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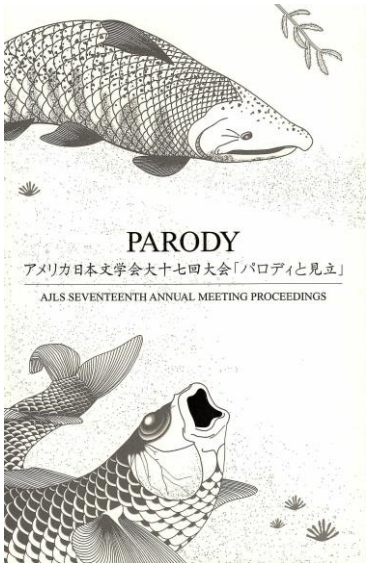

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ON PARODY, APPROPRIATION, AND IDEOLOGY IN HARUNOBU'S IMAGES OF SERICULTURE

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FOREWORD

This paper focuses on the print *Weaving* 機織 by Suzuki Harunobu 鈴木春信 (c. 1725–1770) as a case-study of parody (Figure 1). The print depicts a tender-looking girl seated by the loom; absorbed in operating the machine, she is unaware of the toddler crouching by her legs gazing under her kimono. Or perhaps she is aware of that gaze, since she raises an uncommonly large shuttle in a rather unnatural pose? Below I argue that this mischievous gaze turns the weaving girl from a signifier of a virtuous lady into a playful parody.

Figure 1. Suzuki Harunobu. *Throwing the Shuttle (Weaving).* 1765 Size: chūban (10 7/8 x 8 1/8"). Clarence Buckingham Collection 1937.21, The Art Institute of Chicago. Photography © The Art Institute of Chicago.

By examining the precedents of this seventeenth century image, I propose that Chinese models played a significant role in the formulation of ukiyo-e imagery, and consequently in ukiyo-e parodies (or *mitate-e* 見立絵). Moreover, by associating the Chinese models with Neo-Confucianism, I suggest that variations on Chinese images of sericulture communicated an ideological stance. Appropriation of Chinese images

could mean support of their ideology, and the use of erotic imagery together with Chinese themes could be used to subvert the ideology associated with the Chinese works. Likewise, Japanization of the theme could reflect the rise of a proto-nationalistic discourse concerning native traditions. I conclude by suggesting that the definition of parody was not conditioned by formal similarities, but by reception.

Timothy Clark, in his comprehensive article on *mitate*, divided scholarly discussions of *mitate-e* into three areas: semantic, analytical, and interpretive.[1] Here I prefer to avoid the semantic discussion and simply use the English term "parody" as defined by Hutcheon: "repetition with critical distance."[2] My paper pertains to the analytic and interpretive discussion of parody prints, through examining aspects of painting-practices and reception.[3]

IMAGES OF WEAVING IN CHINA

The Japanese imported Chinese paintings and illustrated books throughout history, and these played an important role in the development of visual parodies in Japan. Images of women preparing silk were ubiquitous in China from the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), but particularly well known are imperial scrolls from the Tang Dynasty (618–917 CE) depicting court ladies preparing silk and weaving textiles.[4] Popular illustrated books, produced in great numbers from the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) onwards, often displayed similar vignettes of weaving women. Didactic in nature, they elucidated in detail the technical procedures of silk-making, as in the case of the *Book of Agriculture* 農書 (Jp. *nōsho*; Ch. *nongshu*) by Wang Zhen 王禎 (Figure 2). Readers also encounter illustrations of a weaving woman in the famous story about the mother of Mencius 孟子 (Ch. Mengi, Jp. Moshi) in the well-known textbook *Biographies of Exemplary Women* 烈女伝 (Ch. *lienu zhuan*. Jp. *retsujoden*).[5] The story narrates how, after the young

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[1] Clark 1997.
[2] Hutcheon 1985, p. 6.
[3] The idea for this paper arose during my dissertation research concerning ideological messages in the depictions of rice agriculture and silk production in early modern Japan.
[4] Wang 1995.
[5] An early version was composed during the Han dynasty by Liu Xiang 劉向 (80–9 BCE) and entered Japan in the ninth century. Popular illustrated editions surged in China during the Ming and the Qing dynasties (1368–1911), and were reproduced in Japan no later than 1650. See Allen 2004, p. 131.and Waltner 2002.

Figure 2. *Weaving.* Image reproduced from *Nong Shu* 1969. Vol. 285 (n.p.) (original 1313, vol.24(8)).

Mencius left school early one day, his mother reprimanded him by saying that a man who neglects his studies is like a woman who abandons her weaving—both "may end up as common thieves if not slaves. Shaken, Mencius studied hard […] and eventually became a famous Confucian scholar. Superior men observed that Mencius' mother understood the way of motherhood."[6] This superior role-model was thus illustrated by the loom with her young son looking up to her (Figure 3). The loom in such images is an attribute of the ideal Confucian woman.

Figure 3. *Mencius and His Mother.* Late Ming. Woodblock print. From *Lü Kun*, ed. Guifan, She Yongning edition, late 16th to early 17th c. Image reproduced from: Wicks 2002. Photo courtesy of Harvard-Yenching Library. Harvard University.

[6] Waltner 2002, p. 88.

An additional Chinese genre related to images of weaving which had particular influence in Japan is titled *Pictures of Sericulture* 養蚕図 (Ch. yangcantu, Jp. yōsanzu). *Pictures of Sericulture* refers to a series of twenty-four scenes, each depicting a phase in silk production throughout the year: from raising the silkworms and feeding them mulberry leaves in spring, to spinning and weaving the thread unwound from the cocoons in autumn (Figure 4). This pictorial series was produced together with *Pictures of Agriculture*—a similarly educational sequence of vignettes depicting the production of rice. Beginning in the 12th century, the combined themes of *Pictures of Agriculture and Sericulture* 耕織図 (Ch. *gengzhitu*, Jp. *kōshokuzu*) were favored at the Chinese court as a means to show the emperor and empress examples of commoners' hard labor.

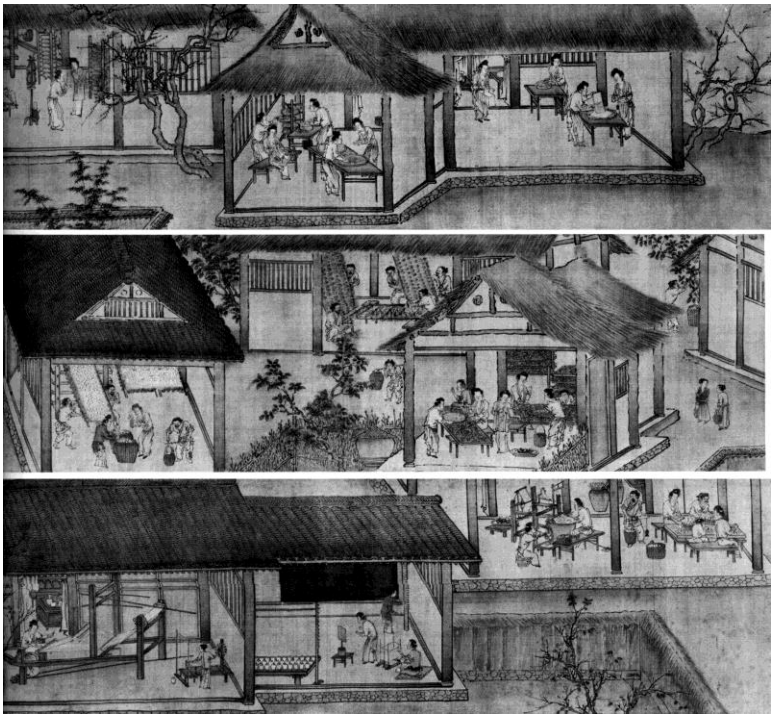

Figure 4. Attributed to Liang Kai (Chinese, Southern Song dynasty). *Sericulture* (The Process of Making Silk), early 12th century. Handscroll, ink and color on silk; 1st section: 26.5x92.2; 2nd section: 27.5x92.2; 3rd section: 27.3x93.5 cm. © The Cleveland Museum of Art. John L. Severance Fund 1977.5

Rice and silk signified food and clothes, the essentials of living. Moreover, since rice and silk were paid as taxes they signified imperial wealth and stability. Thus looking at the images showed attentiveness to the tax-paying subjects, and reconfirmed the heavenly mandate of the court.[7] Namely, representing idealized pictures from the life of the commoners communicated political legitimacy, which turned the images into politically charged signs.[8] It is against this background that a copy of *Pictures of Agriculture and Sericulture* entered the art collection of the Ashikaga shoguns during the fifteenth century; the canonization of the paintings and their later reproduction in Japan are related to their pedagogic role at the Chinese court. "Agriculture and sericulture" stood also as a synecdoche for the Confucian tenet, since the phrase to describe a harmonious society was "men plow and women weave" 男耕女織.[9] Examining women and sericulture in premodern China, Francesca Bray wrote: "where the social order of the state forms a continuum with the conduct of family life, women's behavior is a matter of political concern even though they live in seclusion from what we might think of as the public sphere."[10] I extend Bray's claim to suggest that representations of agriculture and sericulture as forms of social order instruct the viewers to follow their model. Namely, the images instructed the viewers to practice obedience in all five relations 五輪: wives and husbands, children and parents, siblings, friends, and subjects and sovereign. This message was further emphasized in early modern Japanese society when rice was reassessed as the base of the country's economy.

For such reasons, *Pictures of Agriculture and Sericulture* became one of the models practiced by the official painters of the shoguns, the Kano school 狩野派.

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[7] Pictures of Agriculture and Sericulture are categorized as "pictures of admonition" (Jp. kankaiga 鑑戒画). This term refers to paintings of historical or legendary figures, known for their virtuous or evil deeds. The term combines the Chinese characters for "reflection" and "admonition," thus suggesting that looking at worthy figures generates an admonishing function, since the viewer is asked to reflect upon one's acts and to correct one's ways. The term is also written as "paintings of emulation and admonition" 勧戒画", in reference to the moral imperative to encourage the good and warn against evil 勧善戒悪. Reizei et al. 1996, p. 72.

[8] On the complex political role of the images during the Song Dynasty, see Hammers 2002.

[9] Bray 1997, p. 183.

[10] Bray 1997, p. 243.

APPROPRIATION AND CHANGE IN THE WORKS OF THE KANO SCHOOL

Customary to family-centered workshops in premodern Japan, the Kano school masters trained their disciples through repetitive copying of models.[11] The model books 粉本, comprised mostly of reproductions of Chinese ink paintings, were employed as a stock of vignettes and were rearranged into new compositions. The scrolls of *Pictures of Agriculture and Sericulture* attributed to the Southern Song painter Liang Kai 梁楷 (fl. late 12th–early 13th century) became such a model; borrowed scenes from this painting can be detected in dozens of folding screens produced by Kano painters from the sixteenth century onwards. The characteristics of the newly adapted artwork were dictated by the patrons' liking, and—as importantly—by their finances (since the number of figures in a folding screen was related to the price paid by the commissioner). Therefore, the Kano school played the old Confucian game of showing virtue through imitation or copying.[12]

It would be wrong, however, to describe the Kano school paintings as series of reproductions. Models were constantly altered and refashioned, and new styles and themes were devised. Of particular interest to our case is the Japanization of *Pictures of Agriculture and Sericulture*; from the seventeenth century onwards, a growing number of paintings depict the formerly Chinese farmers and sericulturists dressed in Japanese apparel against a rural landscape decorated with seasonal motifs 景物 (Figure 5). Dissimilarly to the Chinese model, the painters depicted female laborers in the paddies, as it was common in Japan for young women to conduct the rice-planting in supplication for fertility.[13] What could have been the meaning of such Japanization and gender-change?

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[11] Issues of copying practices in Japan, particularly at the Kano school, are discussed in Jordan and Weston 2003.

[12] The modern demand for progress and originality excludes "copies" from the definition of art. However, it is important to realize that according to the Confucian ethics ancestors (and that includes painters of antiquity) were idealized and emulated. "Copying" was in fact the sixth law in the canonic aesthetic theory of Xie He 謝赫 (6th c.).

[13] Yanagita Kunio's study of rice and reproduction is referred to by all later scholars. See for example, Ohnuki-Tierney 1994 p. 56.

Figure 5. Torii Kiyomasu II 鳥居清倍 (1706–1763). *Farmers in the Four Seasons no. 3: Rice Harvest* 四季の百姓／秋：稲苅りの図. British Museum online collection 1954,0410,0.3 © Trustees of the British Museum.

According to Clark, the viewer of *mitate-e* took pleasure in unwinding the "collision" of items borrowed from two different worlds. For instance, a parody print depicting a courtesan in the guise of Meng Zong generated a humorous reaction because of the unexpected combination of the classic male figure with the plebian and contemporary figure of a courtesan.[14] Still, despite the similar changes we see in the Kano works—in nationality, gender, time period, and artistic media—the depiction of the Japanese women farmers does not reflect critical distance.[15]

Studies of ukiyo-e extensively discuss the relation between the depicted figures and the visual culture at the pleasure quarters, but the relation between ukiyo-e and contemporaneous paintings, which were

[14] Clark 1997.

[15] A similar tendency can be noted in a much more renowned theme: *The Eight Views of Xiao and Xiang*. While *Eight Views of Ōmi* is taken to be a derivative of the classic theme, *The Eight Views of the House* 座敷八景 by Harunobu is a parody (Fūryū yatsushi).

produced for the wealthy townspeople or daimyo calls for further examination. Although we know that many ukiyo-e painters were trained under Kano artists, comparisons between the models and practices used by the two schools have yet to be drawn. Here I argue that similarly to Kano school painters, ukiyo-e painters relied heavily on mixing-and-matching past models. Printed painting manuals 画譜 (Ch. huapu, Jp. gafu) were important sources of visual inspiration. For marketing reasons, conservative images were updated and revised to create a fresh and fashionable appeal.[16] For instance, nothing in Utamaro's 歌麿 image *Woman Bathing a Child* (Figure 6) discloses a relation to the classic *Scenes of Song Court Ladies*, which was probably borrowed from *Master Gu's Manual of Painting* 顧氏畫譜 (Ch. *Gushihuapu*)(Figure 7).[17] However, the rarity of the theme—cleaning the dripping nose of a boy—together with the position of the figures and the household items, indicates that Utamaro knew the Chinese model before creating his updated version. Since nothing in Utamaro's print points to an external image, it cannot be categorized as an imitation or "collision," and thus it is not a parody or *mitate*. Therefore I suggest that it is the decoding (or reception) of the image, rather than the intent behind its formation, that is essential for defining it as "parody."

Figure 6. Kitagawa Utamaro. *Woman Bathing a Child*. c. 1801. Color woodblock. 37.2x25.2cm. Private collection. Image reproduced from: Shugō and Clark 1995.

[16] The manners in which the image of an ukiyo-e painter was constructed to appeal to the audience are discussed in Davis 2007.
[17] The Master Gu's Manual of Painting was published in China c. 1603. It is not clear when the book was imported to Japan or whether it was reprinted there.

Figure 7. *Woman Bathing a Child*. 1603.Woodblock reproduction of *Scenes of Song Court Ladies*, in: *Master Gu's Manual of Painting* 顧氏畫譜. Image reproduced from: *Gushihuapu* 1974.

PRINTED PAINTING MANUALS AND APPROPRIATION

Printed Chinese painting manuals were popular in Japan throughout the Edo period.[18] Earlier on, only established painters could afford to purchase imported illustrated books, but with the increase in the importation of books from the continent and the development of the Japanese printing industry in the seventeenth century, painting manuals became affordable for amateur and independent artists. I propose that these manuals inspired early ukiyo-e parodies. My goal here is not to assign some sort of hierarchy, in which China or Japan is privileged. Instead, I am suggesting that the Japanese print artists operated in a network much larger than their immediate urban centers or the Japanese elite culture of previous generations. I suggest that the *ukiyo-e* world of visual references and production techniques consciously derived much of its inspiration from Chinese popular culture.

Chinese illustrated books were purchased by Japanese publishers who would copy them into new engraving blocks,[19] occasionally adding explanations for Japanese pronunciation (*kundoku*) and new introductions. Book titles that begin with one of Japan's alternative names (*honchō* 本朝, *yamato* 大和, *fusō* 扶桑 or with *wakan* 和漢 (Japanese-Chinese)) usually

[18] Machida Shiritsu Kokusai Hanga Bijutsukan 1990.
[19] Kornicki 1998, p. 153–55.

indicate that the book is a local adaptation modeled after a Chinese text. Such titles emphasize that the images of Japan were constructed vis-à-vis Chinese culture, even when seclusion and censorship seemingly forbade such connections.[20]

An important role in the dissemination of Chinese motifs in ukiyo-e was played by Tachibana Morikuni 橘守国 (1679–1748). Morikuni had studied with the Tsurusawa branch 鶴沢流 of the Kano school; yet he is known almost solely for publishing series of illustrated books. Later biographies suggest that Morikuni published the secret model books of the Kano school,[21] leading to his disgraceful expulsion.[22] Whether Morikuni disclosed the secret models of his teachers or marketed Chinese manuals as being Kano school model books is still to be argued. There is no doubt, however, that his illustrations had a profound influence on most print artists. Here I focus on his role in the dissemination of weaving images. His book *The Illustrated Treasure of Direct Transmission* 絵本直指宝 was published in 1745 and is among the earliest printed Japanese images of sericultural techniques.[23] Similar to the Chinese models of *Pictures of Sericulture* discussed above, the consecutive images show the technical process of silk production: harvesting the mulberry leaves, boiling the cocoons, and weaving. It was after the publication of Morikuni's book that images of sericulturists and weaving women entered the domain of popular visual culture.[24] Two

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[20] For instance, I conjecture that *One Hundred Japanese Women* 和国百女 by Hishikawa Moronobu 菱川師宣 (1618–1694) was modeled after a Chinese manual. The title and composition of some of the images in this book suggest a Chinese model. Similarly to Moronobu, the Chinese *Painting Manual of One Hundred Beauties* 百美圖譜 focuses on beauties absorbed in their daily chores, but the earlier extant copy is dated to 1804, which may actually suggest a Japanese influence on Chinese books. This question requires further research. It is interesting to note that the Chinese title is in itself a parody, since it puns the classic *Painting Manual of Hundred Plums* 百梅圖譜 (Yuan dynasty). Moronobu's book was emulated by Nishikawa Sukenobu's 西川祐信 (1671–1750) *Hundred women* 百女郎品定, which in itself turned into an important source for Suzuki Harunobu's images. Still, beyond the iconographic interest, did such imitations carry a "critical distance"?

[21] Like most guilds, the Kano school kept their professional manuals secret, since publishing the models would be a threat to their livelihood. Hence, the act attributed to Morikuni was a major transgression against his teachers.

[22] Asano 1985.

[23] Morikuni's illustrations maintained their influence through the nineteenth century, and vignettes from his works can be detected in Hokusai's *Manga*.

[24] Fukushima Prefectural Museum 1998, p. 46.

important characteristics suggest the influence of Kano on Morikuni, and thus on ukiyo-e: the preference for the Japanized version over the Chinese original, and the fact that the printed version maintained the edifying messages regarding the hard labor of women conducted in accordance with the changing seasons. As we will see, these points are crucial for the interpretation of Harunobu's image of weaving (Figure 1) as parody.

EROTIC GAZE AND CRITICAL IMITATION

In *Weaving*, Harunobu repeated the same attributes of earlier images: a woman seated at the loom, her body turned in three-quarter pose so that the viewer may appreciate her technical skills. We have also seen that images of weaving were intended as didactic devices; as depictions of women adhering to their domestic roles, they conveyed a message to follow the Confucian path. By inserting erotic overtones into this didactic model, I believe that Harunobu was making a point regarding Confucian values and their distributers. Transforming a virtuous Confucian lady and her son, perhaps even the child Mengzi and his virtuous mother, into a sexy girl and lascivious toddler is too critical a change to go unnoticed among his literate audience. I therefore propose that inserting a forbidden erotic element into a conservative theme made an image into parody.

Toddlers were actually a recurring motif in erotic prints. Hayakawa Monta suggested that, as in other images of children at play, they symbolized marital bliss, thus such erotic images simply reflect a different set of taboos than, say, North American ethics permits.[25] This explanation does not suffice to explain the absence of female children in such scenes, and ignores the strong voyeuristic element attributed to the children in many of these images. The gaze of the pictured voyeur in erotic prints offers a sophisticated reflection on the gaze of the actual viewer.[26] This gaze, I propose, can be interpreted also as a critical comment on Confucian truisms regarding women, as expressed in popular edifying books.[27] In order to better explain my assumption I digress to discuss the most famous voyeur in erotic prints.

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[25] Hayakawa 2000.
[26] Screech 1999.
[27] On women's education, see for example, Tocco 2003.

THE ELEGANT AND PLEASURE-SEEKING MANE'EMON[28]

The book *The Elegant and Pleasure-Seeking Mane'emon* (*Fūryū Enshoku Mane'emon* 風流艶色真似ゑもん)[29]—was designed by Harunobu in cooperation with the writer Komatsuya Hyakki 小松屋百亀 (1720–1793). The plot is charged with humorous allusions to famous lovers and travelers found in Japanese literature. The fantastic exposition narrates how, in his attempts to be enlightened in the secrets of *shiki-dō* (色道), Mane'emon was minimized to the size of a bean, and launched on an extensive journey, in and around Edo and its pleasure quarters. *Shiki-dō* is often translated as "the way of love", or "the way of Eros," and refers to sophisticated indulgence in the sensual pleasures offered by the pleasure quarters, from courtesans to music.[30] In each of the twenty-four illustrated episodes Mane'emon visits a different place and learns a new lesson. The first half of the series takes place in commoners' neighborhoods and in villages around the Kantō area. The second part of the book takes place in the Shinyoshiwara 新吉原 pleasure quarter. While visits to the Yoshiwara courtesans were an obligatory theme in erotic narratives, visits to commoners' houses are more unusual in this genre, and call for a closer reading.

A careful reading of the texts and dialogues of the first part of the series reveals that the scenes portray everything but pleasure and elegance; mostly, the men force themselves on their counterparts in an aggressive or pathetic manner. While previous interpretations concentrate on the depiction of the sexual act, the texts suggest an alternative and

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[28] The series is fully produced and discussed in detail in Hayakawa 2001. Much of my analysis is based on this source. The series is discussed also in: Klompmakers 2001.

[29] *Fūryū* 風流 and *enshoku* 艶色 are intricate cultural terms referring to the protagonist's stylishness, savoir vivre, and pleasure-seeking. See Clark 2007 for the relation between fūryū and parody. Enshoku and shiki-dō are often translated in reference to carnal desire, although the terms refer to the "how," not only the "what" in relation to sensuality.

[30] The term was coined in the 1670s and became culturally influential thanks to Fujimoto (Hatakeyma) Kizan's *shiki-dō ōkagami* 色道大鏡 (1678)—an encyclopedic compendium concerning the customs and experiences of the pleasure quarters. Conventionally shiki-dō is translated as the "way of love." However it is love in the Buddhist, not the Christian tradition. More accurately, the term "shiki" refers to the senses through which humans perceive the physical world and led to suffering. Shiki-dō, is thus the way of the senses, desire and attachment, and carries heretic meanings from the Buddhist perspective. Here I suggest that shiki-dō is the reverse image of the Confucian "way of heaven" 天道.

subversive reading. Interpreting the images as visual parodies of illustrations in pedagogic texts supports the conjecture that this series particular interest here are the sixth episode, which takes place in an agricultural setting, and the tenth episode, which is a sericultural scene.

MANE'EMON AS PARODY OF CONFUCIAN TEXTBOOKS

In episode 10 Mane'emon finds himself in a room being used to raise silkworms (Figure 8). Along the back wall silkworms nest on mulberry bedding in special baskets arranged on shelves. Similar settings are repeated in various adaptations of *Pictures of Sericulture.* The feeding of the silkworms during springtime is the most labor-intensive and crucial time in silk-production, since the grower's investment depends upon the worms surviving the many ailments which threaten their young lives. Consequently, there were many taboos associated with the spaces used to raise silk worms.

Figure 8. Suzuki Harunobu. *Fūryū Enshoku Mane'emon*, episode 10. Image reproduced from: Klompmakers 2001 p. 73. Courtesy of Koninklijke Brill NV. © Collection Scholten Japanese Art, New York.

Nonetheless, the husband in this episode returns from the city aroused after glancing at an erotic book, and cannot wait to have his wife. But the woman refuses his maneuvers by stressing that the silkworms

(pronounced the same as "children:" *ko*) would be disturbed.[31] Her refusal testifies to her acquaintance with sericultural taboos, and possibly, a set of values in which household considerations restrain and even extinguish desire. Such values are evident also in episode 3, in which the wife is reluctant to have sex since she is busy tending her mother-in-law, and episode 4 in which the pregnant wife would not have sex with her husband (who is caught with the maid). Namely, Mane'emon's search for *shiki-dō* emphasizes its absence in the homes of the commoners. And it is women's education and Confucian values that appear to be in tension with desire. I therefore wish to see Mane'emon along the same line as the toddler who looks under the weaving girl's kimono discussed above. In both scenes sericulture is a metaphor for correct feminine behavior, and in both it is the desiring gaze that ridicules the chastity of these women.

The sixth scene, euphemistically titled *Lovers in the Rice Field*, is unusual for several reasons; first, erotic scenes were seldom depicted in exteriors.[32] Second, thought of as country bumpkins, farmers symbolized the opposite of the refined and urban *shiki-dō,* and therefore rarely appeared in erotic prints or literature. The text explains that Mane'emon turned to the countryside, where he saw an odd and funny scene that "he could not help laughing."[33] The image depicts a man wearing a samurai sword and a demonic Noh mask (perhaps one associated with Tengu)[34] forcing himself on a young farming girl, who bends down in the classic posture of rice planting while her parents watch them in awe. The figures and composition of this theme connote traditional depictions of rice planting festivals. A comic-strip like script details the conversation between the characters: the samurai pretends to be a descendant of Inari (the god of rice), and promises the joyous farmer a bountiful harvest for his daughter. Observing this scene with much amusement, Mane'emon

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[31] The word "silkworms" 蚕 (Jp. kaiko) is pronounced similarly to child-raising (飼ゐ子). Both activities symbolize women's domestic duties and were used interchangeably.

[32] See Screech (1999) for a reproduction and discussion of this image, p. 249.

[33] Translation by Patricia Fister, in: Hayakawa 2001, p. 110.

[34] Masks of various kinds appear in many of Harunobu's shunga. The mask can be related to the theme of concealing and revealing common in Harunobu's prints, such as transparent clothes and voyeurism. Hayakawa suggested that the scene alludes to ancient fertility rites that included sex during the planting season. Scholars do not agree whether actual sex was indeed performed in public as part of rice planting rituals. At the same time, even rumors of such festivals (mentioned for example in Saikaku's novel *Kōshoku Ichidai Otoku*) could inspire the authors and receivers.

comments: "Just the kind of thing people mock those clodhoppers for."[35] Mane'emon's figure is a clever literary device. His special position as a passive voyeur fulfills two roles: he is both the protagonist and a representation of the audience. We can also interpret this scene to reflect the condescending emotions of city residents towards the ignorant peasants, their greed, and perhaps misconceptions of planting rituals. But this scene is also a mockery of depictions of farmers in pedagogic textbooks.

As in the case of sericulture, from the beginning of the eighteenth century motifs of agriculture were reproduced in elite paintings as well as in popular books, and became part of common visual knowledge. Particularly well-known are *The Compendium of Farming* 農業全書 (1697), and the didactic textbook for women *The Treasure Box of Women's Great Learning* 女大学宝箱 (1716). Both books are known for their heavily Confucian messages, as well as for practical advice that made them best-sellers throughout the Edo period.[36] These books were adorned with several double-spreads of agricultural activities throughout the year. Motifs were chosen from the many themes found in the *Pictures of Agriculture* described above; the illustrations repeat the same fashions of plowing and irrigation that originally appeared in Song Dynasty paintings. An additional variation on *Pictures of Agriculture* was created by the successful Kyoto-based painter Nishikawa Sukenobu 西川祐信 (1651–1751) in *Illustrated Book of the Four Social Classes* 絵本士農工商 (1729).[37] In the beginning of his career, Sukenobu studied with Kano Einō 狩野永納 (1631–1697)—the head of the Kyoto branch of the Kano atelier—but he gained his fame primarily thanks to his erotic prints. Sukenobu's illustration of farmers for the pornographic novel *Pillow Book: The Great Opening* 枕本：太開記 (c.1720)[38] was modeled after his illustration of farmers in the *Four Social Classes.* Scholars argue over whether or not Harunobu studied directly under Sukenobu in Kyoto; nevertheless, there is no doubt that Harunobu based many of his designs on Sukenobu's models,[39] and that the illustration to episode 6 is almost a copy of Sukenobu's *Great Opening*. Examining the visual similarities led

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[35] Hayakawa 2001, p. 111.
[36] For the English translations, see Najita 1993.
[37] Kōno 2000.
[38] The image is reproduced in Screech 1999, p. 241.
[39] For detailed discussion of the visual similarities between Harunobu and Sukenobu, see Tanabe 1990.

me to believe that *Lovers in the Rice Field* parodies its models, the *Book of Agriculture* and *Women's Great Learning*.[40]

Beyond the borrowed iconography, Mane'emon's sarcastic comment "Just the kind of think people mock those clodhoppers for." calls our attention to a message much broader than the immediate joke of a samurai pretending to hold the divine powers of a Shinto god to have sex. Harunobu, as Sukenobu before him, was also parodying the heavily politically charged messages conveyed by the original pedagogic texts. According to such a reading, a samurai promising his stupid subordinates abundant harvest in return for obedience and hard work is a metaphor for the general abuse in the relationship between samurai and farmers. This attitude refutes the all-inclusive messages of social harmony conveyed by the pedagogic texts, and ridicules the philosophical legitimacy of the shogunate.

CRITICAL REPRESENTATION AND CENSORSHIP

Conventionally in a set of twelve erotic prints, one print would depict violent or weird love-making.[41] Yet, in the first set of the Mane'emon series, most of the sex-scenes he observes outside of the pleasure quarters may be described as being either violent or grotesque. All lead to the impression that *shiki-dō* is not to be found in the domestic arena. Indeed, *shiki-dō* was defined as being a pursuit undertaken exclusively in the pleasure quarters, as an escape from loveless marriages and the confining regulations of "real" life. To borrow Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding, the pleasure quarters were a carnival site, a binary opposition to prosaic or domestic norms. Or, according to William Lindsey's book *Fertility and Pleasure*, wives represented the orthodox model of Confucian values, but courtesans represented the heterodox.[42] I am inspired to see a similar model in *Mane'emon*'s images: while the normative women do not cooperate with non-reproductive sex, prostitutes are offering sensual pleasures. Yet, despite the opposing images, Lindsey maintains that there were many similarities between the Confucian socialization of girls into wives, and the socialization of girls

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[40] See also Gerstle (2007) for the close study of an erotic parody and *Women's Great Learning*. For an erotic parody of Confucian texts by Hiraga Gennai and Harunobu see Newland 2005, pp. 58–59.

[41] Thompson and Harootunian 1991, p. 44.

[42] Lindsey (2007) analyzes the socialization of women into the role of a wife or the role of the courtesan as conducted through similar rituals based on Confucian thought.

into prostitutes. This similarity is indeed apparent in the second part of Mane'emon's travels, when he arrives in the Yoshiwara, and peeps into the boudoirs of the courtesans. Contrary to the expectations of the print's receivers, tension, rejection, and limitation also characterize most encounters in the Yoshiwara. For instance, in five episodes the client is scolded for his disobedience after approaching an apprentice instead of waiting for his courtesan. While the Mane'emon series presents itself as a man's search for sexual enlightenment, a closer reading of the images and texts points to an alternative narrative: social regulations, either those stemming from the way of the heavens (*tendō*) or from the way of the senses (*shiki-dō*), are in conflict with uncurbed desires. The story, both visually and textually, indicates a Buddhist worldview and more than a grain of cynicism regarding edifying texts in the Confucian spirit. It is important to note that although Harunobu flourished prior to the Kansei reforms (1787–1793) when government enforcement of censorship-regulations was relatively lax, open political criticism was severely punished.[43] I therefore propose that the erotic print was used as a witty means to bypass censorship; between the lines of the erotic message, the receiver could sense discomfort and opposition towards the Confucian social stratification and shogunal rule.

Mane'emon displays a particularly intricate set of motifs, but it also calls our attention to the fact that erotic prints were a politically subversive medium. It was politically subversive not only because producing and purchasing pornography was illegal, or because non-reproductive sex did not accord with the official ideology, *shunga* (erotic prints) were politically subversive because they presented the official ideology as being fallacious. Future research may further fine-tune the place of women in *shunga* as embodiments of the institutionalized ideology, and contextualize erotic images in the political discourse of the time. However it is already evident that *shunga* cannot only be understood as documenting the sexual customs of the early modern period.

This point leads me to propose that we should also examine social taboos and censorship when attempting to define parodies in ukiyo-e. The central place of appropriation in the art world of early modern Japan complicates the definition of imitation and makes proving the existence of critical messages difficult. As we saw, we cannot count merely on visual comparisons in order to decide whether an image was received as

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[43] Thompson and Harootunian 1991, p. 56.

subverting or supporting societal norms. But, the fact that eroticism, as well as criticism of Confucianism, were forbidden by edicts from 1722 onwards can assist us in defining the critical aspect of "parody" and its distinction from imitation.

SERICULTURE AND JAPANESE MYTHS

Weaving is a charged motif in the Japanese tradition due to its association with the sun goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神. According to the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712), Susanoo 須佐之男, in his attempts to destruct his sister's authority, caused havoc in the rice fields, defecated in the Great Tasting Hall for new rice, and threw a piebald's hide into the Sacred Weaving Hall.[44] It is not coincidental that the sacred spaces Susanoo chose as objects for his transgression against Amaterasu's authority are ritual sites associated with rice-farming and silk-weaving.[45] As I discussed above, on the continent agriculture and sericulture were identified with the heavenly mandate; they were sites of political legitimacy and cosmic harmony. Defiling these sites would, consequently, imbalance the cosmos and undermine the legitimate status of the regime.[46] The *Kojiki* tells us that upon seeing Susanoo's acts "the heavenly weaving maiden, […] was alarmed, and with the shuttle stabbing her genitals she died."[47] Was Harunobu referring to this narrative when he constructed his composition? Note how the composition leads from the boy's eyes to the girl's genitalia to the shuttle (Figure 1), in a manner suggesting a visual association between the girl's genitalia and the shuttle. Such an unexpected association would add an additional layer of *mitate* for the amused viewers. But can we assume that Harunobu and his audience were well-versed in mythological stories?

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[44] See Naumann 1982, pp. 9–-10 for the three versions of the story in the Kojiki and the Nihon-shoki.

[45] While the text does not state what materials were woven, the references to a horse and sacred garments suggest that "weaving" referred to silk.

[46] Naumann (1982) decodes Susanoo's transgressions as "black magic" against Amaterasu's cosmic power of light and fertility. Although my explanation is based on a different set of terms, it continues Naumann's findings: disharmonizing a symbolic space was believed to upset the larger cosmic balance and thus delegitimized the authority of the ruler. Consequently, Amaterasu was forced to retire to the cave.

[47] In: Naumann 1982, p. 10.

The series *Leaves of Silkworm-Raising* 蚕養い草 (c. 1772) by Katsukawa Shunshō 勝川 春章 (1726–1793) and Kitao Shigemasa 北尾 重政 (1739–1820) suggests that it would not be too far-fetched to attribute some knowledge of the ancient scriptures to the work's audience. This is a *nishiki-e* series of twelve prints closely based on the images and texts of Morikuni discussed earlier. Print number 11 (Figure 9) depicts the classic vignette of a weaving woman, and carries an inscription explaining that in the land of the rising sun rituals dedicated to silkworms date back to ancient times. The text mentions two anecdotes from the book of gods in the *Nihon-shoki* 日本書紀: the appearance of silkworms and mulberry trees from the head of Wakumusubi 和久産巣日, and Emperor Yūryaku's 雄略天皇 ordering that his consorts to tend mulberry trees. These references suggest that the print's audience was expected to have some knowledge of the structure and content of the *Nihon-shoki*, and thus perhaps recognized Harunobu's pun of the scene describe in the *Kojiki.*

Figure 9. Katsukawa Shunshō 勝川 春章 (1726—1793). *Leaves of Silkworm-Raising, no. 11* 蚕養い草，第十一 © Trustees of the British Museum

Figure 10. Katsukawa Shunshō 勝川 春章 (1726—1793). *Leaves of Silkworm-Raising, no. 12* 蚕養い草、第十二 © Trustees of the British Museum

Print number 12 in Shunshō's and Shigemasa's series introduces a new theme to the canonical set of weaving vignettes: silk trade (Figure 10). It depicts a textile salesman at the door of two elegant women. One lady examines the pattern of a fashionable *obi*, while the other examines a pattern-book of kimono designs 雛形本 (Jp. *hinagatabon*). The inscription refers to ancient narratives of sewing in ancient Chinese and Japanese myths. The choice to end the print series with a depiction of commercial activity points to a key issue in the history of sericulture in Japan. During the seventeenth century, silk imports from China decreased significantly, which gave rise to the development of local production.[48] This process was accompanied by a burgeoning discourse concerning the Japanese character of local products and techniques vis-à-vis those of China, which is also apparent in other fields of Edo period culture. The Japanized images of sericulture seem to be part of this discourse, since they emphasize the importance of sericulture by linking it to Shinto myths and rituals from the distant Japanese past.

[48] Ukiyo-e reflect this surge in the local garment industry; many artists began their careers designing kimono patterns, which remained important motifs in this medium. Terming multi-colored prints "brocade pictures" 錦絵 perhaps refers to economic parallels in the manufacture of textiles and color prints.

The sericultural prints I examine here were produced at the time that Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801) composed his influential theories regarding the idiosyncrasy of Japan and its differences from China based on his new interpretations of the *Kojiki*. To a certain extent, the production and marketing of the sericultural images reflects this concurrent ideological discourse. Formerly Chinese symbols were Japanized to convey a new recognition that native traditions were the precedents of contemporary developments, while Chinese authoritative models and values were questioned. Harunobu's print *Weaving*, nevertheless, seems to parody all forms of ideological discourses.

Silk production developed and expanded in the later Edo period; by the Meiji period Japan took a leading role in the silk markets of Europe and the United States. During the modern period prints of sericulture were created to be undisguised nationalistic propaganda. Featuring the Meiji emperor and empress, Shinto gods, and advanced factories, these modern images of sericulture—though still drawing their structure and themes from the canonic vignettes— aimed at mobilizing women for the National body (Jp. kokutai 国体).[49] I argue here that we cannot disconnect the modern representations of the silk-industry and their political message from their precedents. Despite the very different nature of the Japanese state, nationalistic undertones were rooted in the discourse regarding silk production from the later half of the Edo period. It is no coincidence either that Empress Michiko is portrayed in current media as a patron of traditional sericulture.[50] This linkage of the empress to both archaic court rituals and the romantic image of traditional Japan is part of the struggle to gain imperial legitimacy through acknowledging the commoners' hard labor.

CONCLUSION

Browsing through Japanese representations of silk production establishes the charged political significance attributed to images of weaving. Examining Harunobu's print *Weaving* against this background reveals that it was a parody of exemplary women in popular Neo-Confucian texts.

Due to the great importance attributed to imitation in premodern Japanese painting practices, this examination problematizes the distinction between appropriation and parody (defined as "repetition with

[49] Yamazaki 2006.
[50] Imperial Household Agency 2005.

critical distance"). I therefore suggest that focusing on reception, through acknowledgement of visual taboos and censorship regulations, can prove a useful tool in the study of parody.

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