenment commanded in the realm of human affairs. Opinion changed as the French Revolution approached, and China thereafter stood as a monument to "Oriental despotism," where it remained, if one follows Clarke, into the postwar period.⁹ As for the latter twentieth century, it is Buddhist ethics that Clarke cites as the prime Asian reference point for segments of the peace, animal rights, Green and feminist movements.¹⁰ Gandhi is passed over in two sentences, Maoism is never mentioned and "Third Worldism" is dismissed with condescension as an "attitude of self-recrimination" and "an overly elevated and a-historical vision of the East's moral and spiritual purity."¹¹ Not only does this marginalization of political Asia contradict Clarke's advocacy of pluralism and egalitarianism, it is also detrimental on a practical level to the revisionist project to which he ascribes. It behooves discussion of the influence of Asia upon twentieth-century European and American cultures to take up Chinese socialism and Third World politics, if for no other reason than to be able to speak to contemporary discourses so shaped by and invested in identity politics, postcolonial studies, the antiglobalization movement, issues pertaining to the "global South" and the reassessment of socialist and communist ideals. There is no hope of the Asia factor becoming an object of serious and sustained consideration within intellectual history or art history as long as the "mystic East" remains the favored focus. Future

revisionist accounts of modern Western cultural history should keep this in mind and not let the terms of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Orientalism, “affirmative” or otherwise, dictate representations of the later twentieth. ❁

NOTES

1. As cited in William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind* (New York: Seaver Books, 1978), 25.
2. A couple of lines in Stiles’s essay name *The Little Red Book*, AfroAsianism and Gandhi (p. 334).
3. Alexander Dumbadze, “Fuck It: Or, Death Is Elsewhere: Rudimentary Thoughts on Commitment,” unpublished paper presented at Our Literal Speed, Gallery 400, University of Illinois, Chicago (May 1, 2009).
4. Allen Ginsberg, “Thoughts Sitting Breathing” (1973), in *Mind Breaths: Poems 1972–1977* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1978), 3–7.
5. There is much recent scholarship on the issue of American AfroAsian connections in both politics and culture. See, for example, Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Shannon Steen, eds., *AfroAsian Encounters: Culture, History, Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen, eds., *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung-Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001). For a more global context, see Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World* (New York and London: The New Press, 2007).
6. Sam Durant, ed., *Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas* (New York: Rizzoli, 2007).
7. Yügen: *A New Consciousness in Arts and Letters*, no. 1 (1958): table of contents.
8. Two of the strongest of such interpretations can be found in Leroi Jones, *Black Music* (New York: William Morrow, 1967), and Frank Kofsky, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970).
9. J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought* (London: Routledge, 1997), 43–53.
10. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment*, 172–78, 202–5.
11. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment*, 203, 216.

Japanese Exported Lacquer: Reassessments and Summary of Sources

MONIKA BINCSIK



FIG. 1. Catalogue cover

THE WORDS “EXPORT ART” usually conjure up the image of commodities made specifically for a foreign market. Japanese lacquer was sought after by the great families of Europe as luxurious exotica, and European collections are a repository of not only Japanese export lacquer but of domestic lacquers, as well. Exported lacquers helped define the aesthetic of Japan for the Continent for more than three hundred years, regardless of their more commercial purpose. Inventories and trade records surviving in Europe provide crucial references for Japanese researchers dating and analyzing Edo-period domestic lacquerware.

Spurred on in part by recent research of scholars in the West, there has been a boom of publications and exhibitions on this subject, exemplified by “Japan–*Makie*/Export Lacquer: Reflection of the West in Black and Gold Makie” shown at the Kyoto National Museum (October–December 2008) and the Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo (December–January 2009) (fig. 1).

“JAPAN–MAKIE” EXHIBITION: REASSESSING EXPORT LACQUER

The “Japan–*Makie*” exhibition was organized by the Kyoto National Museum and the Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo, with the participation of the Yomiuri newspaper and NHK. The eponymous 360-page catalogue illustrates all 284 objects and presents an overview essay, section summaries and each individual entry in Japanese and English (bibliographic citations are given in the language of publication). Nagashima Meiko, the lead curator and a specialist in Japanese lacquer at the Kyoto National Museum, brings to fruition her decade of study on the Japanese lacquer collection of Marie Antoinette (1755–1793), a number of which appeared in the exhibition. She introduces her catalogue essay by reminding readers of the indelible effect of exports from East Asia to Europe: in England, varnished furniture simulating raised lacquer was “japanned”; tableware is still “china.”¹ Around 150 exhibition loans came from European collections, including the royal collections of Sweden, Denmark, Augustus the Strong and Marie Antoinette, whose mother, Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, remarked, “I prefer lacquer to diamonds” (p. 317).

The exhibition and catalogue were organized chronologically, from the tenth to the early twentieth century, in seven sections. Seventeen objects made only for the Japanese market, several registered as National Treasures and

Important Cultural Properties from monasteries in the Kyoto area and from the Suntory Museum, gave an elegant snapshot of the early history of *makie*, literally “sprinkled picture,” the standard term for Japanese lacquer. The costliness of the gold and silver filings and technical skill required to produce lacquer objects restricted their use to the aristocratic classes and Buddhist institutions under their patronage, much as the first exported lacquers would enter the collections of European royalty and the Catholic church centuries later.

Next came a group of twelve Kōdaiji-style *makie*, the innovative gold and black lacquers associated with the more flashy tastes of the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) that take their name from the temple Kōdaiji, founded in eastern Kyoto by Hideyoshi’s widow, Kōdaiin. A food and drinks cabinet held by the Suntory Museum is decorated in gold and mottled gold (*nashiji*, “pear skin”) *makie* with arching pampas grasses studded with dewdrops and matching overlays of paulownia crests (cat. no. 34). Kōdaiji-style lacquers were the first Japanese wares encountered by European traders, beginning with the Portuguese in 1543. A vivid early seventeenth-century screen from the Suntory Museum shows the traders in their pantaloons arriving by ship in Nagasaki harbor, where they are greeted by Jesuit priests in black robes and engage with the Japanese (cat. no. 21). Innovation of shortcuts in lacquer technique and decoration gave rise to the establishment of lacquer workshops catering to an expanding commercial base within and without Japan.

Lacquer produced mainly for the European trade in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is known collectively as “Nanban,” meaning “southern barbarian,” the Japanese nickname for foreigners, who arrived “from the south.” Twenty-seven examples of the rare Nanban lacquers were featured in the exhibition: ritual utensils ordered by the Jesuits, such as folding lecterns, pyxes and portable cases to hold European-painted icons. Similar to the flat gold-powder sprinkling (*hiramakie*) on a black ground of Kōdaiji lacquers, many have also added embellishments of inlaid mother-of-pearl. The dim lighting of the exhibition simulated the effect of candlelight on either side of the retable of the painting of the Virgin and Child (cat. no. 41).

The next thematic group consisted of the so-called “red-hair lacquers” (*kōmō-shikki*) produced for the foreign market from the mid-seventeenth century through the late eighteenth century. After the 1630s, the ruling Tokugawa shogunate restricted foreign trade to the Protestant Dutch on the tiny artificial island of Deshima in Nagasaki harbor. Dutchmen appear in Japanese art of the period with their exotic red hair, which gave rise to the term for lacquers imported by them, etymology so assumed it is skimmed over in the English catalogue text; quite possibly it is a twentieth-century antiquarian term. Trade with China was permitted, but was also controlled and limited. This situation remained more or less unchanged until 1854, when Western military threat caused Japan to reopen its borders to foreign trade. The “red-hair style” was adjusted to Western needs and fashion in furniture, and both decorative techniques and designs were



FIG. 2. The van Diemen Box. 1636–39. Wood, covered in black lacquer, with gold and silver *hiramakie* and *takamakie* lacquer and gold and silver leaf. H. 16 x W. 48.3 x D. 36.7 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Given by the children of Sir Trevor Lawrence, Bt. (W. 49:1 to 3-1916). Photo: © V&A Images

modified. Pictorial motifs within cartouches or in open spaces replaced the earlier geometric and floral patterns. Lacquer for the Dutch market generally has raised and flat *makie* designs on a black background but lacks the extensive use of mother-of-pearl inlay of Nanban wares.

Of the thirty-four “red-hair lacquers,” with most dating from the mid-seventeenth through the late-eighteenth century, two star loans were the famous van Diemen Box and the Mazarin Chest in the Victoria and Albert Museum. They represented the sumptuous gold, silver and black lacquer synonymous with the finest Japanese lacquers exported to Europe around 1640. The van Diemen Box, decorated with scenes from *The Tale of Genji* and other Japanese literary works, is inscribed under the lid with the name of the wife of Antonio van Diemen, governor-general of the Dutch East Indies between 1636 and 1645 (fig. 2). The box subsequently entered the collection of Madame de Pompadour (1721–1764), and from there it passed to Randon de Boisset (d. 1776). The de Boisset collection was sold in 1777, and the van Diemen Box was purchased for Jacques Leopold, Duke of Bouillon for 6,901 livres, a large sum.² The gothic-novelist William Beckford (1760–1844) acquired the box from the Duke’s collection around 1800. In 1882, the piece went for £315 to Sir Trevor Lawrence at the Hamilton Palace sale and his children donated it to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1916.³

The Mazarin Chest, densely decorated with scenes from Japanese literature such as *The Tale of Genji*, purportedly entered the renowned collection of



FIG. 3. The Mazarin Chest. c. 1640. Wood covered in black lacquer with gold and silver *hiramakie* and *takamakie* lacquer; inlaid with gold, silver and *shibuichi* alloy; and mother-of-pearl shell; gilded copper fittings. H. 59 x W. 101.5 x D. 63.9 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (412:1.2-1882) Photo: ©V&A Images

The box has the coat of arms of the Mazarin-La Meilleraie family on its French steel key, suggesting that it was once in their possession. The Mazarin-La Meilleraie family was related to the Mazarin family, descendants of Jules Mazarin, who is known to have been a collector of lacquer.

Cardinal Jules Mazarin (1602–1661), chief minister of France. Like the van Diemen Box, it later passed from the collection of the Duke of Bouillon to that of William Beckford (fig. 3). It was purchased for the Scottish estate of the Dukes of Hamilton in an auction in 1823 and for the Victoria and Albert in the 1882 sale of Hamilton Palace. The chest was on exhibit in Kyoto for the first time after four years of conservation under the joint supervision of Japanese and British specialists; Julia Hutt provided the art historical research for the team.⁴ Other pieces in this prize sampling of European-market lacquers included a set of barrel-top boxes from the royal collection, National Museum of Denmark, and a rectangular cabinet with landscape panels mounted on a gilded sculptural base from Burghley House (cat. nos. 65, 83). The hinged lid of a tall square box purchased by the Prince de Condé conceals a removable red velvet toilet seat set above a chamber pot (cat. no. 81). Dutch East India Company records make the claim that the box “befits a king or queen and is too splendid for anyone of lower rank. It is impeccable in both technique and beauty; the company will certainly become closer to the royal family” (p. 309).

Makie objects, exhibited together with Imari porcelains, pointed to the role Japanese export lacquer played in the fad for Chinoiserie, the fifth section of the exhibition. This influence has not been well studied, in part because of the paucity of documentation. Curator Nagashima reproduces *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing* by John Stalker (1688) as an appendix.

A Dutch tempera panel of 1680–1700 shows the tantalizing porcelains, lacquerwares, screens and fans in a fantasy boutique somewhere “east” (cat. no. 102). A 1750 blue faux-lacquer secretary desk attributed to the European cabinetmaker Adrien Faizelot Delorme and varnisher Guillaume Martin or his brother Etienne-Simon Martin shows how the craze for East Asian lacquer prompted European masters to recreate the effects in varnish (cat. no. 115). Over the blue ground, a color unattainable in Asian lacquer, are scenes of frolicking Chinese children and dogs in raised relief achieved by modeling plaster and applying it with gold paint and oil varnish. So highly regarded was the Martin family of artisans that Louis XV designated them “varnishers to the king”; japanning in French is known as “vernis Martin.” This example once stood in the Bellevue palace of Madame de Pompadour, official mistress of the king between 1745 and 1750. The loans in the Chinoiserie section also included a German dollhouse complete with second-floor “China room” and “Lacquer room” with miniature wall panels of birds and autumn flowers simulating Japanese *makie* (cat. no. 117). “Chinoiserie” included Japanese and Indian wares under its umbrella. European collection inventories are indiscriminate in listing countries of origin.

“Grand European Collections and Kyoto Lacquer Shops,” the sixth section, introduced 107 lacquers from the collection of Marie Antoinette now in the Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon and the Musée Guimet, and documented lacquers from late-seventeenth to eighteenth-century royal or aristocratic collections, borrowed from the National Museum of Denmark, the Royal Collections of Sweden, the Stiftung Schloss Friedenstein Gotha and Burghley House. High-quality lacquers appreciated at the eighteenth-century courts and in aristocratic households consist of two groups: those made for export and those intended for domestic trade, the latter produced by lacquer masters active mainly in Kyoto. In other words, European collections preserve *makie* objects made for Japanese clients of eighteenth-century Kyoto workshops, including items made to order, originally part of elaborate wedding sets consisting of dozens of matched boxes, tables and accessories or accoutrements for the incense game. Many of the sets were split up (there are no entire wedding sets in Europe) and used as separate bibelots, such as the box with knob in the form of a Chinese boy reclining on the board of a go game owned by Marie Antoinette (cat. no. 155). The exhibition curators and catalogue editors maintain that Marie Antoinette’s lacquer collection is the largest and finest in Europe and show here her apparent fancy for small incense containers sold by Kyoto lacquer shops (she inherited fifty small boxes from her mother in 1781). One is a tiny version of a pilgrim’s backpack, a reference to the Japanese classic *Tales of Ise* (cat. no. 130). Another box with imagery indicating it was made for the domestic Japanese market is her incense container in the shape of a knotted love letter decorated with deer and autumn foliage (cat. 131). A black-and-gold lacquer box in the form of a roofed cart with movable wheels is listed in the 1777 inventory of the Swedish royal collection as “Chinese cart with three wheels,” an anomaly by any standard, as the cart is a pastiche of a Japanese ox and festival cart, suggesting it was made strictly for export around 1700 (cat. no. 173).



FIG. 4. Incense Cabinet with Birds and Flowers of the Four Seasons. Wood, covered in gold lacquer with gold, silver and red *hiramakie* and *takamakie* lacquer and mother-of-pearl shell; silver fittings. Late 17th–early 18th century. H. 10.8 x W. 16 x D. 9 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Salting Bequest (W138–1910). Photo: © V&A Images

This incense cabinet and the container in figure 5 came from the same Kyoto workshop and both were in the collection of 568 Japanese lacquers assembled by George Salting (1835–1909), a wealthy British art collector and connoisseur who is best known for his paintings, carpets, furniture, Asian ceramics and other works of art. The cabinet probably once belonged to Marie Antoinette.

The final section of this comprehensive exhibition featured fifty-seven lacquerworks related to nineteenth-century World Exhibitions, including three boxes by Shibata Zeshin (1807–1891), whose work is well known and well represented in the West. The loans were selected mainly from the Victoria and Albert Museum and the lacquer collection of Ugo Casal, a Swiss industrialist long a resident of Kobe, now in the Osaka Municipal Museum. The idea was to show that small-sized *makie* objects, typical export items of the mid-Edo period, continued to be produced for export into the early twentieth century and that many of their shapes and decoration are based on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century prototypes found in European aristocratic collections. A two-wheeled oxcart censer in the Casal Collection is signed by the Kyoto lacquer artist Ozeki Tōshū, who was active in the Taisho period (1912–1926) (cat. no. 279). British collectors such as George Salting purchased not only works exhibited at world fairs but also earlier domestic lacquers formerly owned by aristocrats like Marie Antoinette, an indication that Japonism was an extension of Chinoiserie (figs. 4, 5).

In her catalogue essay, Nagashima provides a historical and cultural background for the evolution of Japanese lacquer, emphasizing the role and



FIG. 5. Fan-shaped Incense Container with Gourd Flowers. Wood covered in gold lacquer with gold *takamakie* lacquer and gold leaf and silver, and mother-of-pearl shell inlay. Late 17th–early 18th century. 1 x 9.2 x 6 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Salting Bequest (W233–1910). Photo: © V&A Images

activities of *makie* masters and the encounters of the wares with the West. Illustrations are followed by descriptions of the individual objects. The catalogue is bilingual, which is a real boon. In my opinion, the discussion of the reception of Japanese lacquer in Europe from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century deserved fuller treatment. The “rediscovery” of eighteenth-century French decorative arts around 1850 brought back the fashion for the Orient, especially eighteenth-century Chinoiserie taste in interiors reminiscent of salons in the time of Madame de Pompadour. The collections assembled for interior decoration by the ancien régime were part of an imaginary Garden of Eden and were to a great extent frivolous, not just as objects but as displays. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the balletlike settings, including Japonaiserie, were outmoded and even harshly criticized. Parisian dealers of Chinese and Japanese art in the eighteenth century, notably Edmé-François Gersaint and Claude-François Julliot, did not take Asian art seriously; for them, Buddhist sculptures were simply *magots*, grotesques. By mid-century, influenced by newly acquired knowledge about China and the Chinese language, there arose the revisionist judgment that Pompadourian taste represented objects highly appreciated in China and Japan. Not until the beginning of the twentieth century did it become evident to collectors what true antiquity meant in terms of Chinese ceramics and Japanese lacquers. From the 1870s, wider exposure to the Japanese language led to the deciphering of marks inscribed on lacquer objects. This, in turn, led to misinterpretations of signatures, false dating and the appearance of fakes on the art market. Generally speaking, around the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans still collected according to the standards of the eighteenth century, without access to, or proper interpretation of, Japanese sources and documents. Contemporary style, while appreciating export wares anew, dismissed the practice of mounting objects, the mode that had commanded the highest prices in the eighteenth century. (In the 1850s and 60s, however, imitation Louis XV mounts were still popular.) The highest prices in the nineteenth century were paid at

the Hamilton Palace sale of 1882, when William Beckford's lacquers were dispersed (see figures 2 and 3). The high prices reflected provenance: some objects had belonged to royal mistresses and nobles like Cardinal Mazarin.

The decoration of middle-class English and French homes with mass-produced things Japanese began in earnest in the 1870s. Mass production of Japanese lacquer for the Western market had started as early as 1859, when Christie's sold ten thousand lacquer trays in lots of twelve that had come from Japan in one shipment. From the mid-nineteenth century, the art of Japan (and that of Asia) was essentially rediscovered, or reappraised. Interestingly enough, in the early nineteenth century, medieval Asian art—early Buddhist sculpture and Indian manuscript paintings—had some commercial value in Europe, but by mid-century the vogue was for the new. The change was due to museums devoted to art and industry established in quick succession after the 1851 London World Exposition at the Crystal Palace. Their emphasis on technique and materials, as formulated by Gottfried Semper (1803–1879), had a strong influence on contemporary collecting strategies. One of the aims of establishing museums of applied arts was to provide inspiration and models for artists and industry, rather than to focus on aesthetic qualities, as had been the case in the past. The growing interest in Eastern decorative motifs, related to the activities of Owen Jones (1809–1874), notably, his still-in-print *Grammar of Ornament*, strongly influenced public taste. The reach of these tastes is quite evident if we think of the quantities of Meiji-period enameled earthenware, textile samples, *fukusa* (wrapping cloths) and lacquers in Western collections. The exhibition concludes that the exported lacquer of Japan fostered brilliant innovations in response to a changing marketplace evolving over three centuries and that the consistent high standard of workmanship and artistry are evident in the 284 examples in this unique and prodigious undertaking by the Kyoto National Museum and Suntory Museum of Art.

EXPORT LACQUER SOURCES

The term “*yushutsu shikki*” (export lacquer) was first used in the Meiji period to indicate contemporary lacquer made for export, mainly as a commodity. Ogawa Sanchi (1867–1928), a stained glass artist and painter who studied lacquer while in the United States from 1900 to 1911 as a representative of the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, used the term in an article he wrote in 1907 for *Nihon shikkōkai zasshi* (Journal of the Japanese lacquer society) about Japanese lacquer available on the American market.⁵ Only much later was the term used to identify earlier, historical export lacquer, most likely under the influence of Western publications. In the West, scholarly interest in early Japanese “export lacquer” began around 1916 with Smith H. Clifford's publication of the van Diemen Box in *Burlington Magazine*.⁶

In Japan, research on export lacquer of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries began around 1920, with the discovery of several lacquer objects, mainly in the Ibaraki area, depicting Christian imagery. Some of those eventually found their way to the Kobe City Museum. Later, numerous

similar lacquer objects came to light. Nanban-style export lacquers are believed to have been first published in Japan in 1918 by Shinmura Izuru (1876–1967), a professor at Kyoto Imperial University who was a European-trained linguist and philologist and the author of *Kōjien*, an essential reference work in Japan.⁷

As early as 1922, Hamada Kōsaku (1881–1938), the well-known archaeologist, wrote about the connection between Japanese Christianity and lacquer art, and differentiated Japanese domestic lacquer objects decorated in the Nanban taste from those made for the foreign market.⁸ Hamada graduated from Tokyo Imperial University's department of art history and later studied archaeology in Europe. He based his study of Japanese archaeology on European principles and focused on the anthropological aspects of his field, extending his research to China and Korea. Most likely, it was Hamada's anthropological perspective and European training that helped him formulate his views on two different strains of "foreign taste" in Japanese lacquer history.

Early publications related to Nanban lacquer naturally centered on domestic works; lacquer made for the foreign market was little known because it was held in not-yet-explored Western collections. In 1935, Yamada Chisaburō (1908–1984), a Berlin-trained art critic with an interest in artistic exchange between East and West, published an article on the Mazarin Chest.⁹ In 1936, the Tokyo Imperial Museum (the present Tokyo National Museum) opened the exhibition "Nanban Design *Makie* Lacquer," the first opportunity for the Japanese public to see Nanban *makie* objects. Yoshino Tomio (1885–1961), a lacquer researcher at the museum and himself a trained lacquer artist, tried to reconstruct historical lacquer techniques by fashioning replicas. In one of a series of articles he wrote for the journal *Urushi to kōgei* (Lacquer and craft) in connection with the 1936 exhibition, he discussed export lacquers, defining their technical characteristics and proposing that the combination of mother-of-pearl inlay and gold (and silver) and black lacquer was used to decorate objects specifically commissioned by Westerners.¹⁰

In 1940, an enthusiastic collector of Nanban art, the Kobe businessman Ikenaga Hajime (1891–1955), founded the Ikenaga Museum. After World War II, the Japanese started to buy back "exported lacquer." In 1941, Theo H. Lunsingh Scheurleer in the Netherlands established for the first time a connection between Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or VOC) documents and existing Japanese export lacquer.¹¹ In 1957, Tjjs Volker, (1892–1979), a curator at the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, published "Japanese Export Lacquer," defining the term for the public.¹² In 1959, Martha Boyer, one of the first European scholars of Japanese export lacquer, published her research in *Japanese Export Lacquers from the Seventeenth Century in the National Museum of Denmark*, introducing the well-documented Danish Royal Collection.¹³ Bo Gyllensvärd published his "Old Japanese Lacquer and Japanning in Sweden" in 1966.¹⁴ In 1967, Kitamura Yoshiro opened the Nanban Art Museum (Nanban bunkakan) in Osaka. Prior to a series of publications in the 1970s by Okada

Yuzuru (1911–1981) and Arakawa Hirokazu, there was no systematic lacquer research in Japan; most publications were limited to the introduction of the objects themselves.

In 1969, the Tokyo National Museum held a special exhibition entitled “*Nanban Shitsugei*—Nanban Lacquer Art.” Many pieces were exhibited there for the first time, reflecting new research. Arakawa published his landmark book on the same subject in 1971.¹⁵ He divided objects into export lacquer made for foreign export and lacquer prepared in the Nanban style, examining not only techniques and designs, but trying to establish connections between contemporary domestic lacquers and the export-made items, with reference to relevant VOC documents. This was the first scholarly attempt in Japan to connect written sources with known Nanban lacquers, providing a wider context for the domestic lacquer history in the process. In the 1970s, Okada Yuzuru and Yoshimura Motoo published their in-depth research on Nanban lacquers.¹⁶ Nishida Hiroko introduced the link between the van Diemen Box and the Mazarin Chest and VOC documents.¹⁷ From the 1970s, Japanese had the opportunity to see high-quality Edo-period Japanese export lacquer exhibited in Japan; in the 1977 exhibition “Oriental Lacquer Art” at the Tokyo National Museum, a section was devoted to export wares.

Beatrix von Ragué, in her important *A History of Japanese Lacquerwork* (1976), made several references to export lacquers.¹⁸ In the 1980s, Oliver Impey (1936–2005) established a stylistic analysis of export wares, grouping them through a combination of documented trade history and stylistic features: the Nanban style (represented by the export lacquers traded by the Portuguese, Spanish and English in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries), the transition-period style of the 1630s–40s under the monopoly of the Dutch East India Company, and the pictorial style that followed. Impey’s three categories became the basis for further research in the West as well as in Japan.¹⁹ Beginning in the 1980s, Christiaan Jörg published several studies of late Edo-period export lacquers based on European prints of historical figures and scenes. Joe Earle threw further light on the dates of manufacture of the van Diemen box and Mazarin Chest and the sources of their decoration. Monika Kopplin in the Münster Museum of Lacquer Art also contributed several exhibitions and publications in a wider context.²⁰

In Japan, beginning in the 1980s, the next generation of lacquer researchers, among others, Doi Kumiko and Yamazaki Tsuyoshi, published significant new findings.²¹ They combined the interpretation of historical sources with iconographical research, establishing further classifications of the Nanban style. A series of important exhibitions introduced new material. In 1983, the exhibition “*Nanban Shikki*: Cultural Exchange Between East and West Through Lacquer Craft” opened in the Sakai City Museum; in 1987, “Nanban Art” opened in the Itabashi Art Museum and “*Kōdaiji Makie* and Nanban Lacquer” in the Kyoto National Museum. In 1988, the Kyoto National Museum hosted “Siebold and Japan,” which included several examples of lacquer; and “Arte Namban” was organized in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon and Brussels in 1990. In 1993, “Via

Orientalis” at the Sezon Art Museum, Tokyo, showed several export lacquers.

Since the 1990s, several previously unpublished Japanese lacquer collections in Europe have been introduced through exhibitions and essays. In 1993, the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties in Tokyo and the Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege in Munich launched a joint project on conservation and related technical studies of lacquer. This new approach was an important means of sharing information between lacquer researchers, conservators and chemists from all over the world. The Research Institute later played an important role in facilitating further cooperation. The exhibition “Japan und Europa 1543–1829” in Berlin in 1993 introduced several export lacquers, as did the exhibition “Western Influence on Japanese Art” in Fukuoka in 1995. Reflecting the latest research results in 1997, the Kyoto National Museum staged “Maki-e: The Beauty of Black and Gold Japanese Lacquer,” organized by the late Haino Akio (1942–2008). Nagashima Meiko succeeded Haino as lacquer specialist at the Kyoto National Museum, and her 2008–2009 exhibition clearly benefited from his work. In 1998, the Kobe City Museum launched an exhibition of late Edo-period export lacquers based on European etchings, using the research of Christiaan Jörg and Oka Yasumasa. Another important opportunity to see export lacquer was “The World of Lacquer: 2000 Years of History” in the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon in 2001. In 2002, there was the “Edo *Maki-e*” exhibition at the Tokyo National Museum.

From 2001 through 2002, three volumes of the popular series *Nihon no bijutsu* (Arts of Japan) introduced Japanese export lacquers.²² In 2002, Filip Suchomel reported on lacquer collections in the Czech Republic.²³ The “Encounters” exhibition presented by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2004 discussed Japanese export lacquers as well, and in 2005, the exhibition commemorating the Aichi World Exposition introduced Meiji-period export lacquers in the context of nineteenth-century World Exhibitions.

Most recently, in 2005, Oliver Impey and Christiaan Jörg co-authored an impressive work that collated mostly Western research on export lacquer produced between 1580 and 1850.²⁴ It was followed in 2008 by Hidaka Kaori’s book based on her Ph.D. dissertation, providing a summary of the Japanese export lacquer research in Japan and in the West, and proposing new ideas for future research.²⁵ The “Japan–*Makie*” exhibition in the same year at the Kyoto National Museum was an inspiring amalgam of Japanese export lacquers, many of which were shown in Japan for the first time, on loan from foreign collections. Looking to the future, we anticipate further advances in the research of Japanese exported lacquer. ☸

NOTES

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REVIEWS

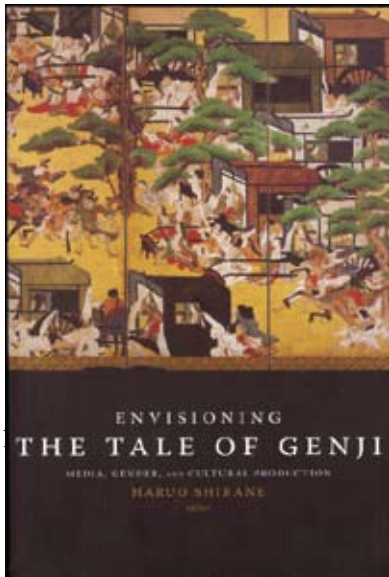


FIG. 1. Catalogue cover

Envisioning The Tale of Genji: Media, Gender, and Cultural Production. Edited by Haruo Shirane. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. 400 pages, including chapter titles for *The Tale of Genji*, bibliography and index, with 66 black-and-white illustrations and 12 color plates. Cloth \$84.50; Softcover \$32.50

Like the story of Romeo and Juliet, *The Tale of Genji* has for centuries begged to be retold, reworked, reinvented, reanalyzed. People just cannot let it alone. Google yielded 3,140,000 hits for “Genji,” including annotated volumes, card games, steak houses, antique stores, comic books, animated films—and a notice that these two syllables are a trademark title of a Sony Computer Entertainment’s Playstation game (“all rights reserved”). Semioticians say that each iteration of the text represents, in effect, a new work. Even allowing for the homophony of the Japanese language (and for the existence of that other great medieval Genji, namely the Minamoto clan), we have now over three million “Genjis” that refer to Lady Murasaki’s tale. This witty, secluded court lady could scarcely have envisaged the global ripple—now a torrent—her words, put to paper almost a millennium ago, continue to generate. In fact, if we include the phenomenon of “Planet Genji” (<<http://www.anime-planet.com/anime/tale-of-genji>>) in the roster, one might say that Murasaki’s influence is galactic.

Trying to get a handle on *The Tale of Genji* is like attempting to lasso a star. When you approach it, what seems like solid matter dissolves into dazzling particles of light. Meanings have morphed into other meanings by the time you wake up the next morning and recognize a previous allusion you hadn’t thought of. That is the beauty of great literature: its reverberating ambiguities and silences clamp a hammerlock on the imagination and won’t let go.

The scholarly literature on the *Genji* is legion. Why, then, another book? *Envisioning The Tale of Genji: Media, Gender, and Cultural Production* presents a selection of papers from the conference “*The Tale of Genji* in Japan and the World: Social Imaginary, Media, and Cultural Production,” organized in 2005 by Haruo Shirane, Shincho Professor of Japanese Literature and Culture at Columbia University, New York, and Melissa McCormick, now Professor of Japanese Art and Culture, Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University (fig. 1). As Shirane explains in his forty-six-page opening essay (“*The Tale of Genji* and the Dynamics of Cultural Production: Canonization and Popularization”), the *Genji* itself has been the object of centuries of internal textual and contextual analysis, but its pervasive impact on Japanese culture, right down to modern manga, has been studied only in piecemeal fashion. “The history of the reception of *The Tale of Genji* is no less than a cultural history of Japan, for the simple reason that the *Genji* has had a profound impact at various levels of culture in every historical period since its composition, including the twenty-first century, producing what is called ‘*Genji* culture,’” he asserts in his opening sentence (p. 1).

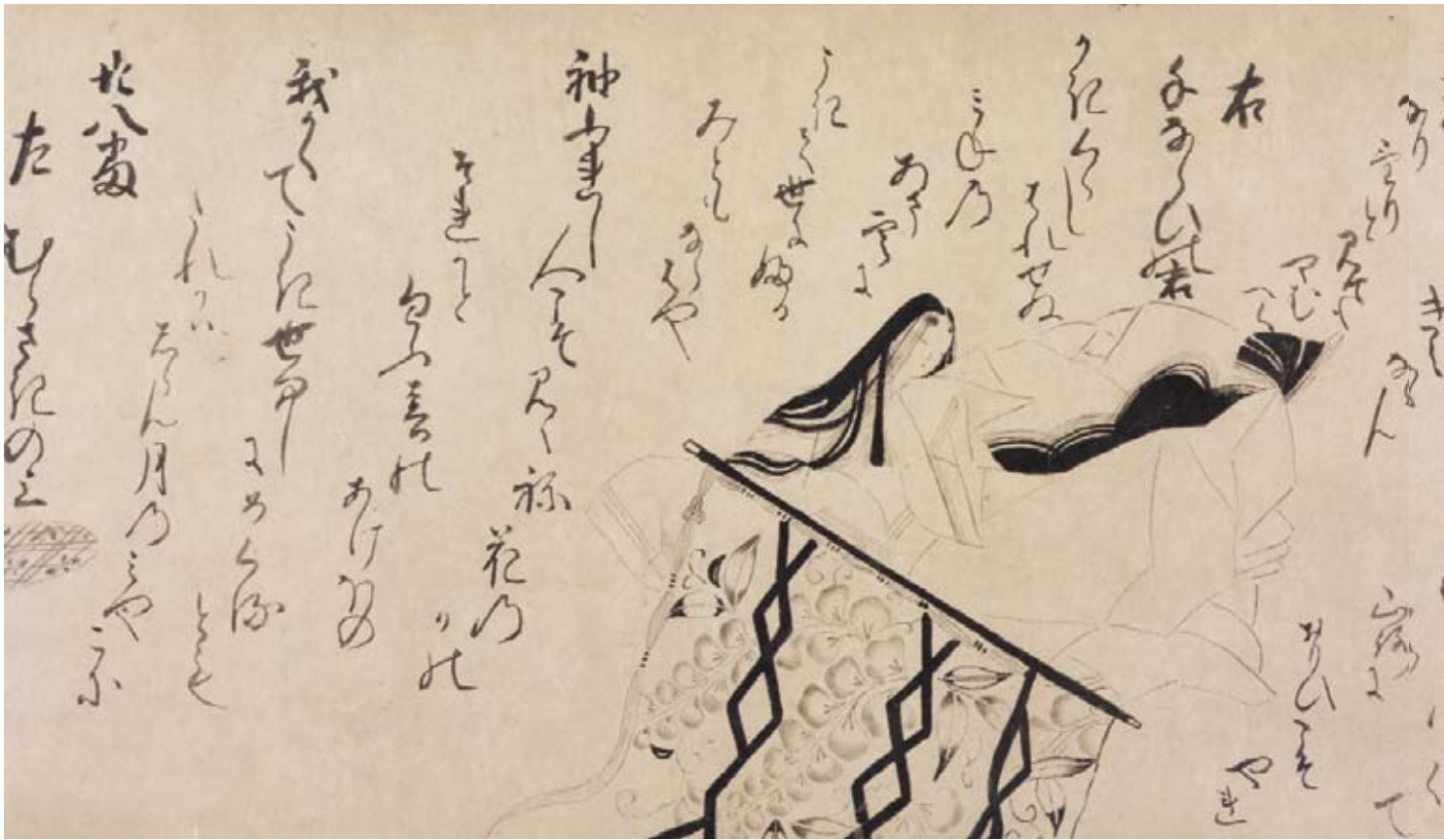


FIG. 2. *Genji Poetry Match* (detail). First half of the 16th century. Handscroll; ink on paper with touches of red color. 15.5 x 931.3 cm. John C. Weber Collection. Photo: John Bigelow Taylor
 Ukifune (Tenarai no kimi) is on the left, and the Third Princess (Onna San no Miya) is on the right.

Counting Shirane’s contribution, this volume includes twelve essays. Half of the writers have Japanese institutional affiliations; the rest hail from the United States. Three of the contributors are art historians, one is a specialist in *noh* drama, and the remaining seven can loosely be classified as scholars of literature and cultural studies. These individuals are equipped collectively to address the iterations (the “media” in the title) that propelled the onset and perpetuation of this “*Genji* culture.” These media include, but are not limited to, manuscripts, paintings, dramatic performances and other kinds of fictionalized sequels, digests, poetry handbooks, incense and card games, lectures, parodies, woodblock prints, Edo popular fiction, manga and anime. As the book’s title indicates, gender and cultural production also weave throughout many of the essays as tropes to link them together. The essays spin the *Genji* into areas that obsess our contemporary world: media/information, gender/sex (by extension, the disenfranchised) and cultural production/consumption—underscoring once again that magisterial work’s open-ended ability to connect with the human condition. The essays following Shirane’s opener are organized into four sections.

PART I, “THE LATE HEIAN AND MEDIEVAL PERIODS: COURT CULTURE, GENDER, AND REPRESENTATION” (FOUR ESSAYS)

Yukio Lippit’s (Harvard) weighty and erudite “Figure and Fracture in the *Genji Scrolls*: Text, Calligraphy, Paper, and Painting” performs a close reading of the earliest partially surviving set of *Genji* text and images, a



canonical twelfth-century work. His meticulous analysis of choices for text, calligraphy, paper decoration and image—and how these operate symbiotically—illuminates some of the modalities that manipulate viewer response. Lippit likens the collective involvement in the production of these scrolls to the practice of *awase* (matches). He asserts that the set “epitomizes as well as any other surviving artifact the particular conditions that governed cultural production at the highest levels of the late Heian court: created by fiat, within a highly centralized sociopolitical environment, but also by committee, in order to guarantee a productive cacophony of interpretation” (p. 72).

Moving on to the medieval period, Reiko Yamanaka’s (Hōsei University, Tokyo) “*The Tale of Genji and the Development of Female-Spirit Nō*,” shows how plays employing characters from *Genji* are a relatively late development in the history of *nō* (alternate spelling of *Nō*). These center on redressing the anger of victimized women. Yamanaka compares the earliest three *nō* plays treating *Genji* characters: the pre-Zeami (1363–1443) *Aoi no Ue*; a Zeami-period *Ukifune*; and the post-Zeami *Nonomiya*. This progression illuminates the development of the templates (aristocratic women returning to the world after death, meeting a guide and dancing, even though dancing was not appropriate for court ladies in life) that govern subsequent female-spirit *nō* plays.

Melissa McCormick’s (Harvard) “Monochromatic *Genji*: The *Hakubyō* Tradition and Female Commentarial Culture” underscores the link between Yamato-style ink-line drawings of the *Genji* (surprisingly, the

medium for the majority of surviving medieval illustrations of *Genji*) and women's consumption of the tale, and the ramifications thereof. The first of the three examples she uses as illustration is the so-called *Ukifune Booklet* (late Kamakura). The next is the *Genji Poetry Match* (first half of the sixteenth century) (fig. 2). The third is the six-piece set, *Monochrome Tale of Genji Scrolls* (mid-sixteenth century). We learn that a mode of illustration that started out as a kind of women's diversion—intimately associated with their private fascination with the *Genji*, along with their amateur aesthetic pursuits—gradually became miniaturized and professionalized as it was appropriated and diffused by (male) workshop artists.

Lewis Cook's (Queen's College, City University of New York) "Genre Trouble: Medieval Commentaries and Canonization of the *The Tale of Genji*" treats what he calls the *Genji*'s "reception history." Cook shows how criticism of the work first took the form of marginalia on manuscripts of the *Tale*, possibly as early as (Fujiwara) Sesonji Koreyuki (d. 1175), with emphasis on the 795 *waka* (thirty-one-syllable) poems included therein. Eventually, oral lectures interspersed with commentary, transcriptions of these performances, and subsequently full-blown independent commentaries swelled the literature, even though the work defied literary classification—was it a biography? poetic diary? a tale? (p. 141). Rival specialists often associated with *renga* (linked verse) lineages began claiming exclusive interpretive truth. The *Genji* received the ultimate canonization under Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), who equated its sensibilities with the very notion of Japaneseness itself.

PART II, "THE EDO PERIOD: WARRIOR SOCIETY, EDUCATION, AND POPULAR CULTURE" (THREE ESSAYS)

Haruki Ii's (National Institute of Japanese Literature, Osaka) brief (fourteen pages) "Didactic Readings of *The Tale of Genji*: Politics and Women's Education" enumerates some of the functions besides sheer entertainment that the *Genji* served. Through most of the medieval and Edo periods, it was "valued mainly for its utilitarian and didactic qualities; it was used as a handbook for poetry composition, a guide to moral ideals for rulers, a book of Confucian and Buddhist teachings, and a text for women's education" (p. 157). The article dwells primarily on pre-Edo usage; it is hard to see why it was grouped with the Edo-period essays.

Keiko Nakamachi's (Jissen Women's University, Tokyo) "*Genji* Pictures from Momoyama Painting to Edo *Ukiyo-e*: Cultural Authority and New Horizons" consists of two discrete expository articles. In the first section we learn, unsurprisingly, that while *Genji* themes appear occasionally on walls of the structures within the imperial palace and aristocratic mansions, they played no role in the formal decor of military castles—they belonged to the feminine sphere. Warlords did not shun the *Genji* entirely, however: Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) presented a screen of *The Tale of Genji* to his rival Uesugi Kenshin (1530–1578) (pp. 171–72) to garnish his own image with aristocratic overtones. Military families used such screens in dowries and

marriage ceremonies for the same purpose. *Genji* imagery also graced the walls of Edo Castle's women's quarters (pp. 176–77).

The second section, showing how *Genji* gets “ukiyo-ized” (my word), devises a series of typologies using examples by eight prominent seventeenth- to nineteenth-century artists, so the treatment is necessarily cursory. In the Edo period, *Genji* illustrations accompanied vernacular translations to make the story accessible to those unable to read the original language. In the quest for novelty, artists employed a mix-and-match approach: *Genji* is sometimes shown smoking a pipe and dressed as an Edo rake, sometimes visiting the pleasure quarters or inserted into scenes alluding to the Chinese classic “Eight Views of Xiao and Xiang.” Chapter titles like “Kiritsubo” (The Paulownia Court) conflate with the homophonous “Opening the Vagina,” a typical example of the Edo notion of the ultimate in racy wit. The pictures relate in different ways to an actual or implied text. Nakamachi concludes that “This surprising assortment of (text-image) links between the *Genji* and *ukiyo-e* or (image-image) links between earlier *Genji* iconography and *ukiyo-e* is a testament both to the wide circulation of pictures from *The Tale of Genji* in Edo Japan and to the ever-evolving diversity of *ukiyo-e* artists, techniques, and compositional formats” (pp. 202–3).

The title of Michael Emmerich's “The Splendor of Hybridity: Image and Text in Ryūtei Tanehiko's *Inaka Genji*” is a playful allusion to Norma Field's classic on the classic, *The Splendor of Longing in The Tale of Genji* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). Emmerich (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Society of Fellows, Princeton, and newly appointed to UC Santa Barbara faculty) approaches a single work, the serialized bestseller *A Fraudulent Murasaki's Bumpkin Genji*, 1829–42, with intelligence, decisiveness and verve. His essay, he hopes, “will serve as a case study of a particular image of *The Tale of Genji*—an example of an adaptation that both takes value from and gives value to the work it replaces” (p. 211). The earliest editions, lavishly illustrated by Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1864) in consultation with Tanehiko himself, were irresistibly attractive extravaganzas in their own right, as demonstrated by the author's deft comparisons with the later economy versions. Showing how Tanehiko drew from an unimaginably rich potpourri of sources and incorporated a dizzying patchwork of references—including the story's Muromachi-period shogunal setting, as well as references to Chinese literature, the *Man'yōshū*, Chikamatsu Monzaemon, kabuki, mechanical fountains, Dutch imports and Ogata Kōrin, to name a few—Emmerich argues that for most Edo readers, *Inaka Genji* was the *Genji*. By the 1880s, however, Western-style reproduction processes flattened the deluxe Tanehiko/Kunisada hybrid and invited unfavorable comparison with Murasaki's now increasingly familiar original—a legacy which Emmerich proposes passionately to ameliorate.

PART III, “THE MEIJI, TAISHŌ AND PREWAR SHŌWA PERIODS: NATIONAL LITERATURE, WORLD LITERATURE, AND IMPERIAL JAPAN” (TWO ESSAYS)

Tomi Suzuki's (Columbia) “*The Tale of Genji*, National Literature, Language, and Modernism” centers on the elevation of Murasaki's novel to the

status of “literature” (*bungaku*, a newly emerging cognitive domain), which, along with science, philosophy, art and other humanistic endeavors, was seen as the measure of a nation’s degree of civilization. Suzuki shows how the *Genji* became, in Tsubouchi Shōyō’s words, the harbinger of the “artistic, realistic novel” (p. 243), despite its sometimes embarrassing eroticism. As a nationalism-driven demonstration that Japanese modernism, and indeed the genre of the novel itself, had existed as early as the tenth century, (bowdlerized) selections from the *Genji* became required reading in secondary-, then primary-school education during the 1930s. The story is, of course, not that simple, and Suzuki takes us through the process of the *Genji* becoming a political hot potato during the rise of imperialism prior to its emergence as a “cultural symbol for overseas consumption” (p. 277).

Masaaki Kobayashi’s (Aoyama Gakuin Women’s College, Tokyo) “Wartime Japan, the Imperial Line, and *The Tale of Genji*” elucidates how the caesura in the lineage of emperors caused by the ascension of Reizei, the illegitimate son of the commoner Genji, collided head-on with government propaganda asserting “a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal” (p. 288). Although the *Genji* was recognized as an exemplary ambassador to show off the ancient sophisticated elegance of Japanese culture, the troubling episode of Reizei’s parentage equated with blasphemy. It set off heated debates over whether the *Genji* should remain in the public domain. When Tanizaki Jun’ichirō began the first of his three translations of the *Genji* in 1939, the “proofreader” (read: censor) forced him to expunge Murasaki’s offending references undercutting the myth of an unbroken imperial line. Kobayashi elegantly concludes that “in the particular context of wartime Japan, when propaganda was transforming the idea of the emperor system into reality, pushing it to ever greater extremes, the line that separated ‘tales’ from ‘history,’ fiction from fact, was gradually whittled away until finally it became so thin as to be nonexistent. This brought the fiction of the ‘tale’ of the ‘Great Empire of Japan’ into direct conflict with the fiction of the *Genji*” (p. 298).

PART IV, “THE POSTWAR SHŌWA AND HEISEI PERIODS: VISUALITY, SEXUALITY, AND MASS CULTURE” (TWO ESSAYS)

Kazuhiro Tateishi’s (Ferris Women’s University, Yokohama) “*The Tale of Genji* in Postwar Film: Emperor, Aestheticism, and the Erotic” takes up six films representing various phases of a postwar *Genji* boom. The productions, dating from 1951 to 2001, reveal ways mass culture managed to sensationalize, internationalize and cash in on this enduring classic. Tateishi argues that these films oscillate between the two poles of aestheticism and eroticism, all the while treating the imperial house/imperial promiscuity with the traditional kid gloves. He shows how they contributed to the fueling of Orientalist exoticism abroad, which looped back to Japan, pressed into service of national self-identity.

The films also raise the question of government censorship versus self-censorship by the producers, and the taboo lines that cannot be crossed in portrayals of the imperial family. We see the *Genji* as a vehicle to ferry

Freudian, surrealist, imperialist and sexist tropes. We see also the mass market cannibalizing and feeding off of itself. Later filmic versions became increasingly divorced from what was left of Murasaki's novel, and began to incorporate, not to mention plagiarize from, one another and pop culture at large. The *Genji* became part of the "adult film" repertoire (so-called "eroductions") when the movie industry slumped during the late 1960s. In the anime version of 1987, *Genji* has long (hippielike) hair and pierced ears—symbols of rebellious youth.

Tateishi's final example, *Love of a Thousand Years: The Tale of the Shining Genji* (2001), is a product of eleven corporations and media agencies cashing in on the new millennium, the fiftieth anniversary of Tōei Animation, and what was touted as the thousandth anniversary of the creation of the tale. The hype surrounding its release was worthy of Hollywood itself, and that glitzy venue was chosen for the movie's debut. But, like all media productions, this was no innocent entertainment film; the (anachronistic) depiction of exoticized neighboring nations gathering to pay court at the feet of the emperor led one critic to call it a "dark conspiracy of the right wing, business, and media" (p. 321). Tateishi concludes, "Many of the essential elements of *Genji* popular culture can be found in *Love of a Thousand Years*. Indeed, it can be argued that it is not a film adaptation of *The Tale of Genji*, but a rendering into film of *Genji* culture—mixing the colonial imagination, imperial profanity, Orientalism, comic-book-ization, recycled *Genji* imagery, and the marketing of classical education" (p. 321). Tateishi's discourse applies to popular culture in general, and his essay serves as a kind of road map through larger complexities of our postmodern media- and consumer-driven society.

Equally—if not even more—illuminating of postmodern popular culture is Yuika Kitamura's (Kobe University) "Sexuality, Gender, and *The Tale of Genji* in Modern Japanese Translations and *Manga*." "*Genji* culture" might appropriately come to be termed "*Genji* industry." Millions of Japanese participated as purveyors and consumers in this collective enterprise to dumb down, hot up, lighten, darken, romanticize, psychologize, pornographize or otherwise profit from Murasaki's classic tale. To deal with this tidal wave of post-1960s material, Kitamura chose six examples of so-called "free translations" from a mass of popular material that must number in the tens of thousands. Four of these are illustrated either with cartoon drawings or (amazingly, in one case) photographs using Caucasian models! (The latter is unfortunately not illustrated in the Shirane volume.) There was a *Genji* for every target audience: young girls (virgins); sexually experienced women (presumed, of course, to be married); discontented women who delighted in hearing *Genji* female characters recite their grudges; or horny college students cramming for exams (midnight oil sweetened with titillation). Targeted also were readers who wanted to be entertained by hyped-up notions of Heian culture (pictured as a steamy combo of elegance, fantasy, love affairs and various kinds of sado-eroticism)—readers who liked looking at illustrations, but didn't want to be bothered to plow through more demanding translations. Categories of venues featuring these often-serialized productions are also telling: girls' comics (*shōjo manga*); ladies'

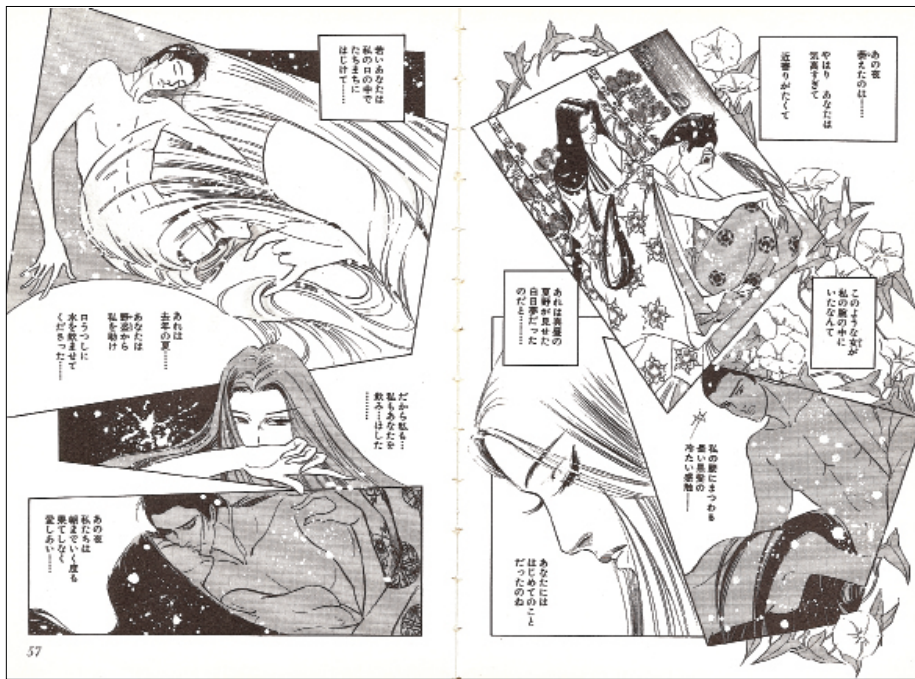


FIG. 3. Maki Miyako. *Lady Rokujō Performs Fellatio on Genji*, from *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*), vol. 2. 1997. 15.2 x 10.8 cm. Courtesy Shōgakukan

as his offsprings’—to have sex whether the woman wanted it or not (“any woman who was sexually involved with Genji, the emperor’s son, was truly fortunate”) (p. 351). Another work, aimed at the pockets of what must have been an enormous readership of career-oriented women fretting in a sexist society, gave *Genji*’s female characters voices filled with bitterness and vindictiveness (the work also includes sadomasochism, women’s masturbation and an illustration of Lady Rokujō performing fellatio on Genji) (fig. 3). One romanticized comic-book version became the basis for performances by the all-woman troupe Takarazuka. One wishes that the author of this otherwise compelling article had pointed out that it is one thing for Murasaki in the tenth century to speak of women as weak, helpless creatures with loathsome bodies; it is quite another to hear these sentiments parroted in the late twentieth century by almost all the writers she discusses. The fallout from ancient sexist attitudes remains with us even today.

* * *

One of the advantages of such a diversity of scholarly perspective is that the anthology covers territory that (like the *Genji* itself) far exceeds the grasp of a single individual. Polyphony of voices is always welcome, although the quality of the essays varies from the very provocative to the pedestrian. Different readers will bring to the table as many different perspectives and expectations as the authors. This raises the question: Who is the intended audience?

The book addresses itself to specialists; it is not likely to be intelligible to English-speaking undergraduates, because of its presumption of prior knowledge, generally dry academic tone, abundance of specialized terms and pervasive use of Japanese. It would appear that the ideal readership might consist of the fellow contributors, but there is little evidence that they’ve read one another’s essays. References back and forth between articles in the volume are conspicuous by their scarcity. An extreme example

of this is Tateishi making no reference to Kobayashi's preceding essay, but rather leading the reader in an endnote to three of Kobayashi's publications in Japanese on the same subject. The assumption seems to be that readers will peruse the book sequentially, which doesn't often happen with anthologies. The Japanese authors, with few exceptions, cite only Japanese sources. Carolyn Wheelwright's article on the murals at Azuchi Castle, for example, should have been included in the notes documenting the discussion of Azuchi Castle decor along with the Japanese articles cited (see "A Visualization of Eitoku's Lost Paintings at Azuchi Castle," in George Elison and Bardwell L. Smith, eds., *Warlords, Artists, and Commoners: Japan in the Sixteenth Century* [Honolulu: The University Press of Hawai'i, 1981], 87–111). Ditto for the various articles in English on *mitate* (juxtaposition of discrepant motifs for aesthetic affect), to name but two examples.

One could also carp about the notes, bibliography and index. These seem to be whimsical and random, provided as they struck the writer's fancy. The numbering of the notes in Kitamura's article somehow got off by one: when I looked up note 66, a reference to Frederick Schodt's *Manga! Manga!*, I found that the information the author was citing in Schodt was really in note 67. Why did no one notice that there are two notes numbered 79 at the end (p. 352)? Why, similarly, does the bibliography reference Penelope Mason's very general *History of Japanese Art* (New York: Abrams, 1993), but ignore more scholarly offerings such as Laura Allen's "Japanese Exemplars for a New Age: *Genji* Paintings from the Seventeenth-century Tosa School," in Elizabeth Lillehoj, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Classicism in Japanese Paintings, 1600–1700* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 99–132 or Eiko Kondo's "*Inaka Genji* Series" in Matthi Forrer, ed., *Essays on Japanese Art Presented to Jack Hillier* (London: R.G. Sawyers, 1982).

There are twelve color plates of fairly good quality, and sixty-six black-and-white illustrations, many of which are too small to appreciate. Many times the reader cannot see motifs being discussed in the text, but this is not as frustrating as the numerous occasions where images are described without being reproduced at all. Since Michael Emmerich dilates so eloquently on the beauty and subtlety of the printing in Kunisada's deluxe *Bumpkin Murasaki* as central to his argument, it is inexplicable that this splendid work should be illustrated only in small black-and-whites.

Quibbles aside, this anthology vividly charts specific ways Murasaki's tale took on astonishing dimensions. Beyond its immediate subject, the book is really about universal processes of cultural formation through appropriation, assimilation and representation. It does double duty by providing a thought-provoking study of a seminal work, as well as holding up a mirror to ourselves and our own somewhat crazy world. ☺

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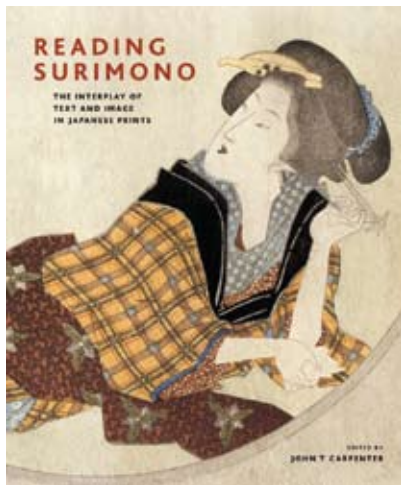


FIG. 1. Catalogue cover

Reading Surimono: The Interplay of Text and Image in Japanese Prints.

Edited by John T. Carpenter. Exh. cat. Leiden and Boston: Museum Rietberg Zurich, in association with Hotei Publishing, 2008. 432 pages, including bibliography and index. Over 400 color illustrations. Cloth \$147

Sometimes you can judge a book by its cover. Or, rather, covers. *Reading Surimono*'s dust jacket presents a detail of a print by Harukawa Goshichi from the mid-1820s, *Woman Reclining Near a Round Window* (fig. 1). The photography reveals great detail: the texture of the paper; the checkerboard pattern of the woman's collar, which seems to rise up from the page, and one may almost trace every hair on the woman's head. Clearly, this book is going to be a thing of beauty.

The actual cover, underneath the dust jacket, shows something very different. Here, we find a no-nonsense, gray cover, with the title, *Reading Surimono*, embossed in Bauhaus-favored sans serif font. The purpose of this publication is also pedagogic: if you actually want to learn how to read *surimono* (deluxe, privately printed woodblock prints)—their images, their texts and their contexts—this is the book for you.

John T. Carpenter, Reader in the History of Japanese Art at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, has established himself as the leading expert of his generation on *surimono* in the English-speaking world. This is his third catalogue-length foray into the field, and there is no doubt that the third time is the charm. In his earlier publications, both with Joan B. Mirviss—*The Frank Lloyd Wright Collection of Surimono*, exh. cat. (New York: Weatherhill; Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1995) and *Jewels of Japanese Printmaking: Surimono of the Bunka–Bunsei Era 1804–1830*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: Ōta Memorial Museum of Art/Nihon Keizai Shinbun, 2000)—there were prints included without their poems transcribed, or transcribed but not translated, and the descriptions, of both the images and the poetry circles that produced them, were nowhere as exhaustive as in the present work. This time, Carpenter and his collaborators tell the reader just about everything one could possibly wish to know about nearly three hundred prints bequeathed to the Museum of Design Zurich by Marino Lusy (1880–1954), the Swiss artist who amassed this impressive collection. The prints were recently placed on long-term loan to the Museum Rietberg Zurich. Lusy was a wealthy bachelor of Greek descent who grew up in Trieste. His hobbies included mountaineering and languages. He never achieved major recognition as an artist.

The scholarship required for the kind of treatment presented in the catalogue is staggering. One cannot turn to the bibliography here to find a number of publications by Japanese scholars that Carpenter et al. have simply translated. Of the more than one hundred titles listed in the “Select Bibliography,” twenty-eight are sales catalogues. Out of the first one hundred prints in the catalogue, at least twenty-six have no previous reference, and probably ten of those that do refer to previous reproductions of the images. In other words, conservatively, 50–75 percent of the near three hundred prints Carpenter discusses required him to start from scratch: identify the poet; identify the theme(s); read, transcribe and translate the

FIG. 2. Totoya Hokkei. *Number Two* (*Sono ni*), from the series *The Boulder Door of Spring* (*Haru no iwato*). 1825. Color woodcut with metallic pigment, *surimono shikishiban*, 2nd sheet of a pentptych. 21.5 x 18.3 cm. Lusy Collection, Museum Rietberg Zurich



poems; and make the connections between the poems and the images. The advances Carpenter has made can be seen by comparing the entry to a print by Totoya Hokkei in the Frank Lloyd Wright exhibition catalogue with one in the Lusy (chosen more or less at random) (fig. 2):

[Wright]

Sarutahiko, a Shinto deity, is described as having an extremely long nose and shining eyes. As in this pentptych, he is traditionally portrayed before the cave in which the goddess Amaterasu has hidden herself.

The presence of the cock and hen serves to indicate that this series was commissioned for a bird year. The decorative scalloped medallions on the garments and textiles in some of the prints in this set include stylized bird motifs.

[Lusy]

The print belongs to a continuous pentptych, with gold clouds against a deep blue background, illustrating the story of Amaterasu, the sun goddess. According to Japanese mythology, Amaterasu, having been insulted by her younger brother Susano, flees and hides in a cave, depriving the world of sunlight. The word *iwato* in the series title refers to the “boulder door” she used to block the cave entrance. Eventually she is lured from the cave by the music and dance performed by a group of fellow deities outside.

Above the title cartouche is the drum-shaped emblem of the Taiko-ren, founded in the late Bunka period by Dondonteï Wataru. The fourth print in the set has a poem signed Dondonteï, but this must be Dondonteï II, since Dondonteï I died in the seventh month of 1822.

Surimono were given by poetry groups and individuals as New Year's greetings and, accordingly, were rich in both visual imagery associated with the holiday's various ceremonies and practices, and in verbal imagery and tropes related to the auspicious occasion. Beyond this, however, many of the prints' descriptions and the quotidian scenes they represent allow the authors to give readers a veritable glossary of useful Edo-period words and expressions:

When a wealthy patron purchased the contract of a courtesan or geisha, and set her up as his private mistress, she became known as his "personally arranged flower" (*te-ike no hana*), as mentioned in the title of this print [cat. no. 235]. This young woman therefore can be considered a *mekake* or *kakoimono* (kept woman). . . . She has propped a songbook against a tobacco box containing a narrow pipe holder and a *hi-ire*, a ceramic vessel that contains ash and small pieces of charcoal used to light the small-bowled tobacco pipe (p. 357).

(Actually, the bamboo tube is not a pipe holder; it is used to knock the ash out of the pipe bowl after smoking.)

In terms of the poetry, many of the original Japanese words have to be explained, as the poems are a web of puns and allusions. Carpenter and Alfred Haft, an independent scholar based in London who wrote some of the entries, are usually deft at untangling these webs for the English reader. Again, an example, more or less at random:

The lower half of the diptych has four poems. The first refers to the *tsuki-hi-boshi*, "moon, sun and stars," which is the song of the warbler. In the second poem, *torioi* are itinerant women who go door to door at the New Year singing *torioi-uta* (folksongs). The poem likens the three strings of the shamisen to the glistening streams of a waterfall. . . . The third poem seems to pun on *haru ni au* (greeting spring) and *ōmu no kaeshi-uta* [*au* can also be pronounced *ō*], "a reply-poem parroted," referring to the legend of Ōmu [Parrot] Komachi. . . . The final poem likens the slow pace of the oxen to the *ashi* (legs or rays) of the sun in spring, when the days are said to be slow because they last longer than in winter (p. 340).

Moreover, the translations of the several poems on one print give a real sense of the *renga*, or linked-verse, nature of this group enterprise (p. 313):

Kinjūen Futaki

<i>Otomego no</i>	Like a little girl
<i>ito utsukushiki</i>	so cute and charming
<i>kakegoe ya</i>	chanting with the music,
<i>tsuzumi no ume ni</i>	a warbler sings to the beat
<i>kinaku uguisu</i>	of a plum-shaped drum.

Kokintei Tōshi

<i>Yawarakaki</i>	Soft reedlike fingers
<i>tsubana no tesaki</i>	tap the "drum flowers,"

tsuzumi gusa
uchinabikasete
harukaze zo fuku

which faintly echoes
 in the spring breeze,
 softly blowing.

Shakuyakutei

Kōri sae
kesa tokesomeshi
kanze mizu
ōgi no te ni mo
sasou harukaze

This morning, even the ice
 in the “swirling water” crest
 on the fan begins to thaw
 as the fingers of the spring
 breeze beckon us closer.

FIG. 3. Marino Lusy. *Badger in Moonlight*, after a hanging scroll by Mori Sosen. 1912. Etching. 24.4 x 13.1 cm. Graphics Collection, Museum of Design Zurich



The first poem suggests that the drumhead a little girl is beating looks like a plum blossom, and then imagines the spring warbler (always associated with the plum) as singing along to the beat. The second poem takes the image of drum beating and imagines the “soft fingers,” or fingertips (*tesaki*), of the reeds (*tsubana*) striking the “drum flowers,” or grasses (*tsuzumi gusa*)—another name for dandelions—setting them adrift in the spring breeze (*harukaze*). This unloosening of the dandelions suggests to the third poet the “loosening” (*tokesomeshi*) of winter ice in the warmth of spring, a common poetic trope. The flowing water in turn suggests *kanze mizu*, the swirling water crest of the Kanze noh lineage, depicted on a fan used in noh dancing, and so referring back to the *tsuzumi* drum that keeps the beat for the dancer.

The pictures themselves offer a whole other level of allusion (though sometimes they don’t—Kunisada’s image for the three poems above simply shows a music teacher watching a little girl beating out the rhythm for her dancing classmate). In the European tradition, *ekphrasis*, or the verbal description of a visual work of art, presupposes that the picture precedes the description or poem written for it. In *surimono*, however, the poems seem to come first, and they are then given to the artist, who devises an image appropriate to one or more of the verses. Sometimes the liberty taken by the artist can be impressive, as in a work by Shinsai (cat. no. 254): to three relatively standard New Year’s poems he adds the image of a courtesan performing as the warrior Watanabe no Tsuna and a reformed demon (*nenbutsu oni*) depicted in folk *Ōtsu-e* (paintings made in Ōtsu), carrying a merchant’s account book. The multifarious associations and allusions, verbal and visual, are all thoroughly explained in Haft’s entry.

In addition to the superlative catalogue itself, there is the introduction by Carpenter, along with eleven essays by an international team of scholars. Nadin Heé introduces the collector Marino Lusy, who was a talented lithographer and etcher, and points out some of the influences of Japanese art on his prints (fig. 3). Joan B. Mirviss explores the sources of Lusy’s collection,

which were almost exclusively in Paris; during his one trip to Japan, he appears to have bought no prints at all. Mirviss discusses the famous dealers of Paris, such as Hayashi Tadamasu (1853–1906). It is interesting to note that Lusy was very much a second-generation collector, and that many of his prints were acquired at the auctions of famous first-generation nineteenth-century French collectors such as Louis Gonse, Charles Gillot and Charles Haviland. Lusy was unusual, however, in focusing on figurative *surimono*, rather than the more popular still-life compositions.

Daniel McKee discusses the social function of *surimono*; that is, as New Year's ritual objects, and provides a fine summary of the various beliefs and practices that surrounded this important date in the early modern Japanese calendar. Kobayashi Fumiko looks at the other side of the equation, the use of *surimono* by their sponsoring poetry circles. She focuses on the Four Quarters Group (Yomo-gawa) and its use of *surimono* to do such things as announce a poet's new poetry name or serve as advertising and self-promotion.

In his essay on the Shippō (Seven Treasures) Poetry Circle, Makino Satoshi examines the relationship between its leader, Fukunoya Uchinari, and the designer Gakutei Sadaoka, by focusing on the latter's seven-print series (*Women*) *Viewed as the Seven Gods of Good Fortune* (*Mitate shichifukujin*).

Tsuda Mayumi surveys the prints commissioned by Mōri Narimoto (aka Edo no Hananari) (1794–1836), the twelfth daimyo of Chōshū, who was both an avid *kyōka* (comic verse) poet and kabuki fan, and who commissioned several *surimono* featuring actors such as the superstar Ichikawa Danjūrō VII. Carpenter, following up on an earlier essay on Kubo Shunman, *kyōka* and the nativist (*kokugaku*) movement (in Amy Newland, ed., *The Commercial and Cultural Climate of Japanese Printmaking* [Amsterdam: Hotei, 2004]), looks at the historicizing process and use of indigenous motifs in late-Edo *surimono*. Verse and imagery of the Bunka (1804–18) and Bunsei (1818–30) eras look back to court culture and traditional literature.

An essay by Iwata Hideyuki returns us to the Danjūrō lineage represented in *surimono*. Specifically, he examines the role kabuki fans played through a commission of *surimono* in establishing the “kabuki eighteen” (*kabuki jūbachiban*), or the eighteen favorite plays or roles, associated with the Danjūrō line. Hans Bjarne Thomsen explores the use of Chinese subjects in *surimono*, while Haft examines the concept of *mitate* (comparisons between two sequences of seemingly unrelated things) in another series based on a Chinese subject, Gakutei's *Courtesans Viewed as Immortals* (*Keisei mitate ressenden*). Finally, Daan Kok looks at another of Gakutei's series, *Twenty-four Generals for the Katsushika Circle* (*Katsushika nijūshishō*).

All in all, this is a magisterial production. As suggested by the picture on the dust jacket, as though allowing the reader to peer through a moon window and gaze on the young woman at her ease, this book provides an exceptional glimpse into the art, culture, politics and everyday life of early nineteenth century Japan. One can imagine no more charming tutorial. ☞

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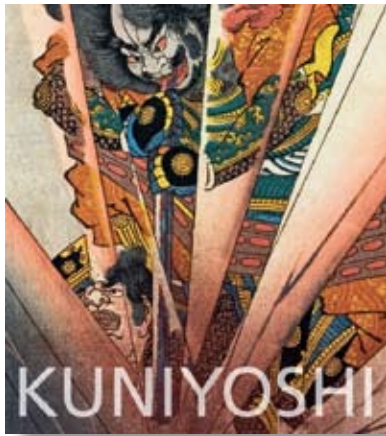


FIG. 1. Catalogue cover

Kuniyoshi: From the Arthur R. Miller Collection. By Timothy Clark.

London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2009. Hardcover distributed by Harry N. Abrams in the U.S.A. 303 pages, including a glossary, bibliography and index. 137 color plates and 16 black-and-white illustrations. Cloth £40.00, softcover £24.99; Abrams, Cloth \$80; Japan Society, Softcover \$39.90 (available online)

It has been twelve years since the Philadelphia Museum of Art presented the outstanding 1998 exhibition *Heroes and Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi 1797–1861*. A great ukiyo-e artist, Utagawa Kuniyoshi's dynamic warriors, powerful triptych designs and satirical prints make him a peer of Hokusai (1760–1849) and Hiroshige (1797–1858). Now, thanks to Arthur R. Miller and the Royal Academy of Arts, about the time this publication arrives a broad overview of the artist's work will open at Japan Society in New York (March 12–June 13, 2010). The exhibition *Kuniyoshi: From the Arthur R. Miller Collection* opened in spring 2009 at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. Its curators were Timothy Clark, head of the Japanese Section, Department of Asia, British Museum; Israel Goldman, the London-based American dealer of Japanese prints; and Adrian Locke of the Royal Academy. Clark, a highly respected and prolific scholar of ukiyo-e, is the author of the catalogue. Although the catalogue consists mainly of works from the Miller collection, it also includes loans from several British museums, as well as American and Japanese private collections (the private loans from Japan and loans from the National Museums Scotland and the Fitzwilliam Museum will not travel to New York) (fig. 1).

Readers may remember Arthur Miller, formerly of the Harvard Law School and currently University Professor at New York University School of Law, as the eminent legal scholar and commentator on ABC, PBS and Court TV. Professor Miller began collecting Kuniyoshi prints in London thirty years ago with the help of the dealers Richard Kruml and later, Israel Goldman. He also developed a friendship with the late Basil W. Robinson, the renowned Kuniyoshi specialist and former Keeper of the Metalwork Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum. [For a tribute to Robinson, see David Waterhouse, "B. W. Robinson (1912–2005): Curator and Collector," *Impressions* 28 (2006–2007): 101–3. Ed.]. Because of this London connection, Miller is giving his almost two thousand prints by the artist to the British Museum through the American Friends of the British Museum. One cannot help but be delighted that the prints will go to a great public collection. Nevertheless, Americans may regret that the works are not going to our national museum of Asian art, The Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

The catalogue, a beautiful picture book intended primarily for the general museum-going audience, will also be useful for students and specialists because of its excellent entries. The lively and well-written essay "Kuniyoshi and Censorship" concisely elucidates Kuniyoshi's artistic biography and ukiyo-e's collaborative process, focusing on two periods in the artist's career, 1842–43 and around 1853. Drawing on Japanese as well as English-language sources (especially Iwakiri Yuriko), Clark carefully explicates the effects of the



FIG. 2. Utagawa Kuniyoshi. *Monk Mongaku Does Penance in Nachi Waterfall*. 1851–52. Color woodcut, vertical *ōban* triptych. 37.3 x 25.6 cm, each approx. American Friends of the British Museum (The Arthur R. Miller Collection) 19212

Tenpō Reforms both on the publishing industry and on Kuniyoshi. Footnotes lead the reader to lengthier discussions if he or she wishes further information.

In the Edo period, the most popular prints were always those of the women of the pleasure quarters and kabuki. After the ban on courtesans and actor prints in 1842, Kuniyoshi turned to warriors, comic subjects, beauties and children’s themes, such as his *Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety for Children*. [For Kuniyoshi’s Chinese themes, see Ellis Tinios, “Kuniyoshi and Chinese Subjects: Pushing the Boundaries,” in this issue. Ed.] The first two define the artist for most of us. Many of Kuniyoshi’s spectacular triptychs on warrior and mythological subjects were produced during a period of strict censorship in 1845 and 1847. Kuniyoshi and his publishers got around the ban on beautiful women by depicting females from history such as *Thirty-six Immortals of Poetry: Mirrors of Ethics for Girls* (cat. 56) and ordinary women in moralizing and daily-life series such as *Pride of Edo: Comparison of Famous Products* (cat. 59). The artist designed approximately ten thousand prints, and one of the most interesting facts that emerges from these pages is the size of the market for his work. A printed note on a design in the series *Biographies of Loyal and Righteous Samurai* of 1847 indicates that “some eight thousand impressions of each of the fifty-one designs were printed and sold, amounting to a staggering 408,000 sheets” (p. 27).

The rest of the book is dedicated to the 137 catalogue entries. Divided into five parts—warriors, beautiful women, landscapes, theater and humor—each section begins with a one-page essay that summarizes the artist’s treatment of the subject. Clark discusses variant print states when pertinent to the Miller impression. For example, Clark explains that Miller’s vertical triptych *Monk Mongaku Does Penance in Nachi Waterfall*, 1851–52, comes from the second printing in which curling lines of blue foam replace the embossing at the bottom in the first printing (fig. 2).

In addition to color reproductions of each entry, color details are frequently included. Full cataloging information, including references to other publications, is standard throughout. These references sometimes lead one to translations of the poems and/or other texts included in the printed image. Clark frequently summarizes and interprets the texts, including information on the source of the subject and references to it in the writings of Kuniyoshi’s contemporaries. A few prints have no references listed—such as the triptych of *Three Women in a Hilltop Teahouse* (cat. no. 67). Readers would like to know if the print is unique or merely unpublished but in a known collection.

The entries incorporate recent findings from the Japanese-language literature unavailable to many students and collectors. For example, the triptych *Last Stand of the Kusunoki Heroes at Shijō-Nawate* (cat. no. 32) was published in 1851 (fig. 3). In 1857, a new publisher with the trademark “Aito” took over publication of the design and asked Kuniyoshi to supply another match. These 1857 triptychs have sometimes been considered six continuous sheets. Clark informs us that Iwakiri Yuriko, by dating the prints’ seals, proved they are two separate triptychs published four months apart.

The curators enrich our understanding of the artist and his working process by supplementing the Miller Collection with loans. In comparing



FIG. 3. Utagawa Kuniyoshi. *Last Stand of the Kusunoki Heroes at Shijō-Nawate*. 1851. Color woodcut, *ōban* triptych. 38 x 25.8 cm, each approx. American Friends of the British Museum (The Arthur R. Miller Collection) 18402

the *ōban* half-length portrait print with the preparatory drawing of *Ichikawa Ebizō V as the Pirate Kezori Kuemon*, 1840 (cat. nos. 108, 109) from a private New York collection, Clark points out bold reworking of the outlines—particularly of the neck and collar—in the drawing to create a more powerful and dynamic image when transferred to the block. He also calls attention to the reddish color applied to the forehead and cheeks in the drawing that required overprinting with an additional block to create the effect of a strong, masculine visage in the completed work. Two block-ready drawings (*hanshita-e*) for unpublished prints (cat. nos. 15, 16) from the Victoria and Albert Museum are also important loans. They reveal Kuniyoshi's skillful draftsmanship and the finished state of the detailed drawing required for the block-cutter.

An exhibition of a private collection—particularly one formed in the late twentieth century—is quite different from a show assembled by the curator. It reveals both the taste of the collector and what was available to him or her in the market. Professor Miller is a print collector. There are only two paintings in the catalogue, and both are loans. Clark, particularly knowledgeable about ukiyo-e painting, writes that the scholarship of Kuniyoshi's paintings is still in an early stage. The most comprehensive listing of the artist's signed paintings contains sixty-two items, but Clark suggests that further research will add more works to this list.

Unlike exhibition catalogues that are meant to open new paths in scholarship with multiple essays and somewhat abbreviated individual entries, *Kuniyoshi: From the Arthur R. Miller Collection* documents a collection and its exhibition. It does not break new ground—nor was it meant to do so, but it draws on Timothy Clark's formidable scholarship, and it deserves a place in every print library. ❁

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FIG. 1. Catalogue cover. Courtesy Phaidon Press (www.phaidon.com)

Hitoshi Abe. By Naomi Pollock. London: Phaidon Press, 2008. 208 pages. 300 color plates; 50 black-and-white illustrations. Cloth \$79.95

Abe Hitoshi (b. 1962), still in his forties, has already achieved remarkable success as an architect and teacher in Japan and abroad. After winning the career-making competition for the design of the Miyagi Stadium in Rifu, Miyagi Prefecture, at the age of thirty, Abe soon established a thriving practice in and around his hometown of Sendai in northeastern Japan (figs. 1–4). This monograph appeared not long after he achieved another milestone: his appointment as Chair of the Department of Architecture and Urban Design at UCLA, a move that has significantly enhanced Abe’s international profile.

The author, Naomi Pollock, was trained as an architect, but has directed much of her professional energy to writing on Japanese architecture. She has produced one other volume for Phaidon, devoted to Japanese residences (*Modern Japanese House*), and her writings have appeared in *Architectural Record*, *The New York Times* and other publications.

The book is richly illustrated by black-and-white and hundreds of color photographs drawn from a variety of sources, including the respected architectural photographer Ano Daici and the staff of the publishing house Shinkenchikusha. Clear plans, sections and conceptual drawings supplement the photographs. Reproduction quality is high, and the book design showcases the images well. The result is an extremely handsome package.

Pollock opens her study with an introduction that outlines Abe’s education and his career to date. Next, she analyzes twenty-six of his most significant designs. They range from the above-mentioned stadium to pachinko game parlors to medical clinics to small private houses constructed in a remarkable variety of building materials, such as timber frame and steel construction, perforated aluminum panels and autoclaved lightweight concrete. Pollock is at her best when she outlines the parameters of each design and walks the reader through Abe’s design process. Architects often



FIG. 2. Abe Hitoshi. October 2008. Photo: Jason Odell

face daunting challenges when building in urban Japan—high building costs with limited budgets, and small and irregular sites. Pollock, drawing on her training, effectively demonstrates how successfully this architect has responded to those challenges in a number of his projects, and contributes a helpful analysis of Abe’s innovative choice of building materials, as when she explains the complexities in executing the ornamental punched-metal screens throughout the Aoba-tei restaurant (see figure 4).

Pollock is less effective at placing Abe within a context of architectural practice in Japan or globally. She does emphasize



FIG. 3. Abe Hitoshi. Miyagi Stadium. Rifu, Miyagi Prefecture. 2000. Photo: Eiji Kitada

that he launched his design career in Sendai, rather than in Tokyo, but does not clarify what the significance of that decision might have been. Does this mean that he was at a disadvantage in pursuing major contracts in the capital? Was he ignored by the Japanese architectural press? We learn from Pollock that several of Abe's commissions came from old friends and acquaintances. On balance, was his location an advantage because, as a Sendai native, he was better situated to exploit existing contacts in this smaller market in building his client base? Do his designs in some way reflect their location in the northeast? The reader would benefit from further exploration of these issues.

Even more important, Pollock does little to help us understand the relationship between Abe's work and that of his predecessors and contemporaries. He is a cosmopolitan architect with training both at Tōhoku University and at Southern California Institute of Architecture whose first hands-on experience was in the Los Angeles office of Coop Himmelb(l)au under the Viennese architect Wolf Prix. It is evident from one look at his designs that Abe is working in dialogue with a diverse array of architectural precedents. Pollock makes a few passing references to premodern Japanese



FIG. 4. Abe Hitoshi. Aoba-tei restaurant interior, view from counter. Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture. 2005. Photo: Shinken-chikusha

architecture, such as the comparison of porches or other similar spaces in Abe's designs to verandas (*engawa*). Another less-convincing claim is that a narrow passageway in a Sendai bar was reminiscent of the approach to traditional shrines and temples. But what is the connection between Abe's semitransparent screens of wood and metal and the punched metal screens so loved by slightly older contemporaries, such as Itō Tōyō or Hasegawa Itsuko? In what way does Abe's almost sculptural use of concrete resemble or break away from Andō Tadao's precedent-setting use of that material? Is there justification in comparing Abe's JB House (2003) with Le Corbusier's Villa Savoy, in terms of the way Abe lifts the mass of the house above gravel parking spaces? Once that model is brought to mind, it is difficult not to see Abe's curious placement of an altarlike pedestal sink in one of the exterior courts beneath the house as a nod to the sink at the entrance to Le Corbusier's iconic building. It is only through comparisons such as these that one can come to understand Abe's development as an architect and to assess his own contributions to the profession.

Despite these unanswered questions, *Hitoshi Abe* is a welcome exploration of the early stage in what promises to be a long and productive career of one of Japan's most exciting architects. ☪

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Glossary of Print Terms

<i>aiban</i>	“Medium-large, or intermediate format,” prints measuring approximately 23.5 x 33 cm, a size between <i>chūban</i> and <i>ōban</i> .
<i>bai-ōban</i>	“Double <i>ōban</i> ,” a print measuring about 35 x 46 cm.
<i>benizuri-e</i>	“Picture printed with red,” an early form of color printing. During the 1740s and 1750s, <i>benizuri-e</i> were printed in two colors, usually safflower red (<i>beni</i>) and green. During the late 1750s and 1760s, prints called <i>benizuri-e</i> were generally printed with dilute forms of yellow, red and blue, a palette that continued to be used for inexpensive prints until the beginning of the nineteenth century.
<i>chūban</i>	“Medium format,” a term used for prints on three different sizes of paper: 1) from the early eighteenth century onward, half of an <i>ōban</i> sheet (see below); 2) during the late 1760s, a quarter of a large, heavy <i>ōbōsho</i> sheet (approximately 29 x 22 cm); and 3) half of an <i>aiban</i> sheet (approximately 16.5 x 23 cm), a size popular for inexpensive prints from the 1770s through the mid-nineteenth century.
<i>hosoban</i>	“Narrow format,” small, narrow print in vertical format typically measuring 33 x 14.3 cm.
<i>kakemono-e</i>	“Hanging-scroll picture,” a term used in Western writing in the early twentieth century as a catchall to describe a variety of prints in extralarge format, including those made in the late seventeenth–early eighteenth century that we would now call <i>ōōban</i> . In current Japanese scholarship the term <i>kakemono-e</i> is used to describe vertical <i>ōban</i> diptychs that were popular in the nineteenth century and that were often sold mounted as hanging scrolls.
key block	The block from which the outlines of a picture are printed, usually in black, and to which the color blocks are “keyed” for accurate registration.
<i>nagaban</i>	“Long format,” a print measuring approximately 52 x 24 cm.
<i>ōban</i>	“Large format,” a print in either vertical or horizontal format and the most common size of woodcut from the 1790s through the nineteenth century. In the first half of the eighteenth century, <i>ōban</i> were printed on a half sheet of Mino paper measuring approximately 45.7 x 33 cm. Beginning in the 1760s, they were printed on half of a smaller sheet measuring approximately 38.1 x 25.4 cm.
<i>ōōban</i>	“Extralarge block,” a standard format for black-and-white and hand-colored prints from about 1670 to the mid-1710s, measuring approximately 54.5–64.5 x 30.5–33 cm. A smaller sheet of paper was pieced to the bottom of the print to extend its length: close inspection will reveal a horizontal seam.
pillar print	<i>Hashira-e</i> , “pillar picture,” a tall, narrow print measuring approximately 69–75 x 112–17 cm, said to have been mounted as a hanging scroll and displayed on a wooden pillar.
<i>sumizuri-e</i>	“Picture printed in black ink,” an uncolored print.
<i>surimono</i>	“Printed thing,” woodblock print generally of small square format, roughly 20 x 18 cm, or in a long horizontal format; usually accompanied by poems, and often commissioned privately in a limited deluxe edition.

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