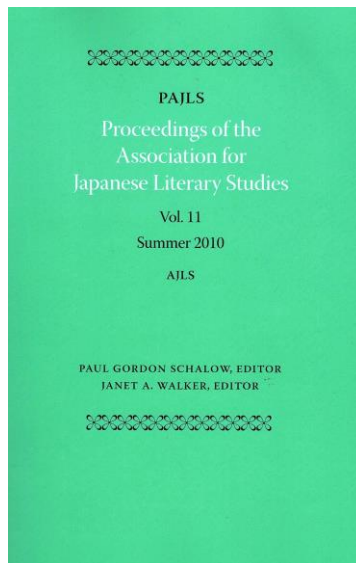


“Enjirō’s Revenge: Parodic Constructions of Masculinity in Early Modern *Kibyōshi*”

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# Enjirō's Revenge

## Parodic Constructions of Masculinity in Early Modern *Kibyōshi*

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In addition to the classic works of political satire for which the genre is best known, *kibyōshi* 黄表紙 (“yellow cover books”) also boasts an intriguing collection of coterie parodies, produced by writers in Tsutaya Jūzaburō's 蔦屋重三郎 (1750–1797) stable during the late Tenmei period (1785–1789), or what *kibyōshi* scholar Uda Toshihiko has termed the period of “gossip pieces” (1784–1787).<sup>1</sup> These works, which feature comic caricatures of Santō Kyōden 山東京伝 (1761–1816), Hōseidō Kisanji 朋誠堂喜三二 (1735–1815), Koikawa Harumachi 恋川春町 (1744–1789), Shiba Zenkō 芝全交 (1750–1793), Manzōtei 万象亭 (1754–1810) and other marquee names publishing under the Tsutaya imprint, offer a view into the social dynamics of circle affiliation, revealing how bonds of friendship were tested and reinforced through playful repartee between writers. Moreover, these works serve as compelling case studies for considering the social and discursive conditions that enabled the formation of authorial identity, the production of literary celebrity, and—insofar as coterie parodies thrived on depreciations of character, however ironic—the mechanisms by which asymmetries of power could be remapped within a given field of literary production. Accordingly, I propose reading these *kibyōshi* as narratives about the camaraderie and competition that animated Tsutaya's stable during its halcyon days in the late Tenmei, as well as guides to a unique, idiomatic discourse of power in which masculinity and sexual virility were projected as analogues to marketability and literary productivity.

In this paper, I refer to two *kibyōshi* works that construct masculinity within the context of coterie parody. The first, Tōrai Sanna's (1744?–1810) *Edo umare henbō tōri chō O-Edo hanasuji* (東産返報通町御江戸鼻筋 *Revenge of an Edo-born Playboy: The Bridge of the Nose at Tōri-chō, Edo, 1788*), presents a carefully wrought caricature of the writer Santō Kyōden as an *iro otoko* 色男 (sensuous man) par excellence, whose

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<sup>1</sup>Uda 1978, 102–107.

success with women ultimately causes him to fall victim to a vengeful literary creation. Conceived as a parodic hagiography of Kyōden, replete with biographical details and classical literary references, it provides one of the most salient examples of how the figure of the *iro otoko* was deployed to comment on a writer's productivity, reception, and celebrity. As such, it is a rich text for considering how Kyōden, at the time the undisputed star of Tsutaya's publishing house, was viewed by other writers in his circle. The second work, Manzōtei's *Iro otoko soko de mo koko de mo* (色男其処此处 *The Sensuous Man, There and About*, 1787), also deploys the figure of the *iro otoko*, but in a much less flattering assessment of a writer—in this case, Manzōtei himself. The self-caricature of the author as a bumbling aspirant to the *iro otoko* ideal, who makes several fruitless attempts to garner notoriety in the Yoshiwara before marrying a high-ranking courtesan, is a far cry from the suave seducer we find in Tōrai's *Revenge of an Edo-born Playboy*. In passing, I also refer to Sakuragawa Toho's 桜川杜芳 (d.1788) *Iro otoko tōde sanmon* (色男拾人三文 *Three Writings About Sensuous Men*, 1786), Shiba Zenkō's *Baka no yume: monmō zukai* (馬鹿夢文盲図解 *The Dreams of Fools: An Illiterate Encyclopedia*, 1785) and other *kibyōshi* works, which, while accorded negligible status in the canon of Edo literature, provide relevant context for the project at hand.

Implicit within all the works I refer to is a recognition of the Yoshiwara as a site for the social construction of masculinity, especially that of the *iro otoko*, whose idealized traits were good looks, attention to fashion and being *au courant* with the trends of the pleasure quarter. The New Yoshiwara (*Shin-Yoshiwara* 新吉原), which had been relocated to Asakusa after the Great Meireki Fire of Meireki 3 (1657), serves as both a setting for these stories and a testing ground, as it were, for the *iro otoko* characters depicted therein. The failures of aspirants to the *iro otoko* ideal, such as Manzōtei's Yorozuya Yashirō, become grist for comedy, especially in scenes where, through over-exuberance or ignorance of the mores of the quarter, they reveal themselves to be *yabo*—unrefined bumpkins. On the other hand, a worse fate awaits those who are too successful in achieving the *iro otoko* ideal—that is, when the attentions of multiple admirers compels them to violate Yoshiwara taboo and become entangled in a web of amorous relationships. In this scenario, the danger for the *iro otoko* lies in inciting the jealousy and resentment of other men, and consequently becoming a target of violence. Denjirō, the hero of Tōrai Sanna's *Revenge of an Edo-born Playboy*, meets with this fate.

Tracing the genealogy of *iro otoko* back to kabuki, we find that a salient violence motif coincides with the defining of the character type. Many *kibyōshi* writers cite kabuki texts and performances when presenting scenes of *iro otoko* characters falling victim to physical violence. Perhaps one of the best known scenes comes from Santō Kyōden's *Edo umare uwaki no kabayaki* (*Grilled and Basted Edo-born Playboy*, 1785), in which the main character, Enjirō, pays a group of thugs to beat him up in the middle of the *Naka no chō*, the main thoroughfare of the Yoshiwara, so that everyone can see. His reasoning, based on casual knowledge of a few kabuki plays, is that truly successful *iro otoko* make other men so jealous that they are in

danger of being roughed up at any moment.<sup>2</sup> Of course, the irony of this scene lies in its choreography—Enjirō is not a notorious *iro otoko* at all, but needs to pay off willing accomplices in order to make it appear to everyone that he is.

A last observation to make before moving on to readings of the works is that rarely are the high-ranking *oiran*, or any female courtesans, for that matter, endowed with the capacity to satisfy the fetishized desire of the *iro otoko*—the desire for notoriety. While successful courtship of a high-ranking courtesan would seem to represent the pinnacle of fulfillment for the aspiring *iro otoko*, following the heteronormative paradigm, in fact most narratives in the genre depict true fulfillment for the *iro otoko* as being realized within a framework of competitive male homosociality, where buying out the contract of an *oiran* means nothing unless all of one's potential rivals know about it and are moved to jealousy or admiration, or both. On this point, it is relevant to note that the recipient of Enjirō's courtship overtures and eventual proposal of marriage, the courtesan Ukina, represents this fetishized desire for notoriety in a very literal way. Her name, written with the characters *uki* 浮 (“floating”) and *na* 名 (“name”) implies the very notion of making a name for oneself in the floating world of the Yoshiwara.

It has been well documented that Tsutaya Jūzaburō customarily repaid his writers for their work with elaborate dinners, nights in brothels and other junketings through the Yoshiwara—all this in addition to or in lieu of monetary payment.<sup>3</sup> Here I think we can draw a parallel between the authors in Tsutaya's publishing house and the *iro otoko* aspirants in the stories they wrote. Insofar as it constituted one of the perks of the remunerative agreements between Tsutaya and the writers in his stable, being feted in the Yoshiwara was indicative of a writer's productivity, success, and prestige. At the same time, the authority of *kibyōshi* writers, especially those whose primary stock in trade was retailing in stories about the floating world, was judged by their knowledge of their subject matter, as well as by their own claims to be habitués of the quarter. For some, such as Tōrai Sanna, whose literary pseudonym refers to a drinking game popular in Yoshiwara establishments at the time, such claims were prominently inscribed in their celebrity narrative. Thus, in addition to serving as a popular setting for stories, the Yoshiwara constituted an important site for the construction of authorial identities. Taken a step further, we might read the desire of the *iro otoko* characters for notoriety in these narratives as representative of a desire on the part of the writers for recognition among their peers and literary celebrity among a general readership.

### Manzōtei as *iro otoko*

For Morishima Chūryō, a physician and Dutch Learning scholar who hailed from a family of personal physicians to the shōgun, it was important to protect the good

<sup>2</sup>Tanahashi et al. 1999.

<sup>3</sup>Kornicki 1998, 240–41.

name of his family while pursuing fame as a fiction writer. Early in his literary career as a *kyōka* poet in the circle of Ōta Nanpo 大田南畝 (1749–1823), he had composed verses under the poetic handle Shinra Manzō. When he made his debut as a *kibyōshi* writer in Tenmei 4 (1784) with the work *Manzōtei gesaku no hajimari* (*The Debut of Manzōtei's Gesaku*), he not only adopted a new pseudonym, Manzōtei, but also created a story that allegorized the construction of this new authorial identity and situated it within an imagined community of his peers. The penultimate scene of this piece provides a veritable who's who of writers and poets affiliated with Tsutaya's stable, with the likes of Yomo no Akara 四方赤良 (Nanpo's poetic alias), Akera Kankō 朱楽菅江 (1740–1800), Shiba Zenkō, Santō Kyōden, Hōseidō Kisanji, Koikawa Harumachi, Hezutsu Tōsaku 平秩東作 (1726–1789) and many others—all identified explicitly with names written on their sleeves—appearing in an audience of spectators.<sup>4</sup> In the center of the two-page spread is Manzōtei's fictional alter-ego, performing in a costume which bears Manzōtei's signature cipher, an elephant swastika, and garlands of leaves reminiscent of the iconic trefoil of ivy fronds that served as Tsutaya Jūzaburō's publishing trademark. Bereft of the theatrical *mise-en-scène*, this scene may be taken to represent, in a very explicit way, the presentation of a new writer (Manzōtei) before his peers. This, and other scenes like it throughout *kibyōshi* literature, demonstrates the propensity of *kibyōshi* writers during the so-called period of “gossip-pieces” to insert themselves in their own works, albeit in pseudonymous caricature, and to thematize their relationships to their peers.

In *The Sensuous Man, There and About*, Chūryō makes the Yoshiwara, rather than the theatre, the *mise-en-scène* of his self-caricature. The protagonist, Yorozuya Yashirō (whose *yagō*, or shop name, co-opts the first ideograph in the pseudonym Manzōtei, albeit with a different reading) is the conceited and self-indulgent son of a merchant who, very much like Enjirō from Santō Kyōden's *Grilled and Basted Edo Playboy*, entertains aspirations of being a well known *iro otoko*. In an explicit prefatorial address by Manzōtei, who adopts the voice of a barker promoting his own piece, Yashirō's story is billed as a sequel to Shiba Zenkō's *The Dreams of Fools: An Illiterate Encyclopedia*, which itself features a narrative sequence about a habitué of the Yoshiwara who commits all sorts of gaffes in his pursuit of celebrity as a man about the quarter. Manzōtei's work repurposes many common comic devices of *kibyōshi* and much of the slapstick derives from the inherent risibility of the character (who is the quintessential *yabo*) and his propensity to interpret slang terms of the bordellos all too literally. For example, in the third scene, he attempts to seduce a respectable samurai woman making a pilgrimage to Sensōji temple in Asakusa, but because he misunderstands the slang term *haru* (“to seek out and seduce a lover”) for its more literal meaning (“to slap”), he ends up assaulting her.<sup>5</sup> This in turn leads to a parodic interpretation of the violence motif, in which

<sup>4</sup>Takada et al. 1994.

<sup>5</sup>Tanahashi et al. 1999, 327.

the woman's bodyguard beats Yashirō to the ground and tramples him underfoot. Here, as in *Grilled and Basted Edo Playboy*, the aspiring *iro otoko* becomes a victim of physical violence for reasons other than his ability to make other men jealous. In this case, he is punished for his ignorance—not his romantic prowess. In a later scene, Yashirō misinterprets the advice that *iro otoko* should bewitch courtesans with their looks and charm, taking the expression *korosu* literally, and trying to act on it by tossing a heavy iron bar, eight *shaku* in length, at an unwitting *zashiki-mochi* at a tea house.<sup>6</sup> Eventually, Yashirō realizes the error of his ways, and comes to a realization about what it takes to be a suave habitué of the Yoshiwara. In the end, he ransoms a courtesan named Hoteno out of indenture, leaving behind a legacy in the pleasure quarter.

When juxtaposed with Manzōtei's debut work, *The Sensuous Man, There and About* suggests an allegory about literary celebrity in which Manzōtei, who was far less recognizable to readers of *kibyōshi* than writers of the old guard like Hōseidō Kisanji and Koikawa Harumachi, not to mention the undisputed star of the stable, Santō Kyōden, strives to make a name for himself. In many ways, Yashirō's career as a pleasure seeker in the Yoshiwara follows the trajectory of Chūryō's own career as a writer, for by Tenmei 7 (1787), the year of this work's publication, he had attained enough of a cachet to be wooed by other publishers. In *The Sensuous Man, There and About*, we catch many self-referential hints about Manzōtei, a writer nearing the pinnacle of his literary celebrity, which are mostly self-deprecating in tone. In theory, these references would have served multiple functions—to reward readers conversant with Manzōtei's celebrity narrative, established in earlier works, with both new and familiar details; to further endear the author to readers with their self-deprecating tone; and to instill within readers an imagined sense of the proximity or accessibility of the author.

### Enjirō at the Gate

Tōrai Sannai's *Revenge of an Edo-born Playboy*, published a year after Manzōtei's work, opens with one of the most provocative metafictional scenes in *kibyōshi* literature. In it, the author, depicted seated at his writing desk with a brush in his left hand and five unmarked volumes stacked at his right—presumably in the throes of writer's block—is visited in the middle of the night by Enjirō, the protagonist of Santō Kyōden's *Grilled and Basted Edo-born Playboy*, the best-selling *kibyōshi* published three years prior. Enjirō appears at Sanna's gate in fine form, attired in a black crested kimono over spangled robes, sporting a *wakizashi*, or short sword, tethered by a hilt cord conspicuously girdling his midriff and a monogrammed paper lantern dangling from his left hand.<sup>7</sup> The more observant among Sanna's readers would have noted that Enjirō's attire in this scene matches up in nearly every

<sup>6</sup>Tanahashi et al. 1999, 339.

<sup>7</sup>Nobuhiro et al. 1989, 65.

detail that which he dons throughout most of *Grilled and Basted Edo Playboy*—that is, except for the black scarf that identifies him as a fashionable pleasure seeker in the previous work. Presumably, by losing the scarf Enjirō has also sloughed off his former ways of debauchery. But when he appears before Sanna's gate, he is not a contrite man, but a man bent on revenge. Enjirō contends that he has been misrepresented as a conceited and self-indulgent dandy in *Grilled and Basted Edo Playboy*, and that the sheer popularity of this work has made him a laughingstock among the courtesans of the Ōgiya. The purpose of his visit, then, is to enlist Sanna's help in writing a work of fiction that will do as much damage to the reputation of Santō Kyōden, the author of this work, as Kyōden has done to his.

Tōrai Sanna, who is perturbed but seemingly not a bit surprised to be visited in the dead of night by a fictional character, agrees to become Enjirō's accomplice in this literary act of revenge. Sanna's motives for agreeing to defame Santō Kyōden, his peer in the stable of Tsutaya, are never really explained; perhaps the unspoken back story would have provided intrigue for readers curious about the relationship, and any potential rivalry, between Sanna and Kyōden. In any event, the product of their collaboration begins as a comical story about a habitué of the Yoshiwara named Denjirō (obviously a corruption of the name Enjirō using the last ideograph in Santō Kyōden's pseudonym), which proceeds very much in the generic vein of *kibyōshi*—that is, until the final scenes, where Sanna scripts Enjirō back into the story and enables him to exact revenge against the fictive alter-ego of Kyōden in one of the strangest acts of violence imaginable.

### Santō Kyōden as *iro otoko*

Like *Sensuous Man, There and About*, Sanna's *Revenge of an Edo-born Playboy* is conceived as a series of tableaux depicting events in the social and sexual maturation of an *iro otoko*—in this case, the protagonist, Denjirō. Born the son of a money changer named Kyōya Denzaemon (one of several details that hew to biographical fact), Denjirō exhibits a precocious interest in girls from the age of five, starts smoking at age eight (a possible plug for Kyōden's tobacco shop) and before turning sixteen, fathers a child with a *hashi-jorō* indentured at a tea house in the Yoshiwara.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the story is woven a rich texture of cultural references and biographical details, which aid in the elaborate construction of Denjirō as an *iro otoko*. Denjirō is likened to the great male lover of classical literature, Ariwara no Narihira, and other romantic figures like Ariwara no Yukihiro and Prince Niou from *Tale of Genji*—all playful allusions which seem to suggest that Kyōden, too, deserves his place in the classical literary canon. Elsewhere, drawing on more contemporary cultural references, Denjirō is compared to the kabuki actor Ichikawa Yaozō II 二代市川八百蔵 (1735–1777), known for dashing villain roles popular with

<sup>8</sup>Nobuhiro 1989, 66–68.

female theatre-goers, especially as Sukeroku. In the accompanying illustration, Denjirō is depicted in a manner that follows contemporary woodblock printed portraits of the actor, evidently an attempt to approximate physical likeness.<sup>9</sup> In a later scene, Denjirō is depicted in the likeness of the celebrated sumō wrestler Onogawa Kisaburō (1758–1806), who at the time of the piece was at the rank of *mae-gashira* 前頭.<sup>10</sup> These illustrations and allusions point up a salient feature of this narrative—namely, the mutability of the protagonist, whose attire and even facial and bodily features become altered as he is compared to one figure after the other. Indeed, it would seem that one body could not accommodate all of the *iro otoko* qualities imputed to him.

Denjirō's body, which serves as a site for inscription of the *iro otoko* ideal throughout the text, also serves to bring about the resolution of the vengeance plot through an anatomical exchange with Enjirō, his would-be avenger. Leading into the final scenes, Denjirō claims to have grown tired of the carnal pleasures of the Yoshiwara, even taking the tonsure and becoming an acolyte monk at Dōjōji. Yet somehow he cannot prevent himself from being seduced by Ukina, the love interest of Enjirō in *Grilled and Basted Edo Playboy*, who woos Denjirō with sake and blowfish soup. Forgetting his vows, Denjirō breaks the Buddhist injunctions against eating meat and drinking alcohol, and soon dispenses with the injunction against carnal lust as well. In the heat of a moment of passion, Denjirō tries to coax Ukina behind a folding screen for some private love-making, when suddenly, Enjirō, who has been lying in wait all along, jumps out and cuts off his nose with a sword, releasing a profusion of blood onto the tatami floor.

At first glance, it would appear that Enjirō has reclaimed Ukina from Denjirō by exposing their affair and subjecting Denjirō to an act of violence tantamount to castration. In a strange twist at the end of the story, however, Denjirō's nose grows back, this time in the shape of the peony nose that is the trademark of Enjirō, while Enjirō arranges for a Dutch surgeon to attach Denjirō's severed nose to his own face. Thus there is an anatomical exchange between Enjirō and Denjirō which confounds a facile reading of the vengeance scene. Perhaps the nose may be read here as a metonym for the self—following the cultural practice of pointing to one's nose when referring to oneself—in which case, Enjirō's revenge against his author is to mark him with his most identifiable anatomical feature. It will be recalled that Enjirō's primary objective in seeking revenge against Kyōden is to defame him, which he accomplishes in part through the assistance of Sanna, who writes the story of Denjirō. However, ultimately, and in a more profound way, Enjirō subverts the agency of the author and makes Kyōden into his own fictional character—thus forcing him to suffer the humiliation of being the laughingstock of readers everywhere.

<sup>9</sup>Nobuhiro 1989, 79.

<sup>10</sup>Nobuhiro 1989, 87.



Santō Kyōden illustrated *Revenge of an Edo-born Playboy* under his handle, Kitao Masanobu 北尾政演, a fact which would seem to dispel any speculation that Tōrai Sanna really sought to defame Kyōden in this piece. Rather, the collaboration between these two writers and members of Tsutaya's stable reads as a complex allegory about literary celebrity, even as it maintains a tone of irreverence, one which seems to expose the author construct as a fictional model akin to characters in a story. The insertion of biographical details, such as the circumstances of Kyōden's childhood, marriages, and venture into business, moreover suggests a mode of playful repartee whereby the man behind the authorial mask is exposed to a general readership. To readers who regarded Kyōden and Sanna as celebrities in their own right, such collaborations would have provided a form of entertainment quite apart from the aesthetic pleasure derived from reading a good story. Like celebrity gossip, these exposés, in theory, would have given readers an illusion of accessibility to this social world, and the vicarious experience of reveling alongside these writers on one of the elaborate junketings through the Yoshiwara for which Tsutaya Jūzaburō and his stable of writers became well-known.

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