Satire within kibyōshi in eighteenth-century Edo: 
a translation and analysis of Santō Kyōden’s ‘Tama Migaku Aoto ga Zeni’

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Foreword

In this text all Japanese names are written with last names first, while Western names are written with first names first. All dates are Anno Domini unless stated otherwise. This document generally conforms to the revised guidelines set by the journal Monumenta Nipponica in May 2017, wherever the Ghent University guidelines for layout do not take precedence. In this document, Ghent University guidelines only apply to the front cover of the dissertation. Monumenta Nipponica follows The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th edition for most questions of style and format.

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Pieterjan Debouck, November 14th 2017, Ghent.
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All other figures (figures 2 to 18) are various pages from Tama migaku aoto ga zeni (see figure 1).
1. Introduction

Much has been written of the rich literary history of the city of Edo and of its writers, a great proportion of it eulogizing the deserving Genroku 元禄 era (1688-1704) triumvirate of Ihara Saikaku, Matsuo Bashō and Chikamatsu Monzaemon, but merely glossing over those who came after. A gargantuan heap of creative composition has been somewhat dismissingly labeled gesaku 戏作, literally meaning “frivolous work”, and they were until recently often disregarded as feeble, puerile and ill-fated productions living in the shadow of former giants. In the present day however, these gesaku have enjoyed some degree of fresh recognition, and many of its representative works now see extensive elucidation by scholars both Japanese and foreign. One of the half-forgotten authors thoroughly reanimated by this new wave of scholarly interest is Santō Kyōden 山東京伝 (1761-1816), a man of many talents, best known among students of Edo literature as a prolific writer and artist, creator of short stories, and author of the illustrated picture books called kibyōshi 黄表紙.

Kyōden, his younger brother Santō Kyōzan 山東京山 (1769-1858) and his younger sister Yone (ca. 1771-1788) were children of a pawnbroker in the Shitamachi 下町 district of Edo.1 Kyōden’s books encompassed a multitude of production forms and literary styles, including but certainly not limited to such “genres” as kibyōshi, yomihon 読本, kokkeibo 滑稽本, and sharebon 洒落本. Besides writing, he was a creative illustrator, producing many prints and artworks under his pseudonym Kitao Masanobu 北尾政演. To the citizens of Edo both high and low, he was known not only for his art but also for his successful tobacco-pouch business facing the streets of Kyōbashi 京橋 in the Ginza 銀座 district. Kyōden belonged to the chōnin 町人 class, and may by some be considered a representative example of it, considering his rather bourgeois lifestyle, his successful mercantile pursuits, and his frequent dalliances with the courtesans of Yoshiwara 吉原, of which he married no less than two.2 There are two first-hand accounts of the life and accomplishments of Santō Kyōden. One is titled Santō Kyōden Ichidaiki 山東京伝一代記, written by his younger brother Kyōzan. A second is Iwademonoki 伊波傳毛乃記, written by Kyokutei Bakin 曲亭馬琴 (1767-1848). In addition, Kyōden’s store3, which he opened in 1793, was at the time sufficiently well-

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1 Katō 1997, p. 228.
2 In a later sharebon he writes in the preface: “The courtesans I have described in this book are women I have often amused myself with, whose character I know well. Some I like, some I dislike. I have described their accomplishments in detail, even revealing their girlhood names in the hopes of assisting visitors who may not yet be acquainted with them.” Keene 1976, p. 407.
known to have been included in a significant amount of *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. One can still find impressions of his store in prints by the publishers Tsutaya Jūzaburō 蔦屋重三郎 (1750-1797), Tsuruya Kiemon 鶴屋喜右衛門 and Izumiya Ichibe 吹水市兵衛. In the years following the Kansei reforms (*Kansei no kaikaku* 寛政の改革), Kyōden devoted most of his attention to this store (which he ran under another pseudonym, Kyōya Denzō 京屋伝蔵), and advertised it enthusiastically in his own books, those of others, and in pamphlets.⁴

Kyōden is most known for suffering punishment at the hands of the Shogun’s government for authoring and illustrating books the authorities perceived to be in violation of their censorship laws, promulgated by the infamous chief elder (*rōjū shūza* 老中首座) Matsudaira Sadanobu 松平定信 (1759-1829), regent to the reigning Shogun Tokugawa Ienari 徳川家斉 (1773-1841). In 1790, Kyōden was put in manacles and confined to his residence for fifty days, and his unfortunate publisher Jūzaburō saw half his property confiscated. Kyōden’s *kibyōshi* *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* 玉磨青砥銭, published in 1790 by Jūzaburō but presumably written the previous year, is not explicitly recorded to be in violation of those censorship laws, but its contents would place it within a broader category of *kibyōshi* which Adam L. Kern describes as “protest pieces” in his extensive study of *kibyōshi* titled *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook culture and the kibyōshi of Edo Japan*.⁵ Until today, researchers aside from Kern have not discussed this particular book in much detail and recent scholarship has been largely descriptive in nature, content to gloss over the more noteworthy politically incorrect images, and most unfortunately disregarding the rest. *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* contains, as this paper will illustrate, an interesting form of satire hidden underneath a rather flimsy veil. Home to both the offensive and the lewd, it is a book of incredibly crude humor, but also a work of subtle satirical prods at the government. As good literature serves not only to comfort the afflicted but also to afflict the comfortable, a book like *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* should not be glossed over simply because of its apparent boorishness when studying the ways of Edo society. That is not to say that *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* is an example of sophisticated writing, but Kyōden’s *kibyōshi*, despite being diverse, numerous and often praised as “the best”⁶, have sadly only seen scant translation and consequently, scant attention. This paper seeks to remedy that fact at least partially, by exposing the contents of *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* to an English-reading audience and examining its references, its meanings, and the nature of its relation to the Kansei reforms, a collective name for the reforms of which the censorship laws were a part.

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⁴ Yuasa 2016, p. 54.
⁵ Kern 2006, p. 220.
⁶ Keene 1976, p. 408.
This paper will sketch a cursory historical context before attempting to summarize the book and expanding upon the ideas contained therein. No translation or commentary will ever be truly complete, however, as we are after all not blessed with the everyday knowledge and cultural background a citizen of Edo would have possessed at the time of its publication. As such, my interpretation of the book will certainly miss some vital puns and references that might have been more obvious at the time, and this document is therefore unfortunately doomed to imperfection. That said, this study will draw connections whenever they present themselves, and it is this student’s hope that this particular kibyōshi may one day enjoy observation by the more seasoned eyes of other scholars who are similarly enamored with the Edo of days long passed.
2. A description of *kibyōshi*

*Kibyōshi* are but one of the many children born from the “second peak” of Edo culture, the decades of the An’ei 安永 and Tenmei 天明 eras, encompassing the years 1772-1780 and 1781-1789, respectively. This second peak is characterized by a shift in the cultural center of gravity, away from the old urban areas of Kamigata 上方 (Kyoto, Osaka and their surroundings) in the west and towards the sprawling Shogunal capital in the east. This An’ei-Tenmei peak spawned not only literati such as Ueda Akinari 上田秋成 (1734-1809), Hiraga Gennai 平賀源内 (1728-1780), Ōta Nanpo 大田南方 (1749-1823) and this paper’s own Santō Kyōden, but also the kabuki actor Ichikawa Danjūrō V 五代目市川團十郎 (1741-1806) and the playwright Sakurada Jisuke 櫻田治助 (1734-1806), both of which Kyōden happens to reference in *Tama migaku aoto ga zenī*. This is also the age of the famous ukiyo-e artists Kitao Shigemasa 北尾重政 (1739-1820) and Kitagawa Utamaro 喜多川歌麿 (1753-1806), the latter of which supplied the images to the *kibyōshi* included in this dissertation, among many others.  

By the eighteenth century, woodblock printing and the commercial enterprise of printed works had increased to such an extent that some print runs reached thousands of copies. New works were published faster than ever before, sometimes only days after the events their contents described occurred, arguably marking a paradigmatic shift in how information spread in Japan. Kern argues that this dramatic increase is not only due to technological improvements, but also due to the evolution of the publishing house (the *hanmoto* 板元) into a complex cooperative enterprise employing a diverse array of talent in an assembly-line like system of production. Kibyōshi, he writes, were arguably the most widely read genre of all mass-printed genres of the day, with several bestsellers issued in thousands of copies per run. The mid-sized (*chūbon* 中本) books measured approximately thirteen by eighteen centimeters, fitting neatly in the sleeves of their owners without much trouble. They were generally issued in one to three separate fascicles (*kan* or *maki* 卷), each consisting of five sheets of paper (five broad sheets producing ten pages), bound together with string, producing a somewhat flimsy, pamphlet-like book. *Kibyōshi* were thus either ten, twenty or thirty pages long, with thirty being most common. Furthermore, the separate fascicles each boast a cover image, suggesting that they may have been sold separately. They were however not sold

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7 Kern 2006, p. 7.
8 Kern 2006, p. 35.
9 Authors (sakusha 作者), copyists (hikkō 笔耕), printers (hanzuri 板刷り), block carvers (hangishi 板木師) and artists (gakko 画工) became largely separate professions all working in tandem at the *hanmoto* publishing house. Kern 2006, p. 36.
serially, but all at once, and only separated into separate fascicles in mock imitation of the preceding children’s books *kibyōshi* found their origins in. To keep the loose volumes together, thin slips Kern calls “bag stashers” (*fukurozashi* 袋刺) were employed, of which precious few have survived due to their fragility. As Santō Kyōden exemplifies, authors of *kibyōshi* frequently composed their own pictures, though they would just as often collaborate with well-known illustrators to increase the prestige of their books. Kyōden’s fruitful collaboration with the famous Utamaro is well known. A *kibyōshi*’s defining feature is the vertical text filling every nook and cranny of the page where the illustrations leave some room. Narrative paragraphs are draped around the images, hanging from the top of the page while dialogue is dispersed on top of, between and underneath the characters, written in shorthand kana cursive. Complex characters are largely absent from the text, as a large part of the audience would not be able to read them.

*Figure 1.* Frontispiece of *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* 玉磨青砥銭, written by Santō Kyōden 山東京伝 (1761-1816), illustrated by Kitagawa Utamaro 喜多川歌麿 (ca. 1753-1806). Published by Tsutaya Jūzaburō 蔦屋重三郎, 1790. Collection of Waseda University.
The price of a kibyōshi was at the time reportedly as cheap as a single bowl of soba noodles\(^\text{11}\), with the highest estimates hazarding to estimate as much as two bowls.\(^\text{12}\) Their affordable price translated to recyclability, both materially and conceptually. The inexpensive minogami 美濃紙 paper could be returned to pulp for reuse, and the woodblocks could be rid of their carvings to provide a fresh canvas. Furthermore, occasionally only a woodcut’s text was discarded, and the remaining image was reused in another product.\(^\text{13}\) The cheap price, portability and widespread availability, Kern argues, helped put kibyōshi in the hands of readers to an extent that long epic novels like *The tale of Genji* could never achieve.\(^\text{14}\)

As new genres of literature never just appear out of thin air, kibyōshi too have their origins in several preceding archetypes. One of these is the dangibon 談義本 sermon book which, contrary to what the label suggests, contains humorous mock sermons that have little to do with religion or morality, exemplified by titles such as *A treatise on flatulence* (hōhiron 放屁論, published in 1774).\(^\text{15}\) The dangibon, which might find its roots in the old western cultural center of Kamigata, was by the mid-eighteenth century thoroughly adapted to urban Edo society, making use of its colloquial dialect to great popular effect. Its visual format, a mostly vertical kana squiggle with one or two simple auxiliary pictures to illustrate the whole text, can be regarded as an important precursor to the kibyōshi-style comic book. The genre of sharebon is arguably the one that exerted the most influence on kibyōshi. Publication of kibyōshi started at roughly the same time as the publication of sharebon, though they are distinctly different, kibyōshi containing illustrations that were just as important as the accompanying text, while in sharebon images were used much more sparingly, if they were included at all.\(^\text{16}\) Kyōden too was a prolific contributor to the corpus of sharebon, the three he published in 1790 (the same year as *Tama migaku aoto ga zen*) incurring him the wrath of chief elder Sadanobu. Sharebon were, in the words of Kern “largely devoted to the latest and swankest haute couture, etiquette and colloquialisms of the day”\(^\text{17}\). The word share, he explains, means “smart” in the sense of being neatly dressed, as well as phrasing using witty puns. As the licensed prostitution district of Yoshiwara was at the centre of the latest fashions and the frequent object of witty puns, the sharebon naturally often dealt with the stirring excitement and creative phrasing of the pleasure quarters.\(^\text{18}\) The influence this genre brought to bear on kibyōshi is twofold. On one hand, the emphasis on what is fashionable and sophisticated is found in kibyōshi as well, an esthetic known of its pictures reused in a hanashibon 話本 jokebook published the following year. Kern 2006, p. 40.  
14 Kern 2006, p. 41.  
15 Kern 2006, p. 98.  
16 Keene 1976, p. 399.  
17 Kern 2006, p. 100.  
18 Kern 2006, p. 100.
as tsū通, which is a quality exhibited by the tsūjin通人 or “great sophisticate”. On the other hand, the colloquial conversation styles in sharebon were also employed in kibyōshi. In some sharebon the conversations were the entirety of the text, only interrupted by occasional descriptive notes. There are many more instances of popular culture that exerted influence on kibyōshi such as the guidebooks (annaisbo案内書), kibyōshi review books (kibyōshi byōban黃表紙評判記), kyōka狂歌 comic poetry, comic haiku, joke books (hanashibon話本), kabuki and jōruri浄瑠璃 puppet theatre, but a broader discussion of these is beyond the scope of this study. It suffices to say these genres were radically interrelated, and the full length and breadth of kibyōshi intertextuality can hardly be grasped fully without an in-depth knowledge of all of these. A lot in kibyōshi is left to the imagination and everyday knowledge of its readership by design, relying on their associative capabilities to add complexity to the narrative and its humor. However, Edo, Yoshiwara and its microcosm of ideas and associations no longer exist, making kibyōshi an exceedingly laborious read in the twenty-first century. The patterns on the character’s outfits would be instantly recognized by a chōnin reader and perhaps elicit a smirk, while the modern scholar must delve deep into dictionaries to figure out its meanings, its capability for humorous effect by then thoroughly depleted. As for the plots in kibyōshi, Adam Kabat recognizes three degrees of narrative. The first type are productions which feature elaborate stories spanning the entire length of the book. The second type are productions which contain elements of a coherent story, but do not expose it to the degree of the first type. The third type are productions which switch the story and characters on every page based on one common theme. A short narration finishes on the turn of every page. It is to the third type that Tama migaku aoto ga zeni belongs.

19 The term has its origins in the term for a frequenter of the pleasure quarters, the tōritō通り人 or tōrimono通りもの. Kern 2006, p. 101.
20 Kern 2006, p. 100.
21 An in depth discussion of all these cultural phenomena can be found in Kern 2006, pp. 96-128.
3. Santō Kyōden and *kibyōshi*

The authorship of *kibyōshi* is generally clear, although they are most frequently published under a pseudonym. Santō Kyōden himself went through numerous pseudonyms before settling on his preferred name, but used his artist name Kitao Masanobu consistently throughout his life. Authors of *kibyōshi* are almost exclusively adult males, and there is scant evidence to the contrary. Kern raises the exception of Kyōden’s sister Yone who, before her premature death at the age of seventeen, had already published *kyōka* poetry and a few *kibyōshi* under the pseudonym Kurotobi 黒鳶式部, although some scholars suggest this may have merely been a marketing ploy used by Kyōden, who could have written the books in her name.\(^{23}\)

The earliest *kibyōshi* were written by samurai, who often were the only ones with the requisite spare time to pursue such diversions. Ever under the watchful eyes of their lords, peers and servants, their freedom of expression was rather limited. In fact, several celebrated writers like Koikawa Harumachi 恋川春町 (1744～1789) and Ōta Nanpo were in fact samurai on the bottom end of the chain of command, whose menial jobs permitted them ample free time.\(^{24}\) In the earliest incarnations, samurai published “picture books aimed at children”, albeit under obvious false pretenses. These books took the form of *Akahon* 赤本, or “red covers”, and described the real world of adults in the form of legends, fairytales and fictional stories. The scholar Tanahashi states that these books were a way for samurai authors to “make grudges held towards the real world reveal themselves”. These grudges, he explains, did not take the shape of explicit criticism or parody, but were simply statements of ambiguous banter toward things they found concerning or offensive. They were written in a way which allowed readers who did not know the author’s intent to simply read and discard the work after a few laughs without giving it much further thought, but also allowed those who knew to understand the inside-jokes. In this way authors of the samurai class found an outlet for their frustrations, and obscured them by disguising their creative promenades as inconsequential children’s books. In other words, if some *kibyōshi* appear shallow and of little merit it is often because it was intentionally written as to obscure its true meanings and references. It is in this context that the properties of *kibyōshi* came to be defined and became a recognized “genre” of literature.\(^{25}\) *Chōnin* authors however did not need this type of outlet for their frustrations, and were content to simply entertain their readership and make a good deal of money in the process. *Kibyōshi* subsequently evolved to entertain a more plebeian audience, where writers like Santō Kyōden took the stage.

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\(^{23}\) Kern 2006, p. 57.  
\(^{24}\) Kern 2006, p. 59.  
\(^{25}\) Tanahashi 2016, p. 83.
Kyōden wrote his first kibyōshi in 1778 at the tender age of eighteen, titled Kaichōryaku no mekuriai 開帳利益札遊合, published under his penname Shachōdō Shōtsūsenjin 小張堂小通辺人 and his artist pseudonym Kitagawa Masanobu. The first time he published under the name Kyōden was in 1780 with his kibyōshi Musume kai akiuchi koyō no nishiki 娘敵討故郷錦, and for some years he alternated between the names Kyōden, Kitao Masanobu and his poet’s alias Migaru Orisuke 軽織輔 before introducing the name Santō Kyōden in 1784. The first kibyōshi that brought Kyōden real fame was titled Gozonji no sbōbaimono 御存知商売物, published in 1782. It opens with a short monologue where Kyōden directly speaks to the reader, introducing his book and explaining his motivations for writing it. Eight years later, Tama migaku aoto ga zeni opens in a similar vein, but with a dialogue instead of a monologue. Interestingly, in both kibyōshi he makes a reference to his publisher, however in Gozonji no sbōbaimono it is Kyōden himself who excitedly runs to his publisher with the manuscript, while by the time Tama migaku aoto ga zeni was released to the public the publisher’s errand boy must visit Kyōden’s home to nag him for a presumably late manuscript as Kyōden makes up excuses. These kinds of passages, depicting the creation of kibyōshi as an unprofessional and hurried affair, eventually became a standard trope of kibyōshi, which Kyōden too liked to employ. This presentation of the author as an overtaxed writer was however largely an expression of feigned humility, as kibyōshi were thoroughly planned projects involving many people, and required a careful editorial process. By 1786, the name Santō Kyōden was firmly entrenched in Edo’s literary scene and consistently employed to great commercial success. He continued publishing kibyōshi yearly until his scuffle with the law in 1790, after which he devoted his time largely to yamibon “reading books”.

Kyōden’s readership, like most kibyōshi, is a matter of informed conjecture. Details about circulation and sales numbers are few and far in between, and consequently no firm conclusions can be drawn without taking unwarranted liberties. Furthermore, the addressed reader, ideal reader and actual reader are not at all the same, nor are they clearly defined anywhere. If publishing catalogues and government documents (such as chief elder Matsudaira Sadanobu’s censorious edicts) are to go by, kibyōshi were mere “children’s books” aimed primarily at literate women and teenagers. On the other hand, Kern argues, it is obvious from the subject matter of kibyōshi, and especially from the puns and references it expects the reader to be privy to, that the idealized reader of such works was an educated chōnin city dweller, frequenter of both the theater stage and the brothel, educated and worldly, probably in his twenties or thirties, and enjoying both ample free

26 Tanahashi 2016, p. 81.
27 Tanahashi 2016, p. 81.
28 Keene 1976, p. 404.
29 Kern 2006, p. 68.
30 Tanahashi 2016, p. 82.
31 Kern 2006, p. 49.
time and significant disposable income. This is because, he argues, the sort of connoisseur who had the required expertise on the entire length and breadth of Edo’s literary and visual production, let alone expertise on the pleasure quarters, was chiefly a male of that description. Kyōden too refers to his readership as children, but Kern argues this is likely in jest. Directly addressing readers as “you kids” in Gozonji no sōbaimono was probably a tongue-in-cheek reference to the genre’s running joke that it was no more than a trivial comic book for children, while simultaneously providing a flimsy cover against the governments censors, dismissing their own work as “mere children’s entertainment”. The introduction to Gozonji no sōbaimono, as translated by Donald Keene in the seventies, goes as follows:

“The person who has come before you is a certain man who draws illustrations for comic books every spring. As yet I have found scant favour with children, and I have therefore tried to think of something that might please their tastes. I have just had my first dream of the year, and it was so strange that I have decided to go to the publisher and tell him about it. I have hurried, and here I am already, at the publisher’s gate. Is anyone home? Is anyone home?”

If we replace Keene’s “children” with Kern’s “you kids” the prologue reads:

“As yet I have found scant favour with you kids, and I have therefore tried to think of something that might please your tastes.”

This interpretation, addressing his middle-aged audience as “you kids” with a wink and a nudge, seems to be the more plausible explanation for the obvious disconnect between a presumed underage audience and the complicated contents of the kibyōshi that only an experienced daitsu 大通 “great sophisticate” could have understood.

Tama migaku aoto ga zeni, published eight years after Gozonji no sōbaimono, is not an especially significant work nor does it exemplify significant literary achievement, but it is a representative work of a distinct genre of fiction that proliferated in the years leading up to the Kansei reforms: a satirical kibyōshi prodding the bakufu’s political and economic agenda. It is not only necessary to understand the evolution of kibyōshi within this socio-political climate, but also essential to comprehend the Kansei reforms as a whole, in order to properly unravel this kibyōshi and its meanings.

32 Kern 2006, p. 49.
33 Kern 2006, p. 51.
34 Keene 1976, p. 404.
4. Kibyōshi leading up to the Kansei reforms

Some periodization of the history of kibyōshi has been attempted, but as with most historical narratives kibyōshi do not allow themselves to be stuffed into neat categories and patterns easily. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made by Mori Senzō (1895-1985), who proposed a four-way division: an incipient period (1775-1783), followed by a “golden age” (1784-1787), the Kansei reform period (1788-1790), and a final period lasting until 1806. For the sake of brevity, I shall commence with the so-called “golden age”, which Kern dubs the “golden age of gossip pieces”. While kibyōshi had always contained references to contemporary persons and places, the kibyōshi published from the year 1784 onwards arguably started to do so with much more flavor and keen enjoyment. Kern raises the examples of Manzaishū chobi raireki (by Koikawa Harumachi, published in 1784), wherein multiple allusions are made to the poetry and to the authors included in the Tokuwaka manzaishū kyōka poetry collection compiled by Ōta Nanpo. Nanpo’s own kibyōshi Atama tenten ni kuchi arī (published in 1784) transports fighting samurai to the equally chaotic scene of a contemporary Edo kitchen, adding copious local references. Santō Kyōden’s lauded bestseller Edo umare uwaki no kabayaki (better known as “Playboy, roasted à la Edo”, published in 1785), made countless references to courtesans, poets, authors and kabuki actors. Satire is already present in these pieces, though it is typically a satire on the social pretensions of Edo’s many “great sophisticate” aspirants. Kern argues that this provided the seeds for political satire, as the satirizing of social pretensions and the comedy that follows always inevitably approached the political. In Edo’s class-based system, a fictional story could temporarily “elevate” a chōnin or samurai and have him peruse the halls of the rich and fashionable without a hitch, so long as he was firmly thrown back into his rightful place at the end. The character Kinbyōe in Koikawa Harumachi’s Kinkin sensei eiga no yume (often translated as “Master Flashgold”, published in 1775) experiences exactly that when he falls asleep on a magic dream-pillow, sending him off on a luxurious and extravagant adventure through Edo’s pleasure quarters and beyond. In this dream, he lives a rich man’s life, earning him the nickname Kinkin, literally meaning “Goldgold”. His fortunes are fleeting however, for he runs out of cash in a flash. Kinbyōe wakes up from his dream, and promptly abandons his ambition of becoming a Great Edo Sophisticate, returning to the countryside.

35 Kern 2006, p. 182.
37 For a more comprehensive retelling, see Kern 2006, p. 193.
Until the mid-1780s *kibyōshi* authors restrained themselves to the satirizing of social pretentions alongside parodies of virtually every aspect of popular Edo culture, but the formula was gradually extended to politics as the Kansei reforms materialized in the late 1780s. Thus far, authors received no more than a slap on the wrist for the depiction of contemporary politicians if they were punished at all, and the satirizing of politicians soon became a regular affair. But this was about to change with the appearance of chief elder Matsudaira Sadanobu on the stage of political power.

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38 Kern 2006, p. 203.
5. The Kansei reforms

Matsudaira Sadanobu and his reforms are essential to the comprehension of *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* and other such works, so it is appropriate to first give a cursory overview of these reforms and why they were enacted. Previous western studies of the Kansei reforms enacted by Sadanobu from 1787 to 1793 have often narrowed down the scope of their research to only one of two discernable manifestations of reform. On one hand, there is the economical component, where Sadanobu struggles with the effects of an emerging monetary economy on an atrophied feudal realm that based its power on the production and distribution of rice. On the other hand, laws of a moralizing nature were passed attempting to encourage virtue and chastise vice. When one examines both elements closely, it becomes obvious that they are fundamentally connected in ways that were obvious to the authorities at the time, even if it might not have been to the common citizen in the streets. It is not at all far-fetched to imagine that, to Sadanobu, both the economic reforms and the moralizing reforms were attempts to treat both the disease and the symptoms he perceived simultaneously.

Previous studies that crossed paths with the Kansei reforms have often unintentionally depicted them as reforms centered purely around the intellectual, without mentioning the broader scope and explicit economic goals of the reforms. Keene for example, in his anthology of pre-modern era Japanese literature, is content to state the effects of the reforms on literacy, education, and what does or does not constitute orthodox thought. Why these reforms came about exactly does not become clear, but that is arguably beyond the scope of his book. Totman, in his History of Japan, surprisingly misses the finer details of the Kansei reforms entirely by only stating its effects on orthodox learning. On the topic of censorship, he summarizes by writing “He [Matsudaira Sadanobu] also enforced punitive measures to discipline writers of more plebeian sorts.” He concludes that the censorship, in the end, ran its futile course, failing to alleviate the symptoms it claimed to treat. Katō does give a hint of the economic background of the reform but merely states that its main aim was a vague “revival of agriculture”, as well as to restrain commerce and regulate expression of opinion. Soranaka however, in his study of the success or failure of the Kansei Reforms, not only provides an overview of the economic reforms but also gives an account of why such reform was deemed necessary. It is through this narrative that we may find an adequate explanation of why censorship really occurred, and thus why *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* and similar books were deemed offensive to the authorities.

40 Totman 2005, p. 277.  
As Soranaka states, the Kansei reforms were a response to grave socio-economic problems that undermined its authority throughout the 1780s. These crises manifested themselves in fiscal issues for the government, socio-economic alienation of the samurai, and frequent revolts in both cities and the countryside. Kern notes that of the ninety-five violent revolts recorded during the Tenmei era (1781-1789), over half occurred during two years of great famine. The primarily rice-based agrarian economy was the foundation for the feudal order in the Tokugawa era, so disruptions in its production frequently led to widespread disorder. To make matters worse, natural disasters struck the islands of Japan in 1783, 1785 and 1787. He argues that these disasters led to massive shortages which raised the price on the wholesale markets in Osaka and Edo. Shortages increasingly caused rice producers to sell their rice wherever it fetched the highest price rather than where it was needed the most, resulting in widespread looting of urban rice shops. According to Takeuchi Makoto, five hundred to one thousand rice shops in Edo were stormed by enormous mobs and emptied in 1787. By June of that year, rice was sold on the markets of Osaka for as high as three times the usual price. Because samurai measured the wealth of their domains in koku 石 of rice, and lords payed their vassals not in hard currency but in sacks of that rice, dramatic fluctuations in the price of rice had a considerable effect on their relative wealth, as samurai had to first sell their rice to wholesalers to acquire currency for their daily spending. As such, both the governing samurai and the governed common people had many reasons for complaint by the time the Kansei reforms kicked off. It is in this socio-economic context that Matsudaira Sadanobu took office as chief elder and regent to the new Shogun, after the demise of his unsuccessful predecessor Tanuma Okitsugu 田沼意次 (1719-1788).

Soranaka argues that Sadanobu recognized some of the causes of the economic problems, as is evident from an essay he wrote in 1789 called Bukkaron 物価論 or “A discourse on prices”. The chief elder’s ideas about the sources of inflation were threefold. Firstly, a shortage of goods led to higher prices in Edo. This indicates Sadanobu’s understanding about the workings of supply and demand. As mentioned earlier, rice was sent to Osaka where it fetched a higher price, leading to shortages in Edo, causing inflation of the rice price. Secondly, the debasement of currency and the divergence of currency exchange rates on the Edo and Osaka markets aggravated the rice price. And lastly, the perceived decadent spending habits of Edo’s populace were responsible for incessant wasteful consumption. In other words, Sadanobu’s austere Confucian background possibly led him to

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42 Citing Herbert Bix, Peasant Protest in Japan, pp. 111-112 in Kern 2006, p. 204.
43 Kern 2006, p. 204.
44 Soranaka 1978, p. 152.
45 Sadanobu earned his spurs as the administrator of the province of Shirakawa in 1784, which was at the time suffering from a famine. He had a reputation as a model ruler based on his performance during that winter. Iwasaki 1983, p. 1.
believe the citizenry was consuming too much, elevating demand and inflating the price of goods. Even though the idea that people should consume less contains some merit in the context of the third millennium, Soranaka argues that this theory, as far as Edo in the latter decades of the eighteenth century is concerned, is widely off the mark. Nonetheless, it is based on these three perceived problems that Sadanobu formulated his fiscal policies for the Kansei reforms. As soon as he took office in June 1787 he initiated policies of austerity, reducing spending and tightening the government’s purse. Furthermore, throughout the six years of reform he continuously attempted to extend this frugal attitude to the general populace by discouraging popular vices he deemed wasteful.47

This analysis in terms of fiscal policy provides a satisfactory addition to an explanation of why censorship of so-called frivolous literature occurred. While Confucian idealism certainly was a motivating factor for the austere attitude, it seems unlikely that moralizing reform was enacted purely for the sake of Confucian virtue itself. Soranaka summarizes by stating that Sadanobu’s Neo-Confucian moralism complemented his economic pragmatism, unlike the somewhat abbreviated statements by Keene, Katō and Totman.

Viewing Matsudaira Sadanobu as a one-dimensional boogeyman of censorship is further complicated by recent discoveries regarding his personality and personal life. Most scholarship of the last two-hundred years has presented Sadanobu as a humorless Confucian moralist, not in the least because of Sadanobu himself, who systematically burnt his own writings when they did not fit the image he wished to present to the world and to posterity. However, Iwasaki revealed in her translation and analysis of Daimyō katagi 大名かたぎ, written by the chief elder himself in 1784, a mere three years before the start of his infamous reforms, that Sadanobu’s personality was not nearly as black-and-white as most historical narratives suggest. Far from being an absolute enemy of so-called frivolous work, he tried his hand at writing one himself. Daimyō katagi is a comical work Sadanobu wrote and attempted to eradicate from his legacy, and can clearly be considered an attempt at writing gesaku fiction. Iwasaki’s work revealed Sadanobu to be in close touch with the popular culture of Edo, and familiar with the literary and popular cultural products of the time.49 Iwasaki theorizes in her conclusion that the reason for his relentless crackdown on gesaku literature can no longer be simplified to the result of an “uninformed prejudice against popular literature as decadent

46 Signs were posted banning street (non-licensed) prostitution, gambling, mixed bathing, gaudy hairstyles, and the publication of obscene books, amongst others. None of these were very successful and faced considerable popular resistance. Prostitution and gambling merely went underground. Agents sent to enforce the ban were often bribed by the wealthy operators of such establishments, further reducing its effectiveness. Soranaka 1978, p. 154.
and immoral.” As earlier scholarship has already noted, Sadanobu made an exception of the theatre, allowing jōruri and kabuki to continue without interference, leading to the suggestion that he might have been enough of a fan of the theatre as to leave it untouched. The descriptions of kabuki and Sadanobu’s comprehension of the plebeian dialects of Edo in Daimyo katagi reveal a level of familiarity with the passions of the common citizen that could not have been acquired by mere hearsay, but they suggest he spent a considerable time immersed in them.

Why then, were the “popular vices” so uncompromisingly targeted throughout the years of reform? Is an economic motivation an adequate explanation? As the exemptions of kabuki and jōruri reveal, “popular vices” were not targeted indiscriminately. Rather, Iwasaki suggests that, as far as kibyōshi were concerned, only parodies of Sadanobu’s reforms were aimed at. A moralistic justification for censorship was certainly raised in the case of sharebon, as their primarily erotic content had little to insinuate about political matters. Kibyōshi such as Tama migaku auto ga zeni however, with their barely disguised jabs at the government and their sham historical settings were slightly more problematic.

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50 Iwasaki 1983, p. 17.
52 Iwasaki 1983, p. 18.
6. The campaign against *kiyōshi*

The Confucian moralism of the Kansei reforms crystalized into the slogan *bunbu* 文武, “the scholarly and the martial”, a catchphrase that also spearheaded the reforms of the Kyōhō 享保 (1716-1736) era more than half a century earlier.\(^{53}\) Though Matsudaira Sadanobu satirized this Confucian zeal for the martial and learned arts in his *Daimyo katagi*, his reforms eventually came to be defined by it, and it is likely that the importance he assigned to this slogan was a reason he burnt his own *gesaku* on that topic in an attempt to keep his reputation ideologically pure and internally consistent.\(^{54}\) Nevertheless, his incessant references to *bun* and *bu* lead to the publication of several works of satire and parody. Whatever his own personal stance towards *gesaku* may have been, politics and the socio-economic troubles of the times evidently eclipsed the personal affection he may have had toward the genre.

Several *kiyōshi* poking fun at this *bun* and *bu* moralism were published coinciding with the transfer of power to Sadanobu. Kornicki has provided an overview of some of these works and how they relate to the slogan. The first *kiyōshi* was published by Tsutaya Jūzaburō in 1788, called *Bunbu nidō mangoku-dōshi* 文武二道万石通, written by the samurai Hōseidō Kisanji 朋誠堂喜三二 (1735-1813). The title of this book, Kornicki explains, is a pun on the word *mangoku-dōshi*, a tool used to separate rice from rice-bran, analogous to separating *bun* and *bu*. A Kyōhō era edict had forbidden the inclusion of contemporary matters and persons in fiction in a futile attempt to nip satire of the government in the bud, so Kisanji set his story in the Kamakura period to avoid prosecution. In the story, Minamoto Shigetada is the model for Sadanobu, and enforces the Shogun Minamoto no Yoritomo’s will. Kornicki argues that regardless of whether this book was a conscious parody or not, to Sadanobu it clearly was. His book was subsequently banned, and Kisanji’s lord, the Daimyo of Akita, commanded him to stop his writing.\(^{55}\) *Bunbu nidō mangoku-dōshi* is merely one of the many *kiyōshi* categorized as “protest pieces” by Kern. Protest pieces, he states, are a written response to the social and economic unrest of the disaster-afflicted reigns of Sadanobu and his predecessor Tanuma Okitsugu. As Kornicki’s description concurs, these books were ostensibly set in a sham historical setting, supplemented with allegory and *reductio-ad-absurdum* to express the author’s experience of the various reforms.\(^{56}\) Kornicki raises another example titled *Ōmugaeshi bunbu no futamichi* 鴨鵝反文武二道, again published by Jūzaburō in 1789, written by Koikawa Harumachi. The title not only references the previous *kiyōshi* by Kisanji, but also a work

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56 Kern 2006, pp. 204-207.
written by Sadanobu titled Ōmu no kotoba 鴨鵡の言乃葉, an essay on politics and the role of government. According to a survey of Edo fiction by Kyokutei Bakin, both Bunbu nidō mangoku-dōshi and Ōmugaeshi bunbu no futanichi were immensely popular and were sold and passed on for many months. Consequently, Harumachi too was summoned by Sadanobu to answer for his writings, but he politely refused due to illness. Additionally, Iwasaki mentions another popular jibe directed at the bakufu’s bunbu slogan in the form of a kyōka poem supposedly written by Ōta Nanpo, who was a prominent poet in kyōka-circles at the time:

yo no naka ni 世の中に there's nothing in all the world
ka bodo urusaki 蚊ほどうるさき as bothersome as this
mono wa nasbi ものはなし you can’t even sleep at night
bunbu bunbu to ぶんぶぶんぶと with arms and letters
yoru no nerarezu 夜も寝られず in your ears

The poem displays puns on the word ka (“this” or “mosquito”) and bun-bu (“arms and letters” or “buzzing”). This poem offers a snapshot of how the incessant referencing of bunbu in bakufu edicts must have been interpreted by the populace. Possibly in response to a reprimand by a supervisor, Ōta too ceased his writing of kyōka before he could be summoned by the bakufu to answer for them. Many kibyōshi like the aforementioned two were published in 1788 and 1789 by Harumachi and others. Kyōden likewise published several such kibyōshi, and it is in this narrative we find a place for the publication of Tama migaku aoto ga zeni.

57 Kornicki 1977, p. 155.
7. Kyōden and the reforms

Kornicki states that throughout the Kansei reforms four edicts relating to censorship of books were promulgated, all posted in 1790. Half a century earlier, in the Kyōhō era, nineteen edicts had been written regarding this issue, but these had long been safely ignored. The Kansei reforms essentially re-affirmed the previous legislation, reminding publishers that the depiction of current events and persons, among other things, was strictly prohibited. By 1790, the government must have seen and read the myriad of *kibyōshi* poking fun at the *bunbu* slogan and Confucian moralism, such as *Bunbu nidō mangoku-dōshi*, *Ōmugaeshi bunbu no futamichi*, and *Tama migaku aoto ga zen*; and decided it was time to crack down upon them with a general prohibition. It is telling that the economic aspects of the reforms were already in full swing for three years before the first general censorship edict was posted, suggesting that perhaps the censors were by that time acting out of desperation and grasping at straws, or that censoring books individually was proving to be too unpractical.

The first of the new edicts was posted in the fifth month of 1790, and was followed by two more which, Kornicki argues, may have simply been different versions of the same text. Specific mention was made of amorous books, referring to *sharebon* such as the ones Kyōden published, stating that they were harmful to public morality and were to be inspected and banned if necessary. The authors and publishers were also obliged to provide their real names in the colophon of their books. The edict makes a direct reference to the Kyōhō reforms, stating that since that time attention has slackened and undesirable books were written and given permission for publication. It is interesting to note that the government does not accuse these books of being subversive works of satire directly. Rather, the government frames the issue as an issue of decadence and waste, further grounding the reform in the economic issues explained earlier. Kornicki, in his translation of the edict, describes its four points as follows:

“Year after year, people have applied themselves to useless tasks, including even picture books for children, and have obtained large fees for their products. Since this is thoroughly wasteful, the rules laid down in the past are to be observed more strictly and attention is to be paid to the following points:

- There have been books since times long past and no more are necessary, so there ought to be no more new books. If the necessity does arise, inquiries must be made at the City Commissioner’s office and his instructions followed.
- Recently some wicked children’s books have appeared which are ostensibly set in ancient times; henceforward these are to be regarded as undesirable.
- Nobody may make baseless rumors into kana books and lend them to anyone who will pay the fee.
- No book may be put on sale if the author is not known.”

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62 Kornicki 1977, p. 156.
Tama migaku aoto ga zeni as well as more explicitly satirical works like Bunbu nidō mangoku-dōshi and Ōmugaeshi bunbu no futamichi are directly alluded to here as “children’s books ostensibly set in ancient times”, indicating that the bakufu recognized those kibyōshi as a problem. However, they were not judged to be politically subversive, but simply as “thoroughly wasteful”. No other justification was given nor was further elaboration deemed necessary. The earlier Kyōhō reform era prohibition on the depiction of current events and people was also revived here as a prohibition of “baseless rumors in kana books”.

Kyōden, like many authors at the time, eventually collided with the government’s commissioners. In 1791 his publisher Jūzaburō published three of Kyōden’s sharebon: Nishiki no ura 錦の裏, Shikake bunko 仕懸文庫, and Shōgi kinuburui 娼妓絹籭. Kyōden, his father, and two representatives of the bookseller’s guild were promptly called to answer for their publication shortly afterwards. Kyōden was judged to be fully responsible for writing the “depraved” books and was sentenced to be put in manacles for fifty days while Jūzaburō was given a large fine and had half his property confiscated. In Kyōden’s biography Santō Kyōden Ichidaiki it is written that, “Although the characters who appear in these three books have been given the names of people from the days of the Kamakura shoguns, the books are generally concerned with the licensed quarters of today”.

This statement refers to Kyōden’s trial on the publication of the sharebon, but the same argument could have been raised to attack his kibyōshi. Kyōden escaped punishment in earlier years, when the authors of Bunbu nidō mangoku-dōshi and Ōmugaeshi bunbu no futamichi were reprimanded, but was evidently not so fortunate when it came to his sharebon. Still, there is little in the vague edicts that can be used to directly condemn Kyōden’s sharebon or his kibyōshi. As Kornicki states, it is against a new determination of the government to enforce existing laws that Kyōden offended, and not exactly against some new moralism encoded in a specific law. The government saw fit to make an example of Kyōden and thereby admonish the literary world, warning them to be more careful than before or face the consequences.

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63 The category “kana books” included the kibyoshi and sharebon types. Kornicki 1977, p. 156.
64 Kornicki 1977, p. 157.
65 Kornicki 1977, p. 162.
8. Reductio ad absurdum

Let us now turn to the actual content of the scenes contained within the kibyōshi translated in this paper. While there is no discernable main character nor a traditional plot, there are indeed overarching themes to connect the seemingly random scenes in the book. The book reads as a series of moments presented to the reader as if they were observed by a passer-by: dialogue is presented to the reader as if overheard by a third party, the reader getting the impression he is walking in on people in the middle of conversation. On occasion, multiple conversations are presented on the same page with little to connect them. This is similar to the way Kyōden presented descriptions of scenes in his sharebon, as can be seen in his Nishiki no ura. There too, Kornicki states, Kyōden presents dialogue as it might have been heard, with no thread of logic to connect them. Characters talk about different matters simultaneously with no explanation given by the author. Consequently, without knowing the historical background to the Kansei reforms and the existence of protest pieces as a specific type of kibyōshi, Kyōden’s Tama migaku aoto ga zeni would make little sense to the modern reader.

As I suggested in chapter six of this document, Tama migaku aoto ga zeni can indeed be regarded as a typical “protest piece” of the late eighteenth century. One of the most frequent literary devices used by authors in these protest pieces was the reductio ad absurdum. This Reductio ad absurdum, Kern describes, was already present in early kibyōshi to some extent, but eventually became the defining feature of these so-called protest pieces. The authors of these stories could hereby express some form of criticism of the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy as espoused by the shogunate, without entering the territory of banned ideas. With this technique, a kibyōshi could avoid the accusation of subverting authoritative thought by claiming to espouse a pure and uncompromising version of its teachings. The premise Tama migaku aoto ga zeni employs is a standard one used in many kibyōshi, and Kerns description of this popular premise practically fits this paper’s kibyōshi like a glove: “One day, everyone in Japan wakes up, lo and behold, the model citizen, the true believer, more Confucian than Confucius himself. Individuals miraculously abide by ethical considerations. Society actually runs according to moral principles.”

Tama migaku aoto ga zeni too takes the Neo-Confucian version of moral excellence and pushes it to its extremities to show how silly the idea seemed in the first place. In this case, Kyōden specifies the setting to the reign of the shogun Hōjō Tokiyori 北条時頼 (1227-1263), who is also the lord of Aotozaemon Fujitsuna 青砥座衛門藤綱 (dates of birth and death unclear), the man the title of the kibyōshi alludes to. Here too, the common people are described as exceedingly

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66 Kornicki 1977, p. 165.
68 Kern 2006, p. 213.
virtuous and diligent, and absolutely nothing or no one went to waste. Central to *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni*’s narrative, even the performers of the three very un-Confucian occupations of kabuki actor, courtesan and sumo wrestler industriously apply themselves to Confucian ideals. They are moved by their inner virtue, or perhaps compelled, to engage in more profitable pursuits. However, this disappearance of the employees from their usual workplace provides the premise for the comedic element, where a host of other people or creatures, both real and imaginary, are employed in their stead to little success. Three such “replacements” can be discerned:

1. Courtesans now apply themselves to scooping brine from the sea to make sea salt. For want of prostitutes, brothels employ foxes and *jizō* 地蔵 statues to fill the vacant job openings.
2. Sumo wrestlers are turned into palanquin bearers for Edo’s resident lords and ladies. For want of sumo wrestlers, *misemono* 見世物 exhibition hosts hire syphilis-afflicted prostitutes and blind masseurs to do the grappling instead.
3. Kabuki actors and their entire musical entourage now toil the dirt as peasants, the highest of Confucian virtues. For want of actors, the disabled are put on stage in their stead.

These three replacements cover the entire *kibyōshi*, except for the scene directly preceding Aotozaemon’s closing speech. In this narrative, the workers in three particularly un-Confucian occupations applied themselves to the kind of labor Matsudaira Sadanobu would have approved of. In this way Kyōden uses his *kibyōshi* to poke fun at Sadanobu’s fixation on utility by reducing his propositions to the absurd, and parodies the bakufu’s edicts against waste in an indirect way. To emphasize this even further, multiple scenes contain references to edicts posted by the bakufu against certain luxury items. *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* was perhaps a reaction against those edicts specifically, as so many of the *kibyōshi* at the time were, which the *chōnin* must have experienced as annoying, bizarre, and most of all completely pointless. Still, Kyōden maintains a veneer of implicit support by his inclusion of the moralizing statement in the finale. While Sadanobu could have found ample reason to consider this a direct parody of his policies if he had wanted to, Kyōden carefully crafted this work to simultaneously contain both implicit jabs at the reforms, while also presenting explicit support of Sadanobu’s core principle of reducing waste and luxury. In a way, Kyōden presents a middle road where people can live their lives the way they want to, while also agreeing with Sadanobu that extravagance is not a virtue and a bit more stoicism would not be out of place in the Edo of the time, a city afflicted by severe economic hardship. But all things considered, the true intentions of Santō Kyōden can now only be the object of informed conjecture.
Still, what is clear is that this is indeed a representative piece of “protest fiction” as Kern described it, regardless of Kyōden’s true intent.

Several points can be raised about Kyōden’s possible motivations for writing this *kibyōshi*. One plausible explanation could be that he simply stooped to ridiculing the disabled and other unfortunates for cheap (but profitable) laughs. Self-proclaimed gentlemen of leisure and sophistication (the *daiitsu*) could then purchase this *kibyōshi* and have a sensible chuckle as they pitied the destitute they so deplored. Kern, however, raises another possibility. He states that Kyōden was apparently familiar with the work of Teshima Toan (1718-1786), a Neo-Confucian thinker who urged his followers to cease making fun of the disabled in his primer *Early lessons* (*Zenkun*, published in 1773). Kern states it is possible that Kyōden deliberately humiliated his disabled actors to indirectly protest the dominant Confucian ideology, which put even the most unfortunate to work to justify their existence. In this manner, Kyōden’s intent would not have been to merely humiliate the unfortunate for the sake of laughter, but to utilize the disabled as a building block for his political satire.\(^69\) This fanciful theory is perhaps too impetuous at absolving Kyōden from all liability, as a direct link between Teshima Toan’s work and this *kibyōshi* is yet to be established. But if it is true that Kyōden indeed was familiar with his work, it is not unreasonable to imagine it had at least some influence on the author’s own creative process. Yet, the disabled and their predicaments are not what this entire *kibyōshi* is about, and it is important to remember they only take the stage in the first volume of the book. Furthermore, Kyōden did not invent such displays and they were not a matter of pure fiction. *Misemono* shows and exhibitions featuring the disabled, sick and the blind were omnipresent in eighteenth century Edo, and it is possible he included them in his work simply because he had recently seen shows of that kind and wanted to include a reference to them. The *kibyōshi* market, if one can talk about it in those terms, was subordinate to the whims of supply and demand just like any other product, and Kyōden arguably wrote what he thought would sell. It is clear from Kyōden’s own statements that he was a businessman first, and a writer second.\(^70\) Bearing all these matters in mind, it would be too bold to assume Kyōden simply maliciously capitalized on the quandaries of the unfortunate for his own financial gain, just as it would be too presumptuous to state exploitation of the disabled did not take place at all. However, what we can comprehend from the entirety of the text is that the element of political satire dominates all others. Kyōden’s true intent likely contained varying degrees of all these points.

To summarize, several features of this *kibyōshi* allow us to place this book firmly in the “protest piece” category. First, it was published when the Kansei reforms were in full swing, and the author and his readership can therefore not be entirely unaffected by them. Second, the work has several features in common with other “protest piece” *kibyōshi* of the time, including a Kamakura period setting and the imagined Confucian moral virtue of its people. Third, *reductio ad absurdum*, a common feature of protest pieces in those years, is demonstrably employed. Fourth, several of the Kansei-era edicts are referenced throughout the book. And lastly, the narrative revolves around Matsudaira Sadanobu’s notion of social utility. As Kern states, protest pieces enjoy pointing out the failings of the Neo-Confucian social order, but offer no real solutions nor a different worldview, and this *kibyōshi* is no different. It instead employs contrarian tactics while staying within the existing ideological framework. Tama migaku aoto ga zeni and its fellow satirical *kibyōshi* can therefore not be regarded as the early sprouting of some revolutionary seed, but as an expression of dissatisfaction with the contradictions of contemporary society. Be that as it may, *kibyōshi* are one of the earliest examples of widely disseminated printed works of satire, and they reached a hitherto unseen scale of readership. By directly satirizing policies and politicians who were sometimes still in office, they have come to somewhat represent the culture of An’ei and Tenmei era Edo, a society increasingly frustrated and disillusioned with the contemporary social order.

9. Additional notes

9.1 Notes on the title and cover frontispiece

The Waseda University version of *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* is a compilation of the three volumes that make up the *kibyōshi*. The cover page is in fact that of the last volume, while the first two are completely absent from the file. When we observe the imagery adorning the page we see a dragon encircling an image of a woman (likely a courtesan as her *obi* belt is tied facing her front) carrying an implement used to transport brine, a preview of sorts of a scene found later in the volume. Above the title of the book we can read *Taiheiki* 太平記 and *Azumakagami* 吾妻鏡 preceding *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni*. Directly below the title sits the famous seal of publisher Tsutaya Jūzaburō, joined by the location of his store, *Tōriaburachō* 通油町. The other two frontispieces are available in *Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei Volume 85* 73, but are sadly printed too small to effectively reproduce here. Volume one is a snapshot of the swordfight scene in that volume, showing the two mute actors struggling to do a proper acting job. Volume two’s frontispiece presents a part of the brothel scene wherein *jizō* statues are substituted for courtesans, only showing an adult courtesan and her young trainee. Aside from the small snapshots, the rest of the frontispieces are completely identical, all boasting the same dragon decoration and text.

9.2 Notes on the *kibyōshi* prologue

The *kibyōshi* does not immediately start with its story. Instead, on a single page a small dialogue is written between none other than Kyōden himself, his wife and an errand boy sent by Jūzaburō. In the scene, a napping Kyōden was disturbed by the visiting errand boy who came by to request a copy of the manuscript. Kyōden tries to hide and sends his wife to give the boy some excuse, as his manuscript is evidently not ready. Regardless of whether the scene really happened or not, it serves more than one purpose to the reader. Firstly, it introduces the author for the first time, whose name is entirely absent from the cover of the book. Matsudaira Sadanobu’s censorship edicts promulgated in 1790 clearly called for the author’s real names to be explicitly attached to any book henceforth published, but as the edict was only posted in the fifth month of that year, and *kibyōshi* take a significant amount of time to produce, it is unlikely the edict had any effect on the writing of this book. Still, the introductory dialogue supplemented with Kyōden’s name on the last page of the book left no room for doubt as to who wrote the work. Secondly, it mentions the source

73 SNKT 85, p. 49.
material for the subsequent story, the *Taiheiki* and the *Azumakagami*. Both are historical works, the *Taiheiki* “Chronicle of Great Peace” dealing with the conflict between the northern and southern courts in the fourteenth century, and the *Azumakagami* “Mirror of the East” chronicling the course of the Kamakura shogunate in the fashion of a diary. Grounding the work in history, as so many *sharebon* and *kibyōshi* of the time did, was perhaps an attempt to give the book a thin veneer of educational authority. Furthermore, chapter thirty-five of *Taiheiki* is where one can find records of Aotozaemon Fujitsuna, the man alluded to in the title. He only appears once in the entire story, to deliver a moralizing sermon on the last page of the book.

9.3 Notes on the introductory scene

The first scene of *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* (page two and three of the *kibyōshi*) is a section of exposition that signals to the reader what this *kibyōshi*’s theme is going to be. No characters are introduced, but Kyōden describes a fictitious Kamakura period where every single person labored diligently to advance the common good and nothing or no one went to waste. He specifies the period to the age of the Shogun Hōjō Tokiyori, not coincidently Aotozaemon Fujitsuna’s feudal lord. He paints a world where moral standards are switched around: the Edo-period esthetic of *tsū*, “being a man of the world”, is applied to those embodying something resembling a protestant work ethic, instead of describing a man who knows his way around the floating world of the brothels in the usual meaning of the word. In this way, a *tsūjin* is basically redefined to draw close to the moral values Matsudaira Sadanobu wanted to instill in the common populace. Indeed, Kyōden instantly inserts two references to laws the bakufu posted in the preceding years to reinforce the theme he is setting up. One recalls a measure taken in 1788 against card games used in gambling, and the other recalls a prohibition on the sale of gold and silver pipes as part of a general prohibition on luxurious goods posted in 1789. Both measures were no doubt fresh in any reader’s mind, and their mentioning here establishes a direct connection between the fictional world Kyōden set up and the actual situation in Edo at the time. It is apparent from the beginning that this book is to be a *reductio ad absurdum* of Sadanobu’s measures against wasteful extravagance. To the common Edo citizen, the news that they had hitherto been living in luxury would no doubt have come as quite a surprise, and the edicts banning the traditionally plebeian activities of smoking and gambling must have left them quite puzzled and confused. Kyōden takes his time emphasizing the absurd

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74 The prohibition on smoking apparel such as silver and gold pipes must have been a particularly frustrating issue to the citizenry, as the smoking rate in Edo was reportedly extremely high. Kyokutei Bakin himself wrote in his *Kyokutei ippu kyōden bari* 曲亭一風 京伝張, published in 1801, “The first things young people ostensibly spend their money on are *tenugui* cotton towels, shoes, tobacco pipes and tobacco pouches.” Yuasa 2016, p. 66.
idea of perfect efficiency throughout the remaining scenes of the kibyōshi, until the point is well made and Aotozaemon can deliver his closing message of moderation. The catchwords Kyōden establishes in this first scene are fuyō 不用, “uselessness” and eki no naki mono 益のなきもの, “people with no utility”, and will return on most pages.

9.4 Notes on the misemono phenomenon

The following kabuki scene (starting on page four of the kibyōshi) is the first of these reductions to the absurd. A group of actors are out of work and decide to quit their acting jobs, and diligent as they are, become peasants. For want of actors, the theatre promptly gathers a diverse cast of people with disabilities and puts them on stage instead. Here Kyōden takes a group of people of little practical use to society and gives them an entirely different purpose, resulting in a rather cruel comedy. One theme that runs through all the different scenes is the obvious mismatch between the people and their new occupations, a device Kyōden uses to highlight the pointlessness wanting to create a world of flawless efficiency. Here too, the unavoidable clumsiness of the disabled actors causes them endless problems, suggesting that they are in principle unsuited for the job, no matter how hard they try and through no fault of their own. The person designated to read the prologue to the play is a man with an extraordinary stutter, likely the most unpleasant job anyone could have given him. In a similar fashion, a lame person is made to pull back the curtain, and in the following scenes the mute and the blind are put on stage to similar effect. What is most noticeable are the copious references to Edo society, kabuki actors, courtesans and place names in what is supposed to be a fictional piece set a few hundred years earlier. To the average reader the references would have been as obvious and recognizable as references to modern celebrities are today, and Kyōden counts on this everyday knowledge to get the reader to fill in the blanks. For example, many of the figures are blatantly drawn from kabuki plays performed a year before Tama migaku aoto ga zen’i’s publishing, while those plays did not even exist in the supposed era the story was set in. The reader is expected to recognize not only the play, but also who exactly was playing the current incarnation of a certain role. In other cases, characters are recognized by the patterns of their kimono, not only making the mentioning of their names unnecessary, but also enabling the reader to link the written dialogues to the right character, as in the case of the Soga Brothers play (pages six until nine). The humor of the scenes that make up the first volume can strike the modern reader as quite crude at first sight, but one may question whether the intent was really to merely make the reader laugh. As we have seen, given the context in which Kyōden wrote this work, there is a bigger point being made. In making “useless” people “useful” by putting them on a stage and having them perform a
task they are thoroughly unsuited for, Kyōden satirizes the principles Matsudaira Sadanobu based his reforms on.

Additionally, people with disabilities being put on stage was not at all an extraordinary thing in the eighteenth century. *Misemono* “shows” or “exhibits” originate in the late medieval period, and became a common feature of urban society by the seventeenth century. The growing speed of urbanization in the Muromachi period was accompanied by a marked increase in the diversity and number of outdoor exhibits in the Kamigata area, with several first-hand accounts describing all sorts of acrobats, animals and other curiosities put on a stage for public showing. By the Edo period, the scope of *misemono* included freak show exhibits, of which we even find a description in Ihara Saikaku’s *Seken mune zen’yō* 世間胸算用, published in 1692. In that story, a merchant finds himself short of money and contemplates organizing a freak show to temporarily aleviate his financial troubles, similar to the show managers in the *Tama migaku aoto ga zen’i* scene. Saikaku writes: “Wasn’t there some attraction or freak of nature that he could exhibit the next spring?” In another story of his, *Saikaku oridome* 西鶴織留, published in 1694, a woman gives birth to a child missing one arm, and that child eventually becomes part of a *misemono* in Osaka. Many such exhibits took place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the shows continued well into the early Meiji period. Most *misemono* took place in the theatre district of Nihonbashi, near the flourishing kabuki theatres, in whose shadows they attempted to further empty the pockets of theatre goers and passers-by. It is no coincidence that *Tama migaku aoto ga zen’i*’s *misemono* also takes place in a repurposed kabuki theatre. The *misemono* attracted visitors from all strata of society, including even the Shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi 徳川綱吉 himself, though his viewings were a bit more private. *Misemono*, unlike works of fiction or *ukiyo-e* pictures, remained largely free from censorship legislation, though shows were occasionally ordered to close for administrative reasons. *Misemono* can therefore be considered a part of every urban life, and their inclusion in this *kibyōshi* is not a complete fiction. It is entirely possible a show such as the one *Tama migaku aoto ga zen’i* describes was actually performed, but as interesting as the *misemono* were, they were seldom recorded in any official capacity and their very nature was fleeting. In fact, most of the previously mentioned orders for closure were due to the unlicensed construction of permanent facilities, an undue luxury the competing kabuki theatres could scarcely tolerate. *Misemono* eventually disappeared in the 1870s, when the Meiji government passed a ban on hoaxes and fraudulent displays. Exhibition of deformities, which would include both *Tama migaku aoto ga zen’i*’s first scene as well as the next, was
banned in 1872 not only on humanitarian grounds, but also due to incompatibility with the new and civilized moral standard the Meiji government wanted to present to the western world.\footnote{Markus 1985, p. 539.}

9.5 Notes on gappeizumō and women in the ring

The second volume of the *kibyōshi* opens with a small scene of exposition just like the first volume did. A group of men gaze excitedly at a wooden billboard announcing an upcoming sumo wrestling match between blind men and sick women. Just like the *Misemono* freak show spectacle of the first volume, wrestling matches between blind men and women were events that really took place on occasion, so its introduction here is not at all entirely fictional. Sumo wrestling between blind men and women had already been performed as a freak show by the Meiwa era (1764-1772), but was also forbidden by the authorities several times.\footnote{SNKT 85, p. 58.} In one account a *misemono* showing one woman wrestling eight blind masseurs simultaneously was ordered to close in 1769, but beyond that the attitude toward sexually charged exhibits was rather permissive.\footnote{Markus 1985, p. 518.} By the times of the Kansei reforms, these shows were considered an acceptable form of entertainment, and it is not unlikely Kyōden could have witnessed one or several of these. Interestingly, the women in the *kibyōshi* display no feelings of apprehension, and one can even sense their amusement at their predicament to some extent.

Even though women are often shunned from participating in sumo tournaments in any capacity in modern times, women’s sumo thrived during the Edo period. Aversion toward their participation finds it roots matters of religion, and the Japanese concept of the unclean called *kegare* 瑪れ. There are several types of *kegare*, but the ones bearing relation to the prohibition on women are red and white uncleanliness, referring to blood and childbirth, respectively. This impurity was contagious by touch, and before Japan’s modernization it was not uncommon for women affected by these two impurities to live in separate dwellings for a time to purify themselves. It is the expressed belief in these impurities, which affect most women at least monthly, that forms part of the basis for the modern prohibition on their participation. This reasoning was also supplemented by Buddhist beliefs regarding the status of women and their capability for enlightenment.\footnote{Yoshiaki and Inano 2008, p. 72.} As early as the Muromachi period (1336-1573) women are recorded to have participated in temple fund-raising sumo matches called *kanjinzumō* 勧進相撲, and evidently these events continued well into the Edo period.\footnote{Yoshiaki and Inano 2008, p. 76.} Women participating in *kanjinzumō* was depicted numerous times in *kibyōshi* in
the latter half of the eighteenth century. In these depictions, Yoshiaki and Inano recognize four typical characteristics these images present. One is the women’s complete nakedness aside from their mawashi belt. The second is a double dobyō土俵 sumo ring as it was typically used from the Tenmei era (1781-1789) until 1931. The third is cloth attachments to the four pillars surrounding the ring, and the last are the buckets placed next to the ring presumably used for chikaramizu力水, which is the ritual wherein water is taken and spit out by the wrestlers to purify the body after bouts. In Tama migaku aoto ga zeni’s sumo scene all four elements are clearly visible except the second, but the double ring is likely obscured by the crowd and the waiting wrestlers. Such Kanjinzumō events with participating women were first conducted at the ekōin回向院 temple in 1768, and continued across the Kansei, Bunka 文化 (1804-1818) and Bunsei 文政 (1818-1831) eras until 1830.86

What is depicted in Tama migaku aoto ga zeni is not sumo between two women but a type of event Yoshiaki and Inano call gappeizumō合併相撲, which is sumo between a woman and a blind man. Women’s sumo was known to be performed for its erotic element, and this carried over to gappeizumō, albeit supplemented with ridicule and derogatory phrasing. Because of the frequency at which women’s sumo was performed by the Kansei era, it would be presumptuous to assume the ridicule was directed at the mere presence of a woman in the ring, but rather it seems more appropriate to consider the scene a combination of eroticism and plain plebeian silliness. The government cracked down twice on gappeizumō, once in 1769 and again in 1872. The 1769 prohibition, it was argued, was enacted as a reaction to the vulgarity of the performances, in which the women frequently ended up copulating with the blind men.87 Interestingly, the ban says nothing about women as a gender participating in sumo, and specifically only the performance of gappeizumō was restricted for its pornographic nature. By the time of the Kansei reforms however, the ban was no longer enforced. It becomes reasonable to assume then, that the imaginative reader of Tama migaku aoto ga zeni in 1790 would be aware of what could happen beyond the scope of its pages and supplement the kibyōshi’s presentation of gappeizumō with his or her own imagination.

So far both scenes have depicted believable spectacles which, on occasion, did take place in Edo and were not mere inventions. Perhaps Kyōden described these scenes first to make the increase in the degree of absurdity appear less steep to the reader, as the following scenes become progressively more fantastical and less believable. The first two set pieces, however, firmly ground

86 Yoshiaki and Inano 2008, p. 76.  
87 Yoshiaki and Inano 2008, p. 78.
the work in popular Edo culture and thereby further highlight the thinness and flimsiness of its supposed historical Kamakura setting.

9.6 Aotozaemon’s coins and the sermon

The book consistently deploys scenes describing the previously mentioned “professional replacement” until the very last page of the book, where Aotozaemon Fujitsuna enters the stage for the first time to proclaim a piece of timeless wisdom. After witnessing the quite ridiculous scenes the book presented, he decides that all of it is simply complete foolishness and orders society to return to reason. Instead of descending into absurdity in the struggle against wastefulness, he advises the people to remember the writing on his coins. The last page presents to the reader a large image of one of these square-holed coins, which uses the hole as the “mouth” radical for the characters 吾, 唯, 知, and 足. The phrase reads “ware wa tada shiru tarukoto wo”, which can be translated as “I know only contentment with what I have”.

Kyōden likely found the story Aotozaemon and his coins in the Azumakagami referenced on the cover and in the prologue. The story is also mentioned in a book written by the countess Mutsu Iso 陸奥イソ (1867–1930), a British woman who married a Japanese aristocrat and thereafter lived in Kamakura, where she wrote the book Kamakura: Fact and Legend. In the story, Aotozaemon loses ten mon in the Namerigawa 滑川 river and proceeds to order his retainers to buy a torch worth fifty mon to try and find the money. The townspeople poked fun at him for his apparent net loss, but he answered to them that although ten mon was not a lot, losing it would rob all under heaven of it forever. Though he lost fifty mon of his own money, others would surely profit from his expense. Furthermore, sixty mon re-entering public circulation was surely of great benefit to all.88

The story revolves public utility just like Tama migaku aoto ga zeni does, and the character of Aotozaemon Fujitsuna is arguably an allusion to none other than Matsudaira Sadanobu himself. Aotozaemon Fujitsuna was Hōjō Tokiyori’s right hand, just as Matsudaira Sadanobu was considered the iron fist of the Shogun. However, the question remains whether this is supposed to be an ill-spirited satire of the chief elder or exactly the opposite. Like Aotozaemon Fujitsuna, Matsudaira Sadanobu went above and beyond to revive Edo’s derailed monetary economy. However, when Aotozaemon Fujitsuna incurs personal loss to increase the public good, it is clearly phrased as an act of virtue, while Matsudaira Sadanobu’s reforms were not hailed by the townspeople as great acts of virtue at all. Perhaps this is once more a biting satire disguised as a

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88 Mutsu 1995, p. 64.
depiction of virtue to avoid the censors. By casting Matsudaira Sadanobu in the trappings of Aotozaemon Fujitsuna, Kyōden retained the veneer of respect he was supposed to show while simultaneously poking a bit of fun at the chief elder’s apparently counterproductive public spending. If we substitute Aotozaemon for Sadanobu, the act of incurring personal loss for the public good remains a compliment, and has an explicitly positive moralizing message. Furthermore, the message on the coins recalls Matsudaira Sadanobu’s clamoring for frugality. In the end Aotozaemon encourages everyone, in true Buddhist fashion, to cherish what they have and not fruitlessly pursue flawless utility. Aotozaemon Fujitsuna enters the story and fixes the people’s morality as a *deus ex machina*, just as Matsudaira Sadanobu suddenly took the highest political office and thought he could simply re-orient public morality with the promulgation of a handful of edicts. *Tama migaku aoto ga zu ni* does not say whether Aotozaemon’s coins had any success in the end, just as it was uncertain in 1790 if Matsudaira Sadanobu’s moralizing would be successful or not. When reading *Tama migaku aoto ga zu ni* within its historical context, one cannot help but feel that it is an expression of *chōnin* bewilderment at the myriad of edicts, and a satire of the pretensions of a moralizing higher power swooping in to change everyone’s behavior.

Moralizing sermons went hand in hand with the concepts of didacticism (*kyōkun* 教訓) and the “promotion of virtue and chastisement of vice” (*kanzenchō aku* 勧善懲悪), and they were concepts a storyteller paid significant attention to in the years preceding and following the Kansei reforms. It is clear from the records of Kyōden’s trial that he was aware of the censor’s requirement that any newly published works be properly justified for their moral values. In *Santō Kyōden Ichidaiki* the *ginmisho* is included detailing the city commissioner’s case against Kyōden in the year following publication of *Tama migaku aoto ga zu ni*. In it, it is mentioned that by the time of the trial Kyōden wrote only didactic works, an extenuating circumstance that should be kept in mind when deciding his punishment. It is possible Kyōden felt the need to include Aotozaemon and his moralizing sermon merely to further reinforce the didactic element in his story, since he is otherwise completely absent from the stories contained within this *kibyōshi*.

It is in this concept of didacticism that we may also find an explanation for the title of this *kibyōshi*. I would propose that it contains a pun similar to, and perhaps inspired by, the one used in Kisanji’s *Bunbu nidō mangoku-dōshi* published two years earlier in 1788. A *Mangoku-dōshi* is, as Kornicki states, an implement used to separate rice from rice-bran, and alludes to author Kisanji’s

89 吟味書 *ginmisho* are documents stating the details of the criminal charges brought against someone and examine the relationship between the prosecutor, defendant and any possible suspects.

90 Kornicki 1977, p. 158.
parody of the bunbu slogan, separating the bun from the bu. In a similar vein, an aoto 青砥 is a pale grey whetstone used for polishing and sharpening blades, stones or jewels.

Furthermore, many readers in Edo would have been familiar with a certain primer on moral teachings called jitsugokyo 實語教, a textbook often used at the terakoya 寺子屋 temple schools to instruct children in proper behaviour. In this primer, forty-eight Buddhist and Confucian maxims were cited in the gogonsekku 五言絶句 form, which are poems of four lines, with each line containing five characters. This book was used from the end of the Heian period until as recent as the early Meiji period, and an eighteenth century citizen of Edo would almost certainly have been well acquainted with its many proverbs. The third of these forty-eight maxims reads as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
tama migakazareba hikari nashi & \quad \text{玉不磨無光} \quad \text{an unpolished jade will not shine} \\
bikari naki wo ishigawara to su & \quad \text{無光為石瓦} \quad \text{if it will not shine, consider it a useless stone} \\
hito manabazareba chi nashi & \quad \text{人不学無智} \quad \text{an uneducated man will not be wise} \\
chi naki wo gujin to su & \quad \text{無智為愚人} \quad \text{if he is unwise, he can be considered a fool}
\end{align*}
\]

Additionally, tama 玉, written on the cover with the character for jade, and another tama 魂 (also read as tamashii), meaning the “spirit” or “soul”, are homophones.

When we put these three elements together and consider Aotozaemon to be equivalent to Sadanobu, it becomes clear that “polishing jade” is not to be taken literally, but refers to the “polishing” (or education) of the “spirit” (or the mind, if you will). If we then treat Aotozaemon as the implement used to perform this polishing, as Kisanji did with his kibyōshi, then the title clearly becomes another manifestation of kanzen 勧善, or the “promotion of virtue”, the thing chief elder Sadanobu was so concerned with. Aotozaemon Fujitsuna, whose name is a pun on an actual tool for polishing, is equivalent to Matsudaira Sadanobu, who swoops in and educates the minds of the people so they may rise above the savage, and closer to wisdom. The wisdom that results from this polishing is nothing but the educational phrase written on his coins: “I know only contentment with what I have”.

92 Santō Kyōden was certainly aware of jitsugokyo, as he wrote an edition himself two years later in 1792, titled jitsugokyo osana kashaku 実語教幼稚講釈, published by Tsutaya Jūzaburō.
93 I thank dr. Angelika Koch for making me aware of this primer and the maxim in question.
94 I must express my gratitude to dr. Mick Deneckere for this insight.
10. Concluding remarks

The intent of this paper was to expose the contents of Tama migaku aoto ga zeni to an English-reading audience and examining its references, its meanings, and the nature of its relation to the Kansei reforms. Therefore, before the reader proceeds to peruse the contents of the book as I have laid them out in the following pages, it is important to recall the main points I have discussed in this document.

Firstly, as for the nature of the relation of this book to the Kansei reforms, it has become apparent that those reforms are an essential part of how this book came to exist. Matsudaira Sadanobu’s economic opinions flanked by his ascetic Confucian sentiments lead to the censorship of printed works and a ban on luxury items and objects he judged to be useless. This book brushes up against both these components. On one hand, it deals with the economic component by satirizing the government’s focus on utility and profitability by replacing people in various professions to an increasingly absurd degree. On the other hand, on a meta-level the book’s author came into collision with the government’s censors, who explicitly punished him for writing lewd material, but arguably sought to discourage Santō Kyōden from writing any more material poking fun at the government’s reforms. We have seen that this book is one of many similar “protest piece” kibyōshi published in the last few years of the 1780’s. Many of the literary devices Santō Kyōden utilized, such as the reductio ad absurdum and the moralizing deus ex machina at the end, were commonly employed by many of the author’s contemporaries, who were also punished for their writing on more than one occasion. If one reads the book as a satire on the concept of “utility” that Matsudaira Sadanobu preached, it becomes a much more understandable work and consequently significantly more meaningful.

Secondly, it has become clear that many of the seemingly random elements of the book are references to contemporary personalities, reforms and places. Kibyōshi were evidently exceedingly complex interrelated works where of the entirety of popular Edo culture crystalized into a single readable experience. Though several of these elements of culture were touched upon, such as misemono exhibitions and gappeizumō mixed wrestling, one cannot hope to truly ever unravel all the multifarious references the author throws at the reader.

Lastly, this paper sought to shed light upon the meaning of this book. Tama migaku aoto ga zeni can arguably be read in two ways. On one hand, one can read it as a series of farcical, semi-humorou, loosely interconnected scenes. A throwaway story to be discarded without a second thought, if you will. No doubt many of the more unaccomplished “Great Sophisticates” of
Kyōden’s time were equally unable to grasp the myriad of allusions and points this book sought to make. It is therefore not a “wrong” way of reading this work, as many of Kyōden’s contemporaries must also have consumed it in such a manner. On the other hand, having knowledge of the Kansei reforms, the cultural connections, and the background story of Aotozaemon Fujitsuna, provides the book with a more satisfying second reading. It then becomes not simply a throwaway comic book, but a satire poking fun at the government’s moral pretentions, and a denouncement of its reforms. As one goes through the various scenes, and remembers the author’s intent and the mechanism he deployed to structure the book, *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* becomes not just another comical story, but a more complex political protest in disguise.

Once the references, meanings, and the nature of the book’s relation to the Kansei reforms have seen some attention, the only thing remaining is the English translation. By bearing all the aforementioned points in mind, *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni* can perhaps offer the modern reader a small window in how the average citizen of Edo could have experienced the politics and social movements of his time, as well as offer a peek into the interesting world of Edo’s popular forms of entertainment.
11. A translation of *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni*  

*Tama migaku aoto ga zeni*, like most *kibyōshi*, only survives in small numbers locked away in library storehouses and in the vaults of private collectors. Fortunately, Mizuno Minoru and his colleagues created an annotated version in Japanese and rendered it into modern typography for the *Shin Nihon Katen Bungaku Taikai, Volume 85*. Their text and the accompanying images are lifted from the copy held at the Kaga Bunko, Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library. Additionally, the Waseda university provides high-resolution scans of a large selection of works held in their vaults, including a scan of *Tama migaku aoto ga zeni*, enabling a cross-examination of both files to produce a modern English translation. I have included the scans in this document, and hope the reader will forgive the slight adjustments I have made for contrast and readability. It is at this point I must advise those enthusiastic readers who skipped the preceding thirty-odd pages of this document to read the first half of this paper first, as I believe the reading experience is thoroughly enriched by some notion of what this *kibyōshi* is and what the author really intended to transmit.

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95 SNKT 85, p. 50-72.
11.1 Volume one

Prologue

Figure 3. Page one of Tama migaku aoto ga zeni. Collection of Waseda University.

YOUNG LAD: “Excuse me! … Excuse me! Say, is Kyōden around?” The young boy’s shouting reaches Kyōden’s ears and rouses him from his afternoon nap. He gets up from his futon.

KYŌDEN: “Osone! If he’s here to ask for the manuscript again, tell him the usual!”, he whispers quietly to his wife as he slips away out of sight. Osone pushes the two books, Taiheiki and Azumakagami, aside.

WIFE: “He must be here to deliver more letters to you from the girls over at Yoshiwara or Fukagawa! You’re being very optimistic again, husband.”, she scolds him, as she opens the sliding doors. “He’s out for a stroll. What business do you have here?”

96 Osone is the name of Kyōden’s wife. Her maiden name was Okiku. SNKT 85, p. 51.
97 The Taiheiki 太平記 is a military story about the conflict between the Southern and Northern Imperial courts in the 14th century. In part 35, one can read about Aotozaemon Fujitsuna 青砥左衛門藤綱, the man alluded to in the title. This is likely where Kyōden found his source material for the character.
98 The Azumakagami 吾妻鏡 ("The Mirror of the East") is a diary-style record of the Kamakura shogunate. Though it contains no references to Aotozaemon Fujitsuna, it was likely used as a source of information about the Kamakura period, and is therefore deliberately mentioned here.
YOUNG LAD: “I come from Tsutaya’s shop, in Aburachō. Did your husband manage to complete the manuscript yet?”

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99 Tsutaya Jūzaburō 蔦屋重三郎, the publisher of this work, ran his publishing business in Tōriaburachō 通油町.
In the picture, we see the “four occupations” alongside each other. A merchant sitting behind a lantern with an abacus, a carpenter working on a wooden board, a peasant tilling the soil and two samurai practicing archery. During the reign of Hōjō Tokiyori, regent to the fifth Shogun in Kamakura, the people were industrious to a fault. In that remote time, the foremost occupation of men was to work the fields, and that of women to operate the loom. Those outside the four castes of samurai, peasant, craftsman and tradesman were called the idlers. Though they were usually of no utility to the world, those boys wanted for nothing and dressed in fine Ueda garments, and even their sort managed to carry themselves with dignity and moderation, exerting themselves without neglecting the household trade their parents had them do. As a result, in those days the only unused and idle

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100 SNKT 85, p. 53.
101 Tokiyori of the Hōjō family was the fifth regent to the Shogun, the shikken, of the Kamakura Shogunate. The Hōjō regents were the de-facto rulers of the time, controlling the puppet-Shoguns in a similar fashion to the way the kampaku held sway over a reigning emperor. Tokiyori is known for his benevolent and just government, aspiring to principles of simplicity and frugality. Aotozaemon Fujitsuna was said to be his incorruptible and loyal vassal.
102 The group of people not belonging to the four occupations was quite large and diverse, and included military personnel, various types of clergy and diviners, eunuchs, concubines, entertainers, courtiers, domestic servants, prostitutes, and lower-class laborers. All these were considered hinin 非人. I thank dr. Angelika Koch for this insight.
things in the world were playing cards\textsuperscript{103} and silver tobacco pipes.\textsuperscript{104} Indeed, if one wanted to be considered a great sophisticate \textit{connoisseur}, one had to work so hard as to deny oneself the time to go to the loo, working tirelessly and without pause both day and night, earning them the name “the four castes’ chamber pots”. Even at sophisticated ceramic shops they exceptionally stocked up on chamber pots to sell.

CARPENTER: “Nowadays, even the penniless and idlers are perusing the streets of Yoshiwara. I heard that the girls laugh as they yell “\textit{fuyō no hito-!”\textsuperscript{105} from behind the latticework\textsuperscript{106}!””

\textsuperscript{103} The text reads \textit{mekuri karuta}, a gambling card game. One of Matsudaira Sadanobu’s reforms was a prohibition on gambling, the \textit{bakuekito no shōbu kinshi no gi ni tsuki furegaki} 博奕賭ノ勝負禁止ノ儀ニ付触書, promulgated January 12\textsuperscript{th} of the eighth year of Tenmei (1788). SNKT, 85 p. 52.

\textsuperscript{104} In the first year of Kansei (1789), Matsudaira Sadanobu promulgated a prohibition on the trade of luxurious goods, the \textit{shashi no buppin baibai teishiti furegaki} 奢侈ノ物品売買停止触書. It included a prohibition on the sale of gold or silver pipes. SNKT, 85 p. 52.

\textsuperscript{105} This is a pun on a phrase one would often hear while walking the streets of Yoshiwara. Kamuro禿, young girls working as servants to the resident prostitutes, would yell “\textit{Mukō no hito} 向こうの人” at passersby: SNKT, 85 p. 53.

\textsuperscript{106} Brothels in Yoshiwara had broad sections of latticework as a façade, behind which the girls available for purchase sat waiting for customers. SNKT, 85 p. 53.
Figure 5. Page four and five of Tama migaku aoto ga zeni. Collection of Waseda University.

In this picture, we see the audience in front of the kabuki stage, upon which a narrator sits. Someone is pulling the curtain back, indicating the beginning of the show.\footnote{SNKT, 85 p. 53.}

A troupe of kabuki actors gather at Kamakurayuki. “My friends, since we’re also nothing more than idlers, let us retire from our profession as Kabuki actors and become peasants. Instead of performing ourselves, let us gather a congregation of the handicapped and put them on the stage! If we dress it up as a play promoting virtue and chastising vice, both us and the disabled will become of great utility of society.”, one of the actors proposed to his colleagues.

The theatre managers mobilized, amongst others, a talentless blind shamisen player\footnote{SNKT, 85 p. 53.}, people missing various appendages, the mute and speechless, the maimed reduced to crawling on the floor,

\begin{itemize}
\item Kamakurayuki refers to a real place near the Tsurugaoka Hachimangū 鶴岡八幡宮 in Kamakura. Kamakurayuki is here set up as an equivalent to the three great theatre districts, the Edosanza 江戸三座, of Sakaichō 堺町, Fukiyachō 葺屋町 and Kobikichō 木挽町. SNKT, 85 p. 53.
\item In Kamakura, the words yukino shita 雪ノ下 are ubiquitous and frequently found in place names and storefronts. As the story goes, the first Kamakura Shogun Yoritomo preserved the winter snow in storehouses until the summer in the center of the city, giving the district its name and associating Kamakura with snow ever since. A less colorful explanation is the supposed rampant growth of the yuki no shita plant in the neighborhood at the time.
\item Their proper name is goze 障女, whose symbols mean “blind” and “woman”. A word already extant at
\end{itemize}
hunchbacks, people missing parts of their nose, the one-eyed and the limping lame, men with unusually large heads and even a few dwarfs, and when they were done they promptly concocted a kyōgen play. The third floor of the backstage area, where actors prepared themselves, was lively with so many of the disabled, it truly resembled the prayer halls of Himonya.

The managers supposed that ordinary persons surely had a better use than opening curtains, so one of the lame was sent to perform this task, stumbling and blundering. His clumsy performance causes one of the geisha waiting behind the curtain to tumble. The narrator, seated on the stage, started reading the prologue from a large scroll with a pronounced stutter. “to- to- o- o- za- zaa- i- iii…” Using him for this performance was merely one of their many ill-conceived casting decisions.

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110 The term here used is sangai 三階, which does not refer to the third floor of the spectator’s booths, but to the third floor of the backstage area, or the actors present there.

111 A komorido 箬堂, or “hall of hermitage”, is a small structure where Buddhist devotees would seclude themselves into to pray and practice asceticism. Himonya 碑文谷, a place located to the southeast of Meguromura 目黒村 (in present-day Meguro-ku 目黒区, Tokyo), was famous for its statues of the two guardian deva kings (the Nin’ō 仁王) located at the Hokkeji 法華寺 temple (present-day Enyūji 圓融寺). During the times of the Kansei reforms the Nin’ō enjoyed a prosperous cult following, and Himonya was a lively gathering place for its devotees. At the time, the disabled congregated there in large numbers, explaining the reference. SNKT 85, p. 54.

112 The text contains a pun on the word korobasu 転ばす, referring to flirting and possibly sexual intercourse with female entertainers. One can also read the word literally as ‘to cause to fall’, or perhaps with both meanings at once, “to sweep her off her feet”. SNKT 85, p. 54.
The actors playing Gorō and Jūrō are on stage. Both are wearing costumes sporting the Iorimokkō
heraldry. Their clothes are decorated with butterfly and bat patterns.\textsuperscript{114}

The season was spring, so the play the managers decided upon was that of the Soga brothers.\textsuperscript{115}
They chose a completely deaf man for the role of Sukenari, and for Tokimune a man with a crooked
nose was chosen. The actors took turns replying to each other, and evidently the lines they attempted to speak were exceptionally troublesome. When Sukenari was prompted to start his
dialogue, Tokimune lost his temper in a spectacular fashion, and as he was getting even more agitated because of his crooked nose, he could not remember a single word of his lines.

\textsuperscript{113}庵木瓜
\textsuperscript{114}SNKT 85, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{115}As a rule, the play of the Soga 曾我 brothers Jūrō Sukenari 十郎祐成 and Gorō Tokimune 五郎時宗
was performed when spring began, in the first month of the Japanese year. SNKT 85, p. 55.
“f-fu yahatte fu-su”, Tokimune clumsily attempted to say. Rather than the intended respectful address to the audience, what came out instead resembled the passionate exclamations one often finds in an erotic picture book.

TOKIMUNE: “Oi, Sukenari, I finished my lines long ago, and yet you’re still only mumbling gibberish. Look at the audience, and perform the play! I told you to stop being such a meddlesome fool, but you couldn’t hear! If you can hear this, the fights about to begin!”

Sukenari and Tokimune scolded each other, but eventually manage to recall how to perform the play. “We can’t just give up on this one”, they thought, and started sweating profusely as they exerted themselves.

SUKENARI “Tokimune, you are in the august presence of Yoritomo! Calm down, calm down!”

AUDIENCE: “What is this? I can’t understand a thing Tokimune is saying. It’s nothing but spittle and wheezing.”

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116 A slurring of the phrase nyamatte mōsu 敬て申す, or literally “respectfully, I speak”. SNKT 85, p. 55.

Figure 7. Page eight and nine of Tama migaku aoto ga zeni. Collection of Waseda University.

Underneath a snow-covered tree Ōmi and Yawata are fighting, with the narrator behind them. In front of a stack of freshly harvested raw rice, a crippled Taira no Kagekiyo marvels at a mirror sticking out of the water.\textsuperscript{118}

Next up was the great voiceless sword fight between the two mute actors, performing the kyōgen by the playwright Sakurada\textsuperscript{119}. When the play was finally finished, a bamboo weir stage prop\textsuperscript{120} came crashing down on the stage. One of the crippled, dressed up splendidly as Taira no Kagekiyo, the main antagonist of the story, was pushed to the front of the stage on a small wheeled cart. This set the stage for this play’s mountain scene.

\textsuperscript{118} SNKT 85, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{119}“Sakurada” refers to a playwright, Sakurada Jisuke I 櫻田治助初世. He was active during the An’ei, Tenmei and Kansei eras. His plays got to the heart of the social conditions within Edo, and his witty satirical style became known as Sakuradaryū 櫻田流. The scene on this page likely imitates Sakurada Jisuke’s play \textit{Edo Fuji Wakayagi Soga} 江戸富士陽曾我, as performed in first month of the ninth year of Tenmei (1789) at the Nakamura-za 中村座 theatre, the same year this book was written. SNKT 85, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{120} This stage prop was called a \textit{yabugaki} 薮垣, a prop resembling the reed weir fences flanking the pathways one often finds in bamboo grove gardens. This prop set the play in a bamboo grove.
KAGEKIYO: “How marvelous! That mirror, whoever can take it out of the water for me is a good boy”, he says as a jeweled mirror rises up from the depths of the water. The wheels of his cart creaked as he rolled on the wooden stage floor, unable to grab the mirror by himself.

Because both brothers Ōmi and Yawata could not speak, the audience couldn’t understand at all why they were even fighting. A stage assistant seated behind the two actors shouted the explanation to the audience as the fight proceeded.

NARRATOR: “Just now, Yawata no Saburō is demanding Kotōda shows the permit of passage to the hunting grounds on the slopes of Fuji Mountain, …”, the prompter said as their swords clashed.

“Look carefully, everyone!”, he said, as the musicians created a tense rhythm by clapping their wooden board instruments.

“Aaa!“, shouted Yawata. Since the mute actors didn’t know their cues at all, the narrator had an exceptionally hard time keeping the play in order.

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121 The word kitte 切手, used here, refers to a postage stamp in modern times. Here its original meaning of “permit, certificate granting passage” is appropriate. In the Soga play, this permit was given to the two brothers by Kudō Suketsune 工藤祐經. SKBT 85, p. 56.

122 Tsuke byōshi つけ拍子 is the sound effect produced by striking with clappers against a wooden board in kabuki theatre. SKBT 85, p. 56.
On the catwalk, there are a prostitute playing the Tigress of Ōiso and a young man holding a foldable lantern. Where the prostitutes crest emblem should have been painted, the words “eye medicine” are written instead, its characters written to resemble a face. A caption next to the young lad holding the lantern reads “the blind young actor”.

It was time for the tea-house scene, and for that part they chose a blind woman. On the tip of her nose she was wearing a pair of metkatsura spectacles, and since she could not see the audience, she was given a black-lacquered walking stick. As she walked forward, someone on the main stage shouted “I can’t see the tigress! I can’t see her!” Further in the play, an actor with an enormous head played the role of Minamoto no Yoritomo. Someone missing a hand played the role of

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123 Ōiso was also an alias for the Yoshiwara brothel district.
124 SNKT 85, p. 57.
125 The lines in the original play were “I can see the tigress! I can see her!”, only one syllable of difference in the Japanese rendition. SNKT 85, p. 57.
126 It is said that the historical Minamoto no Yoritomo had a rather large head as well. SNKT 85, p. 57.
By virtue of this performance, not even a single person was left useless in the world and all possessed utility.

SPECTATOR: “There are no less than two actors on the stage, but they only share one eye between them both!”

11.2 Volume two

(See figure 7 on the previous page) A scene in front of the torii shrine gate on the Fukagawa Hachiman shrine estate. A sign that would usually read “Permit granted”, indicating official sanction for an event, is posted. However, in this case, the sign reads “Permission to view”. In addition, it reads “Eastern team: bald men, western team: women”. The townspeople and samurai gazing at the posted sign are expressing their delight at the prospect of the competition.

Sumo wrestlers from Akazawayama too possessed enormous strength far exceeding that of the common man, and should therefore be perfectly suitable for the competition, but leaving such men as mere wrestlers would be surely be a shame. An ingenious scheme was devised, where instead of proper wrestlers, blind men were chosen, both incompetent and bereft of rank and title. The blind men were assigned to the Western Team. Women from Hashibashi, on the outskirts of Edo, who suffered from syphilis, and thus of no other conceivable utility to the world, were employed to serve in the Eastern Team. The blind men and diseased women grappled one another in bouts of Sumo.

SPECTATOR: “Indeed! This is going the best thing we are ever going to witness”.

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127 Taira no Tadanori 太平度 lost his arm at the battle of Ichinotani (1184), the climactic battle in the latter half of the Genpei war as described in the war tale Heike Monogatari.
128 SNKT 85, p. 59.
129 Prostitutes in Edo who contracted syphilis would continue to entertain patrons in short visits, and were delegated to the worst and lowest of brothels in the undesirable parts of town. SNKT 85, p. 58.
130 Sumo wrestling between blind men and women had already been performed as a freak show by the Meiwa era (1764-1772), but was also forbidden by the authorities on more than one occasion. By the times of the Kansai reforms, these shows were considered an acceptable form of entertainment. SNKT 85, p. 58.
Until now the “Ten days of Bright Sky” Tournament has been held in the city, but as on sunny days the entire audience will be too busy with housework to attend, it was decided that their tournament should be the “Ten days of Rainy Sky” Tournament, so that particular problem could be avoided. After the intermission, the sumo match began.

The first match was between “Menashikawa, The River without Eyes” and “Kasa no Umi, The Sea of Syphilis”. Another between “Tsue ga Take, The Cane’s Bamboo” and “Samegabashi, The Bridge of Sharks”. Another between “Mukōmizu, Water on the Other Side” against “Honegarami”.

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131 From the seventh year of An’ei (1779) onwards, these Sumo tournaments, held on the estate of the Fukagawa Hachiman shrine, were extended from eight days to ten days. SNKT 85, p. 58.
132 The tsue杖 here refers to a swagger stick used by the sight-impaired.
133 Samegabashi鮫ヶ橋 was a place near the Yotsuya四谷 area in Edo. In contrast to the sole licensed prostitution quarter of Yoshiwara, this is where unlicensed prostitutes gathered and did their business. Their quarters were called the okabasho岡場所. While the courtesans at Yoshiwara were expected to be refined and capable of performing fine arts far beyond mere carnal relations, and were therefore exceedingly expensive, the women of the okabasho were cheap and provided only the most basic services. Aside from quartered prostitutes, there were also street walkers, known as yotaka夜鷹, or “Nightjar birds”. SNKT 85, p. 59.
134 Mukōmizu is written here with the character for water水, a pun on the phrase Mukōmizu 向こう見ず meaning “Without watching where one is going”. SNKT 85, p. 59.
135 骨がらみ
The Pockmarked Bones. Indeed, this was a truly magnificent Sumo tournament. The referee waves his persimmon-varnished kitchen fan around, and directs the two players to begin another bout. The performance looked just like a Hyottoko fool’s dance. “A certain Mr. Orisuke bestows an Asakusa rag on Samegabashi!” announces the referee. “Run to the clapping! Run to the clapping!” he shouted to make the blind man run in the right direction.

A spectator shouts “Oi, seven testes! Don’t lose boy! Don’t lose!” The referee keeps shouting. “If nobody starts winning, we should throw some water on them and pull them apart.”

“That girl has some strength in her! She’s got a well-practiced arm after all! So that’s why she gets them to stay all night so often”, one of the waiting women comments.

If we add the blind massagers thirty-two mon to the prostitutes fifty, one entrance ticket makes about eighty mon per day. The audience rooting for the blind man clenched their teeth tightly. “Grapple tight with your walking-stick arm! Grip tight!”, they yelled encouragingly. “Gah! Grappling like this is turning me on”, the blind man yells as he grabs his female opponent.

Another one of the waiting women speaks to her colleague. “If they would grab us this tight during our usual business we could charge them a hundred mon!”

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136 A dance performed by men wearing hyottoko 火男 (a comical male character with a puckered, skewed mouth) and okame お亀 (a homely woman with a small low nose, high flat forehead, and bulging cheeks) masks. These costumed men danced in front of parade floats striking drums and ringing bells during festivals in Edo. SNKT 85, p. 59.

137 Orisuke 折介 were low-ranked servants employed by Samurai families. They were known as the regular customers of street walkers. SNKT 85, p. 59.

138 Production of a type of recycled paper began in the Sanya 山谷 area of Asakusa during the Genroku era (1688-1704). Of notoriously low quality, it was used most commonly as toilet paper or as a throwaway handkerchief. Here bestowed as a gift, it likely highlights the extreme destitution of the performers. SNKT 85, p. 59.

139 A phrase used by children when they play onigokko 鬼ごっこ, or demon make-believe. The boy playing the demon would run around blindfolded after his friends, who shouted “run to the clapping!” Te no naru ko 手のある子, refers both to a Sumo wrestler commanding great strength, and a prostitute with great skill at satisfying her clients. SNKT 85, p. 59.

140 The word used here is nana fuguri 七睾丸. Literally it means “seven testicles”, a word used to describe the feeling a man experiences when he loses to a woman. SNKT 85, p. 59.

141 When a Sumo match looks like a draw, the referee retires for a moment and has the two wrestlers take and spit water, a ritual called chikaramizu 力水. SNKT 85, p. 59.

142 The phrase te no aru ko 手のある子, refers both to a Sumo wrestler commanding great strength, and a prostitute with great skill at satisfying her clients. SNKT 85, p. 59.

143 Blind men, due to their reduced options for employment, often worked as massagers. The word here used is anma 按摩.

144 Edo’s hierarchy of prostitutes is described by a rich tapestry of colorful wording. The word kiri mise 切見 desribes a prostitute of the lowest rank, whose time was roughly worth about 100 mon (indicated by the word kire 一切). It also simply means a short visit to the brothel, as opposed to staying the night. Their working area was commonly only the size of two tatami mats. Interestingly, the term evolved with inflation of currency during the Edo period. In earlier times, the same term denoted a higher-class prostitute, as one hundred mon was worth a great deal more. SNKT 85, p. 59.
A tatami-floored room where guests and courtesans are entertaining themselves. An oiran, kamuro and shinzō, all shapeshifted foxes, wearing kimono with a jewel-pattern. A female geisha entertainer wearing a torii-patterned kimono. A tanuki male entertainer sporting a nihōtsuzumi-patterned kimono. All are keeping their tails in a pouch, which remains visible, sticking out from their clothes. Of the two male guests, one appears to be a patron from the samurai caste, wearing a warrior's haori coat, in fashion at the time.

Here, in the district of Ōiso\textsuperscript{145}, there was a man named Kurōnosuke\textsuperscript{146}, who ran a brothel. For those women who used to be courtesans, being mere tools to console men without wives in that era of great peace, surely another ingenious solution could be found. Secretly, foxes were made to shift their shapes into those of prostitutes and set about consoling the hearts of the masses. The original prostitutes were, just like in ages past, made to weave cloth, as this was considered to be of great utility to society. No less than three thousand wild foxes were employed. Amongst them

\textsuperscript{145} Ōiso 大磯 was a common nickname for the Yoshiwara district.

\textsuperscript{146} A personification of the Kurōnosuke Inari 九郎助稻荷 shrine in Yoshiwara. SNKT 85, p. 60.
were Ibushino from the Sugibaya brothel, Anazuru from the Ōjiya brothel, Matsusaki from the Tamaya brothel, and Rangiki from the Bakeya brothel. When any of these beautiful courtesans were chosen by the guests, they shifted their shapes into those of women. Their transformation was so good, in fact, that the guests could not imagine their chosen girls were foxes at all. They shouted all, “Me too! Me too!”, as they were one by one bewitched by the foxy courtesans.

The foxes did their utmost best and refused to fall behind on their duties. However, no matter how beautifully they transformed, their tails remained a problem. Because they could be discovered by keen-eyed patrons, Kurōnosuke thought of a cunning plan. He had covers manufactured for the foxes to hide their tails in, and had them perform their charges in that manner. Especially on the days before a holiday, when a great deal of patrons would visit the establishment and some serious money had to be made, the tails sticking out would cause a great deal of worry.

Alongside the courtesans were the two female geisha entertainers Kitsu-ume and Tamao, both shapeshifted foxes. Someone ends up stepping on Tamao’s tail causing her to fall down, and in the end, she is banished from the eight provinces of Kanto for being discovered.

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147 A pun on Matsubaya 松葉屋, a brothel in Yoshiwara. Cedar or sugi 杉 is used instead of Pine or matsu 松, as one technique to drive out fox spirits was the fumigation of cedar leaves. The prostitutes name, Ibushino, is a pun on the verb matsubu 檜す, to smoke or to fumigate. SNKT 85, p. 60.

148 Ōjiya is a reference to the place Ōji Inari王子稲荷, on the northern outskirts of Edo. This place was said to be a gathering spot for kitsunebi 狐火, an atmospheric ghost light told about in legends. As is evident from the kanji, foxes are frequently featured in these legends. The prostitutes’ name is a pun on the word ana 穴, or hole, wherein foxes live. There was a brothel in Yoshiwara called chōiya 丁子屋, where a famous pair of prostitutes, Hinazuru 雛鶴 and Hinamatsu 雛松, worked. Incidentally, they were immortalized in one of Kitagawa Utamaro’s famous ukiyo-e. In this text, Kyōden combines the word ana with the name of the prostitute Hinazuru to make the name Ana-zuru. SNKT 85, p. 60.

149 The Tamaya 玉屋 was another brothel in Yoshiwara located diagonally opposite of the previously mentioned Matsubaya. Matsusaki, the courtesans’ name, is a reference to the Matsusaki 真崎 Inari shrine, near Asakusabashi 浅草橋. SNKT 85, p. 60.

150 Bakeya is a reference to shapeshifting, bakenou 化けもの, and a pun on another brothel in Yoshiwara, Takeya 竹屋. Rangiku, the prostitutes’ name, is a pun on the stanza “I hide the fox, Rangiku, in the bushes” from a poem by the Chinese Tang-dynasty poet Bai Juyi 白居易. The stanza is about being secretly related to a fox. SNKT 85, p. 60.

151 This day was called mononome 物前, and was a day when prostitutes were forced to take customers, or make up for the lost profit out of their own pocket. These days preceded each of the gosekku 五節句, or each of the five main festivals in Edo, and was a day for settling accounts, similar to the closing of a fiscal year in modern times. For prostitutes, this was a time of great worry, as many of them could not at all earn the amount they owed to their owner, leaving them in de-facto perpetual bondage.

152 A reference to the Yoshiwara courtesan ittsumi いつ海, her name parodied by combining her name and the word kiyotsune 化けの前, a pun on her name and the kabuki play Tamamo no Mae. This also explains the similarity of the courtesans’ name Tamao to the legendary Tamamo. SNKT 85, p. 60.
“Ah, your tail-bag is made of purple chirimen\textsuperscript{154} cloth. If it were light yellow it would have the appearance of a horse tail, right!”, a shinzō said to an oiran-rank courtesan.

“This is a place a raccoon dog can have a jolly good time in too”, a patron said as one of the girls changed into a drumming-girl, and entertained the party with nictōtsuzumi.\textsuperscript{155}

One of the geisha sang “non-no-kusai, non-no-kusai! Sukon-ko-kuwai, sukon-ko-kuwai …”\textsuperscript{156}

The drumming girl said, “I’m amazing, no?” as one of the patrons encouraged her to drink.

“Hey Tanuhachi,\textsuperscript{157} drink up, drink up!”

\textsuperscript{154}縮緬, a crepe-like type of cloth. SNKT 85, p. 61.

\textsuperscript{155} Raccoon Dogs, tanuki狸, according to legend, drummed their bellies as if they were actual drums. SNKT 85, p. 61.

\textsuperscript{156} A hayashikotoba囃子詞, the verbal accompaniment in traditional performances of Kabuki and Noh. The second part of the sentence is the sound changing into the growl of a fox. SNKT 85, p. 61.

\textsuperscript{157} Tanuhachi狸八, a reference to the fabled eight tatami-mat sized testicles a raccoon dog was supposed to possess. SNKT 85, p. 61.
A stone jizō statue standing at attention outside a patron's room. A courtesan and kamuro with their covered tails sticking out. A patron and a stone jizō sharing a bed in a room. In a different room, a shapeshifted courtesan and her client.

The foxes used their bewitching magic, and a spirit was put in the stone jizō statues. They were used as a proxy to serve patrons the foxes didn’t like.

JIZŌ “That customer over there didn’t like me that much for being a priest, so he threw me out and I came here.”

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158 The word *ishi*, meaning stone, is here used as a pun. In those times, *ishi* could also mean a woman who is rather indifferent toward sex, and undergoes rather than enjoys the act, without word or expression. SNKT 85, p. 61.

159 Courtesans would sometimes have a kamuro take over while they snuck out of the room to different customers and lovers. SNKT 85, p. 61.
PATRON “Your body is pretty cold. And your skin feels so rough. This silver pipe I’m smoking agegiseru-style is rather old-fashioned. How about a better brass one?”

One of the courtesans in the hallway gives her fancy handkerchiefs to one of the jizō and sneaks out of a room to another customer. Her replacement is a jizō with the courtesan’s rank of furisode shinzō, so it was likely slightly cheaper for the client. As the resident courtesans were all foxes, it was just as if Takemura wanted to sell horse dung, but with a stroke of bad luck, sold genuine bean paste after all. Like wanting to light the candle braziers with wax made from horse bones, but instead using genuinely good candle wax. This was a world where everything fell into place just right.

PATRON “You yelled out “kon, kon!” so many times! But this much I really can’t believe”

COURTESAN “Blood rushed to my head countless times, I’m not deceiving you.”

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160 *Agegiseru* 揚煙管 was the smoking of a pipe with the bowl held high upwards, like how one would smoke while lying on one’s back. SNKT 85, p. 61.

161 The text here makes a pun on the word *furisode shinzō* 振袖新造衆, a 15 or 16-year-old courtesan apprentice, and *furisode jizō* 振袖地蔵衆, the type of jizō statues wearing small garments. *Furisode no shinzō* was the middle rank of the three *shinzō*. SNKT 85, p. 62.

162 *Takemura Ise Daijō* 竹村伊勢大掾 was a famous candy shop in Yoshiwara. One of their famous products was *monaka no tsuki* 最中の月, a type of *manjū* 饅頭 hot stuffed bun. “Selling dung at Takemura” would be filling the *manjū* 饅頭 buns with horse dung instead of bean paste and selling it as a scam. SNKT 85, p. 62.

163 The word *kon* 来ん, means both “to come” and is an onomatopoeia for the cry of a fox. SNKT 85, p. 62.

164 The written phrase *mayu to tsuba wa tsukune - 眉毛 へ唾 は つ け ね へ*, or “spittle doesn’t stick to eyebrows”, is a popular saying meaning “to not be deceived by the trickery of foxes or raccoon dogs”. SNKT 85, p. 63.
A dressing room where the courtesans are in their true fox form. They are frying tofu in a cauldron of boiling oil, writing letters and taking naps. The human brothel madam is urging the foxes to shapeshift quickly and prepare for the afternoon shift.

It took a great deal of effort on the part of the foxes to stay shapeshifted day and night, so they took the opportunity to rest in the dressing room, where they return to their original fox form and gossip about the patrons they loved and were loved by, just like humans would do. While preparing in the dressing room, even real human courtesans were frightfully hideous, but foxes especially were a truly disgusting sight.
FOX 1: “There isn’t a thing to eat here. Let us broil some sardines with salt” 165

FOX 2: “We can get some deep-fried tofu 166 at the Bamboo Gate 167. Let us get some full plates of red rice too!”

FOX 3: “Hey, Bakashino, the patron I saw last night completely lost all his vigor, and I suddenly got the feeling he wanted to sodomize me! I have no idea where this guy comes from. I should take a candle next time …”

The scheming foxes, and even the brothel madam, set a very bad example to others. Indeed, this woman was a very mean-spirited creature as well.

MADAM “You all, behave yourselves. Your shapeshifting is making no progress at all, you are all going to be late for the afternoon shift! Hurry up!” 168

FOX 4: “Like hell I will go out for the afternoon shift this early! I don’t want to serve any more cheapskate afternoon foxes” 169

FOX 5 “Screw this! I can’t change my fur the right way at all today”

FOX 6 “I don’t like this. Right now, my body just won’t transform properly!”

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165 Spotted Sardine, konoshiro, are considered fish especially loved by foxes. Each batu uma 初午 day, or the first “day of the horse” of each lunar month, these fish are offered to the kami of Inari shrines alongside sekihan 赤飯 red rice. SNKT 85, p. 63.

166 Nezumi no aburaage 鼠の油揚げ, deep fried tofu, is a food loved by foxes, and was believed to lure them. SNKT 85, p. 63.

167 This gate lied to the north of the Asakusa Temple, near Yoshiwara. SNKT 85, p. 63.

168 The afternoon shift was from the eighth hour until the sixth, from about 2P.M. until 6. SNKT 85, p. 63.

169 Another pun, hirugitsune 昼狐, or afternoon fox. This was Yoshiwara slang for a stingy patron who came in the afternoon and left in the evening, not staying the night. SNKT 85, p. 63.
A haberdashery clerk hands over sets of tools the foxes use to transform into the requested courtesans. The implements look like the ones used in the previous afternoon scene.

Inside, courtesans are of course foxes who change their appearance. On the day before the mono no hi, there were patrons who were squeezed out of every penny, rendering them without clothes, and so there were some badly earning lazy foxes who didn’t do anything more than change their faces, since they wouldn’t be paid much anyway. But there were also composed and good earners who changed their entire body from head to toe.

HABERDASHERY “I affixed the seaweed as you requested.”
FOX 1 “This skull here, there are quite a lot of spots on it. And it has lost its luster in a way”
FOX 2 “Well, at any rate this skull is one from Suzugamori rather than Senjū170, right? That place is by the sea. Skulls from that place are much more beautiful”.

170 Both Senjū 千住 (Kozukappara Keijō 小塚原刑場) and Suzugamori 鈴ヶ森 (Suzugamori Keijō 鈴ヶ森刑場) were execution grounds where criminals were disposed of by the Tokugawa Shogunate. Suzugamori
(see figure 12) Two men, who are famous actors, are about to finish up some work on a farm. A stage assistant seated behind them is illuminating both their faces with a candle on a stick. Mimasu-pattern kimono wearing Danjūrō, and Nakaguruma-pattern wearing Nakazō are both pictured, in a rare instance where someone’s actual likeness is put on paper.¹⁷¹

Thus, it came to pass that actors from the three great theatres of Kamakurayuki¹⁷² all quit their occupations and set off to develop new farms along the great road of Asainakiridō¹⁷³, which they baptized with names like Nakamura¹⁷⁴ and Ishimura. The actors truly were of unseen quality, and bemused the onlooking resident villagers, as the former actors not only exerted themselves during the afternoon to advance the construction of the farms, but even used spotlight candles¹⁷⁵ to shine light upon their endeavors by night. Small implements like spades, hoes and other tools were brought by the stage assistant.

RIGHT ACTOR: “Lord Naritamura no Jūbei?”¹⁷⁶

LEFT ACTOR: “What is it, lord Nakamura no Nakazō?”¹⁷⁷

BOTH “Let us meet on the morrow. Farewell”

A shamisen lute goes cha-cha-cha!

¹⁷¹ SNKT 85, p. 65.
¹⁷² The previously mentioned three great theatres of Edo, Nakamura-za 中村座, Ichimura-za 市村座 and Morita-za 森田座. SNKT 85, p. 65.
¹⁷³ A road cutting through the mountains from Kamakura to Musashi-kanazawa 武蔵金沢 (near Yokohama). There are a lot of roads cutting through the mountains in Kamakura, but the Asaina 朝比奈 road has a deep connection to Edo theatre culture. SNKT 85, p. 65.
¹⁷⁴ The farming towns are named after the above-mentioned famous theatres.

¹⁷⁵ Candles were sometimes held near the faces of Kabuki actors to make sure the audience could see the details of their faces well. SNKT 85, p. 66.
¹⁷⁶ References the actor Ichikawa Danjūrō V 五代目 成田屋 actors guild. Ichikawa Danjūrō V was considered an actor of the highest class at the time, with countless depictions in Ukiyo-e. SNKT 85, p. 66.
¹⁷⁷ References the actor Nakazō Nakamura I 初代中村仲蔵. He might be referred to here because he died in the same year this book was published, in 1790. Nakamura gained fame as a player of villains’ roles. Supported by the actor and dancer Ichikawa Danjūrō IV, he performed at the Ichimura Theatre in Edo, offering new interpretations of the role (collectively called the Hidetsuru style) that are still used by modern actors. SNKT 85, p. 66.
A sign, fashioned like a placard stating the name of a scene in kabuki theatre, is affixed to the trunk of a willow tree reading “rice-planting song for a bountiful year”\textsuperscript{178}, setting up the scene as if it were a theatre piece. Two gentlemen are performing a naga-uta song while four female figures\textsuperscript{179} are cultivating the field as if it were a kabuki dance. Based on the mon-pattern on their clothes, we can take these to represent Osagawa Tsuneyo II\textsuperscript{180}, Iwai Hanshirō IV\textsuperscript{181}, Azuma Tōzō III\textsuperscript{182} and Yamashita Mangiku\textsuperscript{183}.

As one would expect, women do not possess the strength to operate equipment like plows and hoes, but were assigned to insert the plants into the soil. However, when they still worked in the theatre they were kept from losing the will to work by singing Jōruri and songs, and as this

\textsuperscript{178} Hōnen taueuta 豊年田植唄
\textsuperscript{179} Though these are actually men, as females were prohibited from performing in kabuki theatre since 1629.
\textsuperscript{180} Osagawa Tsnueyo II 二世小佐川常世, the artist name of an actor belonging to the Wataya 綿屋 guild. Born 1753, died 1808. SNKT 85, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{181} Iwai Hanshirō IV 四世岩井半四郎, the artist name of an actor belonging to the Yamatoya 大和屋. Born 1747, died 1800. SNKT 85, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{182} Azuma Tōzō III 三世吾妻藤藏, the artist name of an actor belonging to the Azumaya 吾妻屋. Born 1756, died 1798. SNKT 85, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{183} Yamashita Mangiku I 初代山下万菊, the artist name of an actor belonging to the Tennōjiya 天王寺屋. Born 1763, died 1791. SNKT 85, p. 66.
agricultural work was fairly uninspiring, they called for Chūgorō and Shōjirō to accompany their planting activities with music, in the outermost earthen causeway between the fields. A small handheld gong rang signaling the afternoon break. Everyone was working the field, their chests bare up to the waist. Before long, Hamamuraya returned to Ōji.

ONNAGATA 1: “I hope he strikes that gong soon. I want to rest.”

ONNAGATA 2: “Now that you mention it, I’ve heard that Hina Kai and Iroha are coming down to Moritamura town to help with the farm work. I wonder if it’s actually true though.”

ONNAGATA 3: “If we get the same lineup as before, we can put up a great play with those numbers”

ONNAGATA 4: “Hear the noise from those clappers! That must mean break time!”

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184 Matsunaga Chūgorō 松永忠五郎, a singer of Naga-uta. Active during the An'ei, Tenmei and Kansei eras (1772-1800). In the picture, the male figure on the left. SNKT 85, p. 66.

185 Kineya Shōjirō I 初代杵屋正二郎, a shamisen player active during the Tenmei and Kansei eras. Often performed together with the above mentioned Chūgorō in Edo’s theatres. In the picture, the male figure on the right. SNKT 85, p. 66.

186 Refers to Segawa Kikunōjō III 瀬川菊之丞. His association with his predecessor, who was born in Ōji 王子 and therefore got the name Ōji Rokō 王子路考, is probably why they single out this character to return to Ōji. SNKT 85, p. 66.

187 The small drum struck at the end of a play. Here it signals the character wants the work to end.

188 Two kabuki actors, Arashi Hinasuke 嵐雛助 and Yoshizawa Iroha 芳沢いろは. In the 11th month of 1788 Hinasuke and Yamashita Kinsaku 山下金作 were listed as co-stars in the kōmitsukyōgen 頭見世狂言 (a kyōgen where all famous actors of that year performed in together), performed at the Morita-za theatre. However, they were no longer considered top-ranking by that time, and their performance never materialized following some confusion over the matter. SNKT 85, p. 67.

189 As was the set-up on the previous page, this town refers to one of Edo’s theatres, the Morita-za 森田座. SNKT 85, p. 67.

190 Hyōshigi 拍子木, a simple musical instrument, consisting of two pieces of hardwood or bamboo that are connected by a thin ornamental rope. SNKT 85, p. 67.
A sumo wrestler walks in front of a samurai estate without any additional retinue, holding a parasol and spear in one hand, and a palanquin on his other shoulder. A samurai with his retainer and a woman are gaping at the enormous sumo wrestler.

Because sumo wrestlers are very useful people as well, several schemes were devised. Both the retinues of prominent lords and those of minor vassals in Kamakura, who were employed to guard against street ruffians, were discarded and fired, as sumo wrestlers possessed the strength of fifty or one hundred men all by themselves. Depending on the vassals’ standing and rank, wrestlers with the strength of ten men or that of twenty men were chosen, and each of them were assigned to be the sole retinue for a lord. Even on the coldest days of the year they went out in their bare chests and thought nothing of it. The unique manner of their appearance was very different, and a great deal of profit was made. Tokiyori’s direct vassal, the lord of Akita Castle, had the wrestler

191 Money was saved on the hāppi 法被 coats that servants and retainers were dressed up in because the sumo wrestler barely wore anything.
192 Hōjō Tokiyori’s maternal grandfather, Adachi Kagemori 安達景盛, was the kokushi 国司 (governor) of Dewa province 出羽国, modern Akita prefecture, and administered the province from Akita castle. SNKT 85, p. 68.
Tamikaze, who possessed the strength of one hundred men. On the sumo wrestlers apron the mark of a retinue guard is printed.

TAMIKAZE: “Hai-Ho! Move aside!”

PASSER-BY: “That body must be the result of Tokubei’s ointments, hailing from the land of giants.”

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193 A mimicry of the name of the wrestler Tanikaze Kajinosuke II 二代目谷風梶之助, a famous sumo wrestler who became a Yokozuna champion in the first year of Kansei (1789), the first person ever to do so within his own lifetime (the three previous Yokozuna were awarded the title posthumously). SNKT 85, p. 68.
194 Iwanuma no Tokubei was a seller of ointments who walked the streets of Edo selling his wares. Both Tanikaze the wrestler and the medicine Tokubei sold were from Sendai 仙台. SNKT 85, p. 68.
Page twenty-six and twenty-seven

Two courtesans wearing straw skirts are ladling brine from the water to make sea salt, and a kamuro is pulling a small cart.\(^{195}\)

There was a plan to have cloth be woven by the courtesans of Ōiso, but they couldn’t even as much as tie their own under-collars, and aside from folding\(^{196}\) cranebirds they did not know how to do a single useful thing. This couldn’t be helped, however, and so they were sent off, in forced labor, to Yuigahama\(^{197}\) to ladle brine from the sea. However, because they were courtesans, how quickly they caught a cold and were unable to stop shaking in discomfort! They were naturally troubled, and wanted to take a rest.

\(^{195}\) The scene is a reference to the Noh play *Matsukaze* 松風, where two brinewomen have a brief affair with a visiting courtier, and die of grief after his departure. SNKT 85, p. 69.

\(^{196}\) The words for weaving and folding are homophones, both oru (折る and 織る).

\(^{197}\) Yuigahama 由比浜 lies on the shores of Kamakura. The Edo equivalent would be the Suzuki 洲崎 brine shores of Fukagawa. SNKT 85, p. 69.
MATSUKAZE FROM MATSUGAYA: “What a wretched place this is! Oh, how I wish there was a stud like Yukihira here! I would rather change saddles, and head off to Kashimise to ladle brine there instead.”

KOMURASAME FROM KAKUTAMAYA: “Well, there are no worldly men coming by here, only pretentious salt peddlers…”

MATSUKAZE: “Though, I’ve heard there’s a salt stove nearby at Chika. The salt stove right here is stupidly far away from anything.”

KOMURASAME: “Hey Midori, if you wouldn’t be constantly picking up shells you would be a lot faster”

MIDORI: “You want me to empty this bucket in front of the latticework, where the Oiran are?”

Usually their straw skirts would be made of gold, but in a season like this, they are merely made of straw. In this sorry state, they look like kids who march in festivals. I dare say, these women have not an inkling of self-respect, don’t they?

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198 There was a courtesan named Matsukaze at Yoshiwara’s Matsubaya brothel, but here it refers to one of the brinewomen from the Noh play Matsukaze. SNKT 85, p. 69.
199 Ariwara no Yukihira 在行平 is the protagonist of the Matsukaze play and the lover of the two brinewomen.
200 Kuragae 鞍替え, literally meaning “to change saddles”, means both “changing jobs or loyalties” in the general sense and “changing brothels” in the context of Yoshiwara. SNKT 85, p. 69.
201 Kashimise 河岸見世 was a lower-quality brothel facing the east-west thoroughfare of Yoshiwara. SNKT 85, p. 69.
202 A courtesan named Komurasaki 小紫 worked at Kakutamaya, and here her name is likened to Murasame 村雨, the second brinewoman from the Noh play. SNKT 85, p. 69.
203 Salt peddlers were stereotyped to be conceited and pretentious. SNKT 85, p. 69.
204 A pun on a lyric from the Matsukaze Noh play. Chika 千賀 is a makurakotoba for both a beach near Mutsu Shiogama 陸奥塩竃 (literally the “salt stove of Mutsu”) and the word chika 近, meaning nearby. SNKT 85, p. 69.
205 In the Noh play, Matsukaze and Murasame’s koshimino 腰蓑 straw skirts were usually made of gold thread. SNKT 85, p. 69.
A flagpole reading “bat acrobatics” stands on a small stage. In synchronization with a samisen song bats are doing acrobatics along a wire spanning the stage. There is an announcer on the stage, and a bunch of lively spectators. A box clad in stone tiles stands in the middle of the stage, likely a stage prop for the acrobatic performance.

In this way, a world without a single useless thing emerged. The old fundoshi\(^{206}\) loin cloths make of fine crimson crepe fabric were refashioned into improvised hoods, cheap caskets were made into chopsticks for soba salesmen, and the only useless things left were bellybuttons and the six mon coins that accompany the dead\(^{207}\). Somehow or other, shrewd and cunning men came upon the idea to have wildlife perform on stage, even though they realized it might be pointless. A great assembly of bats was gathered and made to perform acrobatics. The bats were put on stage on the riverbank of the Hachiman shrine at Tsuru-ga-oka\(^{208}\), and amused the townspeople, who usually

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206 Fundoshi

207 Just as the boatman Charon required payment to ferry the deceased across the river Styx in Hades, the Japanese put six coins in caskets with the dead to help them cross the Sanzu-no-kawa 三途の川 and reach the afterlife. SNKT 85, p. 70.

208 The Hachiman temple in Kamakura. A reference to the theaters at Fukiyacho 藻屋町, currently Nihonbashi Ningyocho Sanchome 日本橋人形町三丁目. SNKT 85, p. 70.
put all their energies into their house duties. The doorman and announcer were both men with excellent speech.

ANNOUNCER: “Ladies and gentlemen! I hereby begin my prologue. In the age of the sages, unicorns and phoenixes appeared in our world, but in these times only bats show their faces and perform stunts for our enjoyment. As the unfortunate saying goes, in a town without birds the bats are king\textsuperscript{209}. They resemble swallows at least, so please take a look at this willow tree\textsuperscript{210}.

FEMALE SPECTATOR: “Okiyo, don’t put your brass hairpin in any further. Be careful!”

FEMALE SPECTATOR 2: “That gentleman over there is dressed from top to bottom in cotton. He’s looking pretty chic.”

MALE SPECTATOR: “That samurai over looks like such a boor. He’s wearing one of those horse riding haori coats\textsuperscript{211}.”

SAMURAI SPECTATOR: “I say, let us go back to our estate after this, and practice our swordplay or something”

The announcer suddenly feels praised as a male spectator bursts into loud applause. As people keenly watched their peers and imitated their fashions, long haori coats went out of style. They were replaced by haori coats made of bat skins, just as it was in the days of yore.

\textsuperscript{209} Tori naki sato no kōmori 鳥なき里の蝙蝠, “a bat in a village without birds”, roughly approximates the proverb “He that has one eye is a king among the blind.” SNKT 85, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{210} The words for willow and swallow were sometimes used to link verses in Haikai poetry. SNKT 85, p. 71.

\textsuperscript{211} Haori coats with the bottom half of the back seam loosened so a sword could stick through easily were in fashion at the time. SNKT 85, p. 71.
A coin with a square hole used as the “mouth” radical for the four characters. This design was first used in a stone wash basin (tsukubai) in the garden of the Ryōanji temple in Kyoto, and the symbol disseminated widely from there.\textsuperscript{212}

Hōjō Tokiyori’s vassal, Aotozaemon Fujitsuna\textsuperscript{213}, pondered deeply the pretensions of the citizens of Kamakura, and concluded all these schemes are cases of extreme foolishness. He warned that this is making mountains out of molehills\textsuperscript{214}. “From now on, plays, sumo, and the ways of courtesans should be as it always was. However, in your heart, don’t forget the writing on this coin”, he proclaimed. And from his tanned leather purse he pulled a one mon coin and showed it to everyone\textsuperscript{215}. The citizens of Kamakura returned to a balanced way of life, and though it was not as perfect as the latticework of Afugiya, it nevertheless became a peaceful age gilded with blue lacquer.

\textsuperscript{212} SNKT 85, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{213} Aotozaemon Fujitsuna 青砥左衛門藤綱 appeared frequently in plays and stories as an incorruptible vassal to Hōjō Tokiyori and his fabled good government. SNKT 85, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{214} Another proverb, \textit{hari hodo no chiisai koto wo bō bodo ni ōiku suru}, literally meaning “to make matters as small as a thread into something as large as a stick”. SNKT 85, p. 72.
As for the words on the coin, they were as follows. “WARE WA TADA SHIRU TARU KOTO WO”, *I know only contentment with what I have*. Naturally, the square hole in the middle of the coin was used by all four characters at once, in this world devoid of waste and uselessness.

Written by Santō Kyōden
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