

Seducing the Mind: (Edo) Kabuki and the Ludic Performance¹

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What makes kabuki entertaining? According to a recent piece in *Niponica*, the quarterly publication from Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it starts with the eyes: kabuki's costumes and make-up are said to comprise a visual "feast."² Critic Kawatake Toshio, who also stresses the importance of spectacle, adds the ears; appreciating a play means hearing and seeing it.³ Both comments mark kabuki's appeal to the senses, like the label itself. As it is now written, *kabuki* 歌舞伎 literally begins with the characters for "song" and "dance," while the word's final character (also written 妓) suggests the actor's talent. Indeed, as Leonard V. Pronko remarks, the actor is "the absolute focus of" the performance.⁴ Once again, the description centers on a physical stimulus.

Even *kabuki*'s earliest usages give this impression. In compounds like *kabukimono*, which James R. Brandon glosses as "town dandies," the word connoted eccentric or salacious dress and behavior.⁵ This in turn recalls the theater's initial links to prostitution, a trade also defined by sensory inducements. Indeed, the alternate transcription of the *ka-*

buki's last character can mean "prostitute."⁶

Yet it must be admitted that kabuki also relies on things that the viewer cannot see, hear, or otherwise sense—at least not completely. Consider one scene from a 2003 production of *Sukeroku*, in which the hero and his brother force a dandy to pass through their legs.⁷ Before submitting, the man takes a picture of himself and the hero with a camera phone and then spouts a stream of pop-cultural references: from Harry Potter and "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" to Tama-chan, the Arctic seal then swimming in a Tokyo river. All told, the scene takes nearly five and a half minutes—long enough for the hero himself to comment on it. While such moments present further spectacles for consumption, they also invoke absent bodies, splitting the viewer's attention between the live show and the one "staged" in his head as he responds to each sensory prompt.

This face of kabuki is not limited to asides. Major conventions like *mitate*, the "match[ing]" of historical and contemporary subjects, and *modoki*, the "deliberate imitation of a prior play, act, or scene to allow the audience to draw comparisons," also invite the audience to contemplate missing objects, sometimes at some length.⁸ Viewers of a *mitate*, for example, may enjoy the unfolding reference to contemporary events along with the period-guise through which these events are physically represented. *Modoki* similarly provide two shows in one, enabling the viewer to recall and, perhaps, reevaluate an earlier performance through its appropriation in a new physical context and (often) by a new cast. One can make the same point for kabuki's use of *sekai*, "worlds" or backdrops that rely on the audience's previous knowledge of a particular story or historical event.⁹ These elements, too, make kabuki

¹ I would like to thank Philip Brown and four anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments on earlier versions of this manuscript. I am also grateful to Adam Kern for his assistance reading some of the *kuzushiji* discussed here. All errors remain my own, of course.

² Matsui Kesako with Yanai Kenji, "The Mystique of Kabuki," *Niponica* (English edition) (2010, No. 1): 4. The Japanese edition has "*me de tanoshimu*" (enjoyed through the eyes) here. Its title ("*Kabuki wa naze omoshiroi no ka*") translates more literally as my opening sentence.

³ *Kabuki meibamen hyakusen* (Akita Shoten, 1972), first page of the unnumbered preface.

⁴ Leonard V. Pronko, "Kabuki: Signs, Symbols, and the Hieroglyphic Actor," in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter (M.E. Sharpe, 2002): 241.

⁵ *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1975) 2.

⁶ James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, eds., *Kabuki Plays on Stage: Brilliance and Bravado, 1697-1766* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 2.

⁷ A video recording of the performance, filmed in January 2003 at Tokyo's Kabuki-za, is available through www.martygrossfilms.com.

⁸ Brandon, *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays* (1975; University of Hawai'i Press, 1992), 365.

⁹ In *Sukeroku*, for instance, the hero and his brothers are simultaneously Edo commoners and the famous Soga brothers, twelfth-century samurai on a quest to avenge their father's death.

entertaining. To extend the *Niponica* writer's metaphor, they convert the visual feast into a seemingly limitless, super-sensory banquet.

This said, the notion that kabuki exceeds the physical performance is of course well-acknowledged. For example, scholars note the engagement with ideas in analyses of the ways in which *Chūshingura*, whether performed by puppets or actors, considers the nature of loyalty. Similarly, they plumb the extent to which plays like *Sukeroku* redefine heroism for Edo townsmen.¹⁰

However, what I explore here is not the stage's sensory efforts or engagements with social issues, but the ways in which even elements of the play often treated in the context of entertainment render theatergoers participants in the performance rather than observers of it. Based on my research into the cycle of plays about Narukami, the priest famously seduced by a court lady in order to end a drought, I believe that the theater has long marshalled the combination of live and recalled stimuli as a powerful tool for capturing the full attention of the audience. Here and elsewhere, the actors and playwrights used the stage partly as bait, piquing viewers' senses in order to access their minds and exploit their stores of personalized enticements. Kabuki was thus both "total theater" *avant la lettre*, as Pronko and others have noted, and a shrewd interpreter of human desire, which the theater recognized as more self-involved than purely sensory accounts of the stage credit.¹¹

To advance this view, I will begin with a brief discussion of the role of allusion in kabuki dramaturgy, with particular reference to its use by Ichikawa Danjūrō I (1660-1704) in his creation of the *aragoto* or "rough," bravura style of acting. This

section also notes important contributions by Pronko, Brandon, and C. Andrew Gerstle to the theorization of what we might call ludic kabuki, the stage's challenges to viewers to supplement the physical performance with their imaginations. My goal in this section is to convey the very great extent to which kabuki relies on viewers' minds even outside of the Narukami plays, as well as the particular success of Danjūrō I—who created the role of Narukami for kabuki—in exploiting and expanding this technique. While theatergoers in the Edo period, like today, could certainly enjoy a play through its sensory aspect alone, this allusive dimension confirms kabuki's place as part of a broader ludic culture visible in Edo's *mitate* prints and "visual-verbal" comic books.¹²

Having outlined the importance of allusion to kabuki generally and to Danjūrō's view of the theater in particular, I turn to my main subject: three Genroku-era (1688-1704) plays on Narukami, two of them written by Danjūrō I. More precisely, I will discuss *Gempei Narukami denki* (The Genji and Heike Legend of Narukami, 1698), *Isshin onna Narukami* (A Single-Hearted Female Narukami, 1699), and *Naritasan funjin Fudō* (The Split Fudō of Naritasan, 1703) through the *e-iri kyōgen bon* or illustrated playbooks about them. As Keller Kimbrough and Satoko Shimazaki point out, traditionally kabuki scripts "were not supposed to leave the theater, a tendency that was particularly strong in Edo."¹³ Since the three plays in question were staged in Edo, the lack of complete records is therefore not surprising—nor is it necessarily a stumbling block for my argument.

As Francis Motofuji has already demonstrated in his dissertation on the sources of *Narukami Fudō*

¹⁰ See, for example, James R. Brandon, ed., *Chūshingura: Studies in Kabuki and the Puppet Theater* (University of Hawaii Press, 1982), which contains several essays on relevant aspects of the play and illuminates its differences in the two theaters, and Barbara E. Thornbury, *Sukeroku's Double Identity: The Dramatic Structure of Edo Kabuki* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1982), 66-72. On *Sukeroku*, also see Nishiyama Matsunosuke's *Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1868*, Gerald Groemer, trans. & ed. (University of Hawaii Press, 1997) 49-51.

¹¹ See, for example, Pronko, "Kabuki," 240-41.

¹² On the latter genre, see Adam L. Kern, *Manga of the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006). For recent discussions of this dimension of both *kibyōshi* and *mitate* prints, respectively, see Yamashita Noriko's and Kern's contributions to Keller Kimbrough and Satoko Shimazaki, eds., *Publishing the Stage: Print and Performance in Early Modern Japan* (Boulder: Center for Asian Studies, University of Colorado, Boulder, 2011).

¹³ Kimbrough and Shimazaki, *Publishing the Stage*, 5.

Kitayamazakura (Narukami, Fudō, and Cherry Blossoms at Kitayama, 1742), the most famous play about the priest, these playbooks contain substantial information about the performances, including significant excerpts of dialogue and cast lists.¹⁴ Indeed, Danjūrō I wrote the books for his two plays, apparently typical for this playwright.¹⁵

This is not to say, however, that any of the playbooks simply rehash the stage. As I will discuss below, both the texts and the pictures demonstrate considerable playfulness with their subject matter. (For this reason, I prefer “playbook” to the more common “digest.”) Here, too, the authors take obvious delight in both show and suggestion. In this sense, kabuki’s playbooks offer one more performance of a story that undresses kabuki itself.

Allusion in Kabuki

As noted earlier, kabuki actively engages viewers’ imaginations in a number of ways. Some of these directly support the show on stage. The most elaborate set cannot depict the Gempei Wars (1181-1185) or other important *sekai*, even the scant details required by most plots. Rather than simply suspend disbelief, the spectator must will himself *to* believe in these cases: that is, to pretend that he sees and hears things that he cannot actually sense. While such allusions are in a sense necessary to the success of the physical performance, they support a habit of mind essential to the voluntary engagements that I am concerned with.

Mitate and *modoki*, mentioned earlier, come closer to my subject. Here kabuki uses allusion to create aesthetic pleasure beyond that generated by the physical performance at that moment. Members of the audience may recognize one or more lines, characters, or physical gestures from another play or an earlier scene in the same production. They may also observe parallel dramatic situations, again

¹⁴ Motofuji, “A Study of *Narukami*: An Eighteenth-Century *Kabuki* Play” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1964). Motofuji translates the plays’ titles differently.

¹⁵ Danjūrō apparently typically wrote his own playbooks. See Laurence R. Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki: Their Lives, Loves and Legacy* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1997), 89.

across shows or within one performance.

It is worth noting, then, that recognition is only part of the poetic convention exploited by these techniques. In the pre-modern period, *honkadori* or allusive variation was “primarily an echoing of an older poem or poems, not just to borrow material or phrasing, but to raise the atmosphere—something of the situation, the tone, and the meaning—of the original.”¹⁶ In other words, readers of an allusive variation were expected to recall the first verse and compare it with the second, a mental movement that enabled them to revisit old favorites as well as appreciate departures from the same. This is of course the same response expected in *mitate* and *modoki*, although as noted earlier the performance can be enjoyed without recognition of its allusive backdrop.

To these practical and in some senses conventional forms of allusion, finally, kabuki dramaturgy adds a more specific invitation: the challenge to see the actor himself as two or more things at once. Kabuki actors are famous for the technique of the quick-change (*hayagawari*), in which the same actor plays different roles in one production. Like the asides noted earlier, these transformations showcase the actor. They also offer another game for the audience: to recognize the same man in new costume and makeup. For instance, in *Kitayamazakura*, mentioned earlier, Ichikawa Danjūrō II (1689-1758) played three different parts.¹⁷

This technique also again evokes classical poetry, in particular its use of the pivot word or *kakekotoba*. Pivot-words challenge readers to recognize two meanings in the same line of poetry, depending on a homophone embedded in the line. Brandon notes that kabuki playwrights use *kakekotoba* and other poetic techniques in their scripts.¹⁸ The same method clearly also underpins quick-

¹⁶ Robert H. Brower and Earl Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 14.

¹⁷ Brandon, *Five Classic Plays*, 96. Danjūrō was then called Ebizō II. Here and in most other cases, I rely for biographical information on Samuel L. Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia: An English-Language Adaptation of Kabuki jiten* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979) and, occasionally, <http://www.kabuki21.com>.

¹⁸ For examples of both in kabuki texts, see Brandon, *Five Classic Plays*, 39.

changes and double-casting more generally, to say nothing of the famously male-bodied *onnagata* or female role specialist. All three practices asks viewers to read one performer as multiple and even contradictory subjects. As Pronko says of the kabuki actor generally, he “is reality (actor), sign (character), and symbol (visual and aural resonances) all at once.”¹⁹

Allusion in the Edo Theater

As this brief discussion suggests, allusion (and the active viewer participation it calls for) is clearly important to kabuki. This was especially true in the Edo period, when as Gerstle points out, many actors and other artistic practitioners (including amateurs) were themselves active poets.²⁰ However, this technique played a particularly important role in the work of Danjūrō I and the *aragoto* style that came to be associated with Edo itself. Kawatake Toshio has noted the “blank spaces” (*yohaku*) that define *aragoto*-style acting, in which heroes assume the aura or identity of supernatural figures. Like *haikai* poetry, he asserts, such performances succeed through suggestion, in this case by evoking the ineffable as imagined in local spiritual beliefs.²¹ To return to the example offered in my introduction, viewers embrace the *aragoto* heroics of Sukeroku/Soga Gorō because he is more than a man. He is a kind of god-hero, one with an appropriate ceremonial role in kabuki’s own calendar of events.²²

This association of actors with the divine was no accident. As Laurence R. Kominz details, Danjūrō I

¹⁹ “Kabuki,” 241. For a succinct discussion of this layering of roles with particular reference to *Sukeroku*, see Barbara E. Thornbury, “Actor, Role, and Character: Their Multiple Interrelationships in *Kabuki*,” 232-37, in the same volume.

²⁰ See, for example, “Creating Celebrity: Poetry in Osaka Actor *Surimono* and Prints,” in Kimbrough and Shimazaki, *Publishing the Stage*, 137-61.

²¹ Kawatake Toshio, *Kabuki no sekai: kyojō to jitsuzō* (Tokyo: Tankōsha, 1974), 203.

²² On kabuki’s seasonal calendar, and the role of the Soga brothers within it, see Thornbury, *Sukeroku’s Double Identity*, 3-15.

and his heirs cultivated identification with the fierce guardian deity Fudō by emulating him on stage and publicly worshipping him in “private” life. In so doing, Kominz asserts, Danjūrō I “made the remarkable and supernatural real for his audiences.”²³

Suwa Haruo theorizes that the identification of actors with their roles was so strong in the Edo period that whenever Danjūrō I played a villain, he had to reappear at the play’s end as a god to redeem his image.²⁴ This further explains his son’s multiple roles in *Kitayamazakura*. Another way to say this, however, is to note that Danjūrō and his peers successfully trained audiences to recognize this particular allusion in performance, even where the character (like Sukeroku) is human himself.

In short, kabuki audiences might recognize three specific figures in the simplest *aragoto* role, even before recalling early versions of it: the actor, the character, and the divine presence of Fudō himself. Recognition of the final figure was deliberately triggered with an arresting visual performance: the fierce Fudō *mie*, a posture modeled on depictions of the literally “immovable” deity.

This recognition was further reinforced by other another sensory convention: the *akegoe* or set phrases cried out by savvy theatergoers at specific points in the performance. Audiences continue to call out Danjūrō’s *yagō* or “shop name” of *Naritaya* when they see him, a reference to Narita-san, the Fudō-centered temple where members of the family still worship.²⁵ The success of the *aragoto* style thus offers one more example of the extent to which Edo-period kabuki depended on a fusion of the physical and the imaginary, a synthesis begun on stage but completed in the minds of the audience.

As noted earlier, other critics have stressed the importance of this ludic kabuki to the theater. These discussions largely focus on its utility in the early years of the theater’s development. Brandon, for example, writes that:

Because of the restricted social environment in which [early] kabuki artists worked, Japan’s isolation from outside contacts, and

²³ *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 81.

²⁴ *Genroku kabuki no kenkyū* (Kasama Shoin, 1967), 153-167.

²⁵ On *yagō*, see Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia*, p. 427-428.

oppressive government restrictions, kabuki plays developed many characteristics of a game played by audience and performers. Like a game it had certain rules, such as *mitate*, *yatsushi* ["in disguise"], and *jitsu wa* ["in reality"], and playing according to the rules became in itself an important source of enjoyment and pleasure for an audience. Undoubtedly the game approach stimulated writers and actors to perfect kabuki's artistic qualities and helped sustain the form's delightful spirit of playfulness.²⁶

In other words, kabuki playwrights used suggestion to evade censorship and maximize the pleasure of a specific constituency, people constrained by the Edo period's restrictive political and social order.

Gerstle makes a related point about the influence of kabuki's early social milieu. Compared to rigid mainstream society, the theater's "relatively democratic openness," he writes, encouraged "creativity" and "fantasy" among spectators as well as actors and playwrights.²⁷ One might consider the games that Brandon describes one example of this. As Gerstle points out, however, this creative impulse also took more concrete forms. Viewers impressed by a performance might go home to compose related *haikai* poetry, write play-guides, or paint portraits of favorite actors.

In some cases, including the playbooks noted earlier, these products appeared in advance of the related production, and served as a form of advertisement for it. This "culture of play" was thus both productive as well as escapist. One could watch a play with the intent to produce a tribute or consume a tribute as a means of envisioning (or recollecting) the performance.²⁸

As with the games that Brandon discusses, the

²⁶ *Five Classic Plays*, 5. Italics added.

²⁷ "The Culture of Play Kabuki and the Production of Texts," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 66: 3 (2003): 364.

²⁸ Gerstle comes closest to making this loop explicit near the beginning of his article, with the general statement that "[i]n some genres the act of reading (or the watching of/listening to a performance) is primarily for the purpose of artistic creation or re-creation." *Ibid.*, 359.

theater encouraged this response for pragmatic reasons. By "foster[ing] a cult of the actor," Gerstle observes, early kabuki created celebrities, subverting its official position as a world of outcasts.²⁹ Both accounts credit the theater, and its ludic aspect in particular, with defusing external pressures on actors and audiences, pressures that the critics see as characteristic of the Edo period although not peculiar to it.

Ludic Kabuki and Narukami

While Brandon and Gerstle are surely right to link the rise of ludic kabuki to historical factors, both critics also suggest another explanation for its success: the sheer pleasure it generates in informed audiences. In the passage quoted earlier, Brandon notes the "enjoyment" prompted by "playing according to the rules," which presumably include recognizing the prompts on stage. Gerstle's list of keywords to his discussion of kabuki fan culture is still more suggestive: "memory, social interaction, participation, pleasure, play, and re-creation" all appear there, apparently with equal weight.³⁰ None of these feelings or activities is exclusive to a particular genre or period, any more than the delight in "hieroglyphics" that Pronko identifies in both kabuki and French symbolist poetry.³¹ As Gerstle notes, one may observe some of the same processes on the internet.³²

What is fascinating, however, is the extent to which kabuki has made this technique and its effects on theatergoers the subject of its own performance. Nowhere is this more apparent than in plays about Narukami, which as noted earlier dramatize the seduction of the priest. This story, which comes to kabuki from Noh, setsuwa and, ultimately, Indian legend, depicts a court beauty named Taema employing both her wit and her physical charms to engage, disarm, and ultimately seduce the priest.³³

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 364.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 378.

³¹ "*Kabuki*," 248-252.

³² "The Culture of Play," 378.

³³ See Motofuji, "A Study of *Narukami*," 57-61, for a translation of the Chinese source of the original story. Motofuji also translates the relevant

More precisely, Taema pretends to be a widow, convinces Narukami that she seeks the tonsure, and then tricks him into physical contact. Every part of her story is an act.

Moreover, Taema asks Narukami to play-act as well, in many versions by asking him to remembering lines from old love poems. In the process, she habituates him to his new part in the play she is staging for his benefit. For the spectator, these scenes and others like them serve as *mise-en-abymes* of their own experience. Whether or not one completes the poems with Narukami, the longer one watches Taema—and listens to her verbal trickery—the easier it is to forget the actor behind the performance.

Karen Brazell captures this dimension of the play with her comment that the 1742 *Kitayamazakura* (again, the most famous Narukami-themed play in kabuki) is “about seduction on many levels, including the seduction of the audience to the belief baldly stated in the opening lines: ‘*Saint Narukami* is a great play!’”³⁴ As I hope to discuss at another opportunity, *Kitayamazakura* does this even more cunningly than Brazell suggests; the entire play, not just the Narukami act, is replete with allusions to other plays and stories, many of them also on the subject of seduction.

In the following pages, however, I will argue a more limited point: that even kabuki’s earliest treatments of Narukami use the senses to engage the mind and further excite the attention. Moreover, like *Kitayamazakura*, they did it the same way that Taema does: by fixing viewers’ eyes on physical objects while simultaneously evoking something else.

portions of several Japanese treatments including the plays discussed here.

³⁴ *Traditional Japanese Theater: An Anthology of Plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 69.

Gempei Narukami denki 『源平雷傳記』 (The Genji and Heike Legend of Narukami, 1698); Nakamura-za, ninth month³⁵

Gempei Narukami denki (hereafter *Denki*) is not the first kabuki play about Narukami. It is not even the second. Danjūrō I wrote and starred in *Kadomatsu shitennō* (The Four Kings at New Year’s) in 1684, after which he seems to have been involved in several other treatments of the subject. These include *Neko no Koneko* (The Cat’s Kitten, 1696), the earliest-known “female Narukami.”³⁶ This subset of the Narukami plays replaces the priest with a nun; the stage gender of her seducer can be either male or female depending on the plot. In *Neko*, audiences thus saw Danjūrō I play his earlier adversary, a reversal that must have provided considerable entertainment to theatergoers who recognized it. The staging of both *Neko* and *Kadomatsu* at the Nakamura-za, also home to *Denki*, suggests some overlap in the audience, despite the temporal gap between the first two productions.

Like *Kadomatsu*, *Denki* takes place in the world of the *shitennō* (Four Kings), Heian period courtiers associated with the warrior Minamoto no Yorimitsu (also known as Raikō, 948-1021).³⁷ In *Denki*, this

³⁵ My discussion relies on the annotated version of the *e-iri kyōgen bon* found in Kawatake Shigetoshi, *Kabuki meisakushū*, vol. 5 of *Hyōshaku Edo bungaku sōsho* (Tokyo: Dai Nihon Yūbenkai Kōdansha, 1935), 799-823. An unannotated version with full-size illustrations appears in Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki kessakushū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku Shuppankyoku), 123-150; I have reproduced one of those illustrations here for easier reference. For an English summary and partial translation, see Motofuji, “A Study of *Narukami*,” 75-86. I borrow Motofuji’s rendering of the title.

³⁶ On *Neko*’s casting, see Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 152. One aficionado claims that Danjūrō also wrote the play; see www.kabuki21.com/danjuro1.php. While this certainly seems possible, standard lists of Danjūrō’s work as a playwright do not include this play.

³⁷ For the names of these courtiers and the Buddhist figures (deva kings) who inspired their collective nickname, see Motofuji, “A Study of *Narukami*,” 75. Toita Yasuji argues that *Denki*’s

setting takes on special resonance. The opening word of the title, *Gempei*, usually refers in kabuki and earlier art and literature to the clash between the Minamoto (Genji) and Taira (Heike) in the civil wars that ended the Heian period. Indeed, as noted in my introduction, this event constitutes its own *sekai* in kabuki.

In *Denki*, however, *Gempei* also suggests a more local conflict: the struggle between two religious factions at court with patrons in these families. These factions compete to calm the fierce thunderstorms that form the subject of the play's second act.³⁸ *Denki*'s second word, *Narukami*, names both these thunderstorms and the seduction plot. The final mention of a *denki*, or (typically fictionalized) biography, narrows the focus to the priest himself.

To summarize, *Denki*'s title fuses both the civil wars and the priest's downfall. At the same time, the reference to thunder-gods (*narukami*) obviously evokes the recent plays on the seduction plot. Since Yorimitsu and three of his generals have either Minamoto or Taira surnames, the title's opening contraction may also refer to *Kadomatsu* in particular. Motofuji even surmises that *Denki* was a kind of sequel to that play, since "the four sons of the warriors also have important roles" in it.³⁹ From the beginning, then *Denki* encouraged viewers to reflect on something else: in this case, an earlier version of the plot.

Denki also apparently played games with its cast. As noted earlier, Danjūrō played the priest, reprising his initial role in *Kadomatsu* and reverting back to the character he had seduced in *Neko* only two seasons earlier. *Onnagata* Ogino Sawanojō (1656-1704), meanwhile, took the part of Taema—two years after playing the female *Narukami* in *Neko*. The cast list records further doublings, this time blurring art and life. In *Denki*, Taema is married to one of the four kings, Watanabe (elsewhere Minamoto) no Taketsuna.⁴⁰ Their son, Watanabe no Ku-

setting had less to do with *Kadomatsu* than a contemporary puppet-play about Yorimitsu. See *Kabuki meisakusen*, vol. 15 (Tokyo Sōgensha, 1956), 203.

³⁸ See Motofuji, "A Study of *Narukami*," 78 note 136.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 76

⁴⁰ In the playbook, at least, the personal name sometimes appears in the shortened form "Tsunu."

nitsuna, was played by Danjūrō's son Kuzō, who later starred in *Kitayamazakura* (and revived *Kadomatsu* twice).⁴¹

This casting, as a game, had Danjūrō and Sawanojō sharing a child, a correspondence that *Denki* exploited elsewhere in the plot. Not only does the priest "marry" Taema in the seduction scene, he also returns later in the play as a ghost to demand that Taketsuna divorce his wife. According to the play-book, the shadow family—Danjūrō, Sawanojō, and Kuzō—then left the stage together.⁴² Here, too, the viewer familiar with earlier plays could enjoy an extra dimension of the performance, one as dazzling as Taema's act for the priest.

***Denki*: the playbook (text)**

Denki's playbook also piques the reader's imagination. For instance, consider the surtitle that Danjūrō gives to the performance: *Kumo no Taema nagori no tsuki*, "Taema of the Clouds: The Waning Moon (or, alternatively, The Moon at Dawn)."⁴³ The label begins by rehearsing a common sobriquet for Taema, one that contains several meanings itself. As Motofuji points out, this nickname literally re-

His son, meanwhile, is occasionally called Takewaka.

⁴¹ These revivals occurred in 1710 and 1726, at the Yamamura-za and Nakamura-za, respectively. See Gunji Masakatsu, ed., *Kabuki jūhachibanshū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965), 42.

⁴² See Kawatake Shigetoshi, *Kabuki meisakushū*, 818-821. Here and elsewhere, the annotator (like Motofuji in his summary) gives provisional scene divisions but the author of the *kyōgen bon* does not formally divide the acts.

⁴³ I am not certain whether these surtitles were also displayed at the theater, or how prominently. Since contemporary records typically list only the play by its main title, here I will treat surtitles as peculiar to the playbooks. At the very least, it seems safe to the playbooks gave these supplementary labels greater importance by making them available for re- (and pre-) reading, and thus raising their profile relative to the more memorable aspects of the performance.

fers to “a break in the clouds.”⁴⁴ The name perhaps suggests that Taema will lift the general gloom by ending the drought. The reference to clouds in this context is clearly also ironic, since Taema’s efforts cause the rain clouds to gather for this purpose. Finally, the clouds evoke her link to the palace, proverbially described as above the clouds and often illustrated accordingly.⁴⁵

The surtitle’s second half, by contrast, refers to a performer. Motofuji explains that the mention of “the waning moon” also refers to Sawanojō’s impending retirement as a female role specialist. The surtitle might therefore be rendered “Sawanojō, the bright moon among *onnagata*, played his last *onnagata* role as Kumo-no-taema.”⁴⁶ According to the playbook, Danjūrō himself came on stage at the end of the play to announce the event. Sawanojō then appeared in male dress and performed a swaggering *roppō* walk, before a final celebratory dance by the entire cast.⁴⁷

Given Sawanojō’s considerable popularity, a number of spectators probably came to see this swan song. They would have looked for the performer, and recalled earlier performances, even as they watched “Taema” act. The playbook’s surtitle, in short, splits the attention between Taema and the actor who portrayed her from the very beginning. By so doing, it encourages the reader to see both figures at once, both while reading the playbook and presumably when attending the later live performance.

The playbook’s list of act titles, effectively a table of contents, serves a slightly different purpose. Danjūrō labels this act “*Hagi no shiroki wa yuki no*

tenryo (Calves white as snow, a snow goddess).” Whether referring to the performance or simply to Danjūrō’s account of it, this title previews the initial catalyst for the seduction: Taema’s body. The first half of the line specifically refers to her white calves; the second half, pivoting on the phrase *yuki* (snow, suggesting her fair skin) echoes this assessment while evoking Taema’s generally superhuman good looks. Although the playbook does not specify this, the priest’s acolytes probably confused Taema with (or compared her to) a heavenly maiden or goddess, as in other versions of the seduction.⁴⁸

The playbook also contains what look like editorial comments on this point in its summary of the scene itself. After noting Taema’s arrival at the priest’s hermitage, with a robe that she intends to wash in the waterfall, Danjūrō writes: “Perhaps someone sees her white calves (*hagi no shiroki o hito ya min*)? They stare at Taema, looking as if they would like to speak to her. Truly, one/they can think only of old Kume the Transcendent from the past.”⁴⁹

This comment stands out for two reasons. First, it directs the reader’s attention to a particular allusion: the story of Kume the Transcendent (Kume no sennin), an ascetic who fell from his cloud in the sky at the sight of a woman’s calves, exposed as she washed her clothes in the river.⁵⁰ Danjūrō points out the visual clue already referenced in the act’s title, and then names the particular story that he hopes to evoke with it. In other words, the playwright uses the playbook to tip his hand, admitting that readers—like the acolytes the text literally describes—are supposed to see both the characters on stage and something else else.

Second, the comment eschews any reference to Ikkaku the Transcendent (Ikkaku sennin), the Japa-

⁴⁴ “A Study of *Narukami*,” 86.

⁴⁵ Strictly speaking, where clouds refer to the palace, they most commonly appear in expressions like *kumo no ue*, “above the clouds.” The association still seems present here in this abbreviated form, given the woman’s identity as a court lady in even the original Indian version of the seduction plot.

⁴⁶ See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 150, and Motofuji, “A Study of *Narukami*,” 86. Italics added.

⁴⁷ For Danjūrō’s announcement, see Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 150. On the walk, see Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 314 (under “*roppō*”). I borrow his translation of *tanzen*.

⁴⁸ For the relevant portion of the playbook, see Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 138; Motofuji, “A Study of *Narukami*,” 80.

⁴⁹ *Kore makoto ni inishie no Kume no sennin no mukashi ka to omou bakari ni dōshuku kano Taema o uchinagame mono o itagaru fuzei nari*. See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 138; Motofuji, “A Study of *Narukami*,” 80. He has the line referring only to the thoughts of the disciples.

⁵⁰ On Kume the Transcendent and his afterlife in art and theater, see Money Hickman, “On the Trail of Kume the Transcendent,” *M Bulletin* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) 79 (1981): 20-43.

nese name for the Indian ascetic whose legend gives the Narukami story its shape. As noted earlier, that story was well known in Japan by the Edo period. Danjūrō II gave it pride of place in the priest's famous speech denouncing Taema in *Kitayamazakura* fifty years later.⁵¹ Here and throughout *Denki*, Danjūrō I ignores the obvious reference for a playful allusion that surely left readers with two things to think about—again, like the confused (but delighted) acolytes.



Figure 1. Illustration of seduction scene from *e-iri kyōgen bon* of *Gempei Narukami denki* (from Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki kessakushū*, vol. 1, pp. 136-137).

***Denki*: the playbook (illustrations)**

The final aspect of *Denki*'s playbook that I will treat here is its illustration of the seduction scene (Figure 1). The picture is almost certainly not by Danjūrō. According to Richard Lane, because of the “complex[ity of] theatrical billboards and playbills,” which he relates to the political strictures noted earlier, “the Torii clan became the exclusive official artists of Edo Kabuki” in the last years of the seventeenth century.⁵² Since Danjūrō himself authored the playbook, one would assume that the artist is from this school—although, as Lane notes, this school dominated popular prints, too. Kominz, who

⁵¹ For a translation, see Motofuji, “A Study of *Narukami*,” 182-84.

⁵² *Images from the Floating World: The Japanese Print* (New York: Putnam, 1978), 65.

briefly discusses the illustration, notes an attribution to Torii Kiyonobu (1664 - 1729).⁵³

Whoever he was, the artist clearly either shared Danjūrō's views or followed his instructions. The illustration once again highlights the importance of distraction to *Denki* in performance. The picture is the second of four included in the playbook, one for each of the play's four acts. It is divided down the middle in order to fit on facing pages, with clouds further separating the top and bottom into representations of different moments in the plot. According to Takano and Kurogi, *Denki*'s clouds comprise the earliest example of the so-called “Genji clouds” (*Genji kumo*) in an Edo play guide.⁵⁴

The top half of the picture, read from right to left, shows the first scene in Act II, with several courtiers worrying over the thunderstorms noted earlier. A small label to their upper right denotes only their different ranks (nobles and minister, respectively), although the crests on their robes and the slightly different hats may suggest more specifics on the actors and characters. The priest, labeled “Narukami the Superior—Danjūrō” (Narukami shōnin—Danjūrō), glowers at the thunder god he will shortly defeat, who is appropriately surrounded by black storm clouds and holding noisy drumsticks in the far left.⁵⁵ The square crest on the priest's robes, as well as his exaggerated nose and musculature, also proclaim that the actor is Danjūrō. He even strikes a characteristic *aragoto* pose with his left foot.

The emphasis on the priest, the central figure in this part of the picture, no doubt accurately represents both the plot and this part of the performance. However, the artist also takes pains to remind the viewer of the importance of the actor. Danjūrō, and only Danjūrō, gets the label and caricature. This emphasis mimics, if not dictates, the viewer's experience of the play, another of Danjūrō's star vehicles. Intriguingly, to convey this effect the artist chooses to disregard some of the details of the actual stage performance. According to the playbook,

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 77. The attribution and brief summary of the picture appears in the note to the picture itself.

⁵⁴ Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 124.

⁵⁵ As Motofuji explains, the term *shōnin* denotes a “superior person,” specifically a Buddhist monk of great learning and virtue. See “A Study of *Narukami*,” 137.

at this point in *Denki* the priest was called Kaizan; it was only after he defeated the thunder god that he received his famous title from the court. By giving the familiar label prematurely, the artist in a sense confirms that the viewer is looking at “Narukami”—that is, the protagonist of the already well-known seduction plot—from the start, whatever the specifics of the stage performance.

The bottom half of the illustration, which shows the beginning of the seduction scene, reveals the same tendencies. Again moving from right to left, this part of the picture begins with the dragon gods whom the priest has sealed in their own rock cave. Like the thunder god in the top half of the picture, with his apparently natural horns and monstrous toenails, these are “real” dragons, not actors in costume. They get no label, presumably because they were not actually seen in performance. Beneath them and slightly to the left appear two of the priest’s acolytes. Although they are not individually identified in the summary of the scene, here each is labeled with the character’s name, unlike the priests in the illustration from the previous act.⁵⁶ Their clothing is free of crests, effacing the presence of the actors themselves.

Next to them appears, for a second time, the priest. Once again, the artist labels the picture with the name of the character and actor. The priest now sits in meditation, hands clasped in what is presumably a mudra, while he glowers at a new opponent: Taema, on the other side of the page break. Intriguingly, some of the details have disappeared from his robe, to be replaced by two large versions of the family crest noted earlier. Taema, too, is identified with the actor playing her, suggested by the crest on her robes.⁵⁷ As before, a small label clari-

⁵⁶ The first label clearly reads “Unrai bōzumarō.” Judging from the cast-list, the second name (which also ends in “bōzumarō,” a dismissive reference to priests, is one of the following: Ittō kyōchi (bō), Zanmu (bō), Zansetsu (bō), or Tenryū (bō). For the illustration of Act I, which like Danjūrō’s prose account of the scene simply calls the priests “dōshuku,” see Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 130. The priests and label appear in the lower right. Note that here the priests wear actors’ crests.

⁵⁷ Taema’s hairstyle also seems to suggest the actor rather than the character, in this case by

fies the actor’s role (Kumo no Taema) before adding the actor’s name itself (Sawanojō, as noted earlier). Unlike the priest, Taema wears a peaceful expression, bending over a notably realistic waterfall as she pretends to wash her bolt of cloth.

The illustration obviously complements the text of the playbook; its labels for the priests, for instance, clarify the summary by specifying which character appeared on stage in this part of the performance. However, the picture also re-imagines the stage. There could have been no real waterfall in the theater, and even if there were actors depicting the dragons and thunder god, they could not have looked this convincing. The lack of labels for these “characters” suggests that they were left entirely to the viewer’s imagination. Perhaps that is why the flooring, so clearly depicted in the top half of the illustration, fades there just before the picture of the thunder god and disappears completely in the bottom half. In a sense, the artist has fused the imaginary and “real” elements of the stage in his portrait.

Equally interesting is the evident choice not to depict Taema’s leg, the sight of which so inflames the priest. The billowing cloth and rushing water hides her lower limbs from view. The viewer of this picture must therefore imagine the one thing that the actor really sees, even though Taema here is for once facing us. Instead, the artist gives us the priest-Danjūrō’s muscular calf—twice. While the advance printing suggests that the playbook was intended to create interest in *Denki*, it seems clear that Danjūrō did this by employing the same techniques that he used on the stage: by showing one thing and suggesting another, in this case to humorous effect.

evoking the scarf used by *onnagata* to cover the traditionally shaved forelock. Certainly her coiffure does not resemble any of the wigs found in Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 424-26.

Isshin onna Narukami 『一心女雷師』 (A Single-Hearted Female Narukami, 1699); Yamamura-za, sixth month⁵⁸

With *Isshin onna Narukami* (hereafter *Isshin onna*), performed just nine months after *Denki*, we are back in the world of female *Narukami*, with all of its additional distractions. Unfortunately, we do not know the identity of either the playwright or the author of the playbook. Since the playbook provides most of the known information on the production itself, distinguishing between the stage and text is in this case particularly difficult. According to Takano and Kurogi, the play offered a particularly dazzling live show even without the gendered complications. It was reportedly the first five-act play staged in Edo and featured numerous spectacular set pieces, one of which was a cat dance.⁵⁹

While *Neko*'s shadow seems obvious (it also featured a female *Narukami* and a celebrated cat dance), *Isshin onna* did not play any obvious casting games. Judging from the cast-list, none of the actors named earlier appeared in this play.⁶⁰ Instead, *Isshin onna*'s chief distraction from the stage show apparently involved in-character cross-dressing—by both protagonists.

Taema's cross-dressing is in some ways the less interesting. As noted earlier, while female *Narukami* always transform the priest into a nun, they show more variation in their treatment of Taema. Some plays, like the 1854 *Kumo no uwasa: Onna Naru-*

kami (Clouds of Gossip: A Female *Narukami*), make her a man.⁶¹ *Isshin onna* left Taema a woman. However, according to the playbook, this production did preserve the typical cross-gendered seduction. In this scene, Taema reportedly dressed as a man, then staged a lovers' fight and reconciliation with her half-sister. It was this sight that inflamed the passions of the nun-priest. This instance of cross-dressing simply underscored Taema's duplicity in the conventional seduction, discussed above.

The nun-priest's transvestitism, however, adds a new and exciting element of confusion. According to the playbook, *Isshin onna* began with the premise that Taema's victim had been staging her own play long before the pair met. In the first act of the production, the character reportedly appeared as the emperor Go Uda (1267-1324), historically male but here claimed to be a disguised princess. She eventually took holy orders and retreated to her hermitage because Taema's (male) lover rejected her advances; he believed that the princess's masquerade put the country at risk. *Isshin onna* thus again especially foregrounded the other use of deception in the seduction plot and kabuki generally: to entertain the audience.

To add further interest, *Isshin onna* seems to have offered at least two more distractions in performance. The first again involves historical cross-dressing. When the princess-emperor became the nun-priest, she apparently took the name of another historically male sovereign: Kazan (968-1008). The name is tantalizingly close to Kaizan, *Narukami*'s first moniker in *Denki*. Moreover, it supplies a very suggestive historical intertext. Like the character in *Isshin onna*, the historical Kazan was tricked into taking the tonsure but continued his romantic affairs.⁶² He was also considered to have been mentally unstable, which the play apparently also mimicked.

According to the playbook, when this Kazan saw Taema's performance, she went mad with de-

⁵⁸ My discussion of *Isshin onna* relies on the text and images found in Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 151-191. For Motofuji's summary and partial translation, see "A Study of *Narukami*," 86-100.

⁵⁹ For the other scenes, see Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 152.

⁶⁰ *Isshin onna* starred Osaka-born Matsumoto Hyōzō (1669-?) as Taema, and an actor called Daikichi as the nun-priest. The cast-list simply gives Hyōzō and Daikichi, but Takano and Kurogi further specify Hyōzō's surname. See *Genroku kabuki*, 152-153. For details on Hyōzō, see Nojima Jusaburō, ed., *Kabuki jinmei jiten*, rev. ed. (Tokyo: Nichigai Associates, 2002). Nojima lists two actors by the name Daikichi, but both lived too late to have performed in *Isshin onna*.

⁶¹ The character is there called Taemanosuke.

⁶² See Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (New York: Knopf, 1964), 57, for an account of the notorious incident with Fujiwara no Korechika. *Isshin onna* also sends up this altercation, with the nun-priest demanding Taema of "his" lover (actually Taema's sister).

sire, embracing both the pillars in her room and her two attendants. Later in the play she even tore off the head of an ox and put it over her own, symbolizing her descent into delusion.⁶³ This seeming distraction, while delightful on its own terms, resonated with the theme of the play. Here, too, the informed viewer enjoyed an extra joke at the character's expense.

Isshin onna's unusual seduction scene also evoked the figure of Ikkaku the Transcendent, but for different reasons than one might expect. In the *Taiheiki* (Record of Great Peace, ca. 1372), Japan's earliest account of the story, Ikkaku's tale began with another priest aroused by an erotic display: in this case, the mating of two deer. When the priest relieved his excitement and ejaculated, some fluid splashed on a leaf later eaten by a doe, which gave birth to "one-horned" Ikkaku himself.⁶⁴ One might reasonably link the two plots just on this point: the nun-priest, like Ikkaku's father, sees two "lovers" and responds passionately to the sight.

However, *Isshin onna* apparently also conflated this scene with earlier versions of the seduction plot in performance. In the fake love scene, Taema reportedly first resisted her sister's advances, objecting that the woman already has a husband. It was only after the sister explained that she had parted from her husband and was thus effectively a widow (*yamome*) that the pair embraced. To judge from the playbook, *Isshin onna* showed the nun-priest watching a *modoki* of the performances that ruined three of her precursors: the kabuki version of the priest, familiar from plays like *Denki*; Ikkaku's father; and Ikkaku himself.⁶⁵

Nor was this wealth of imaginative stimuli lim-

⁶³ See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 180. Demons with the heads of oxes (*ushi*) often appear in fictional and artistic depictions of hell, where the monsters herd and punish sinners. Kazan is similarly trying to punish Taema for her deception in this act.

⁶⁴ For a translation of the *Taiheiki* account, see Motofuji, "A Study of *Narukami*," 94. This source perhaps explains why *Isshin onna*, unlike the other plays treated here, does not have the nun-priest cause a drought. Ikkaku's father may be the object of the *mitate* in this case.

⁶⁵ See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 175; Motofuji, "A Study of *Narukami*," 93-94.

ited to the plot. After all, what the viewer actually saw in the seduction scene on stage was one *onnagata* disguised as a man to seduce another *onnagata*, with the assistance of a third. Since several other characters also apparently cross-dressed (from male to female) or impersonated other characters of the same sex, the opportunities for getting lost in thought about the physical show here were extensive. The nun-priest's sensory overload—and, more important, her delight—mimicked the mental experience of the audience.

***Isshin onna*: the playbook (text)**

As with *Denki*, the playbook for *Isshin onna* makes some of the stage-based allusions more intelligible (although, since both the play and playbook appeared in the same month, it is difficult to determine which the average viewer would have seen first). First there is the setting of the seduction, reportedly a hermitage in Ōhara (also pronounced Ohara). In pre-modern Japanese literature, this location is closely associated with Kenreimon'in (1155?-1213?), the mother of drowned emperor Antoku from the Gempei Wars. *Heike monogatari* (Tales of the Heike, ca. 1371) famously records how, after Antoku's death and her own failed suicide, Kenreimon'in took the tonsure and retreated to Ōhara to weep.⁶⁶

In addition to spoofing the basic seduction plot, *Isshin onna* thus presumably presented the nun-priest-empress as an on-going *mitate* of the *Heike* empress-nun. The nun-priest's two attendants, while clearly standing in for the priest's acolytes in the standard seduction plot, even conveniently duplicated Kenreimon'in's retinue.

The playbook makes this *mitate* explicit. As the variant pronunciation suggests, Ōhara/Ohara can be written two different ways: 大原 (big plain) and 小原 (small plain). The author of the playbook con-

⁶⁶ On the *Heike* character's time in Ōhara, see Ichiko Teiji, ed., *Heike monogatari* (2), vol. 30 of *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1975), 511-532, and Burton Watson, trans., *The Tales of the Heike*, ed. Haruo Shirane (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 151-169. The Japanese text gives "Ōhara."

sistently uses the first, standard transcription when referring to the location in his account of the action on stage. Only when he introduces the act, with the phrase “*kore wa Ohara no tsuki* (this is the moon of Ohara),” does he use the alternate kanji.⁶⁷ The choice previews the act’s *mitate* of *Heike* by suggesting a “small” version of its famous subplot.⁶⁸

The playbook also highlights the *Heike* story a second time when introducing this act. As with *Denki*, the tribute to *Isshin onna* gives each act of the play its own title. Each heading corresponds in stylistic terms to a section of a poetic anthology. While this subdivision may reflect the stage performance, the author of the playbook is surely responsible for a related innovation: the list of three poetic phrases at the head of each act, just after the title. The act containing the seduction is thus labeled, “*Jukkai no bu* (the book of outbursts): *oboro no shimizu* (misty waters), *sarashi nuno* (bleached cloth), *kamikiri yanagi* (hair-cutting willows).”⁶⁹

This paratext, like those for each of the other acts, previews the highlights of this part of the performance. Here the title alludes to a number of emotional revelations: most relevant here, Kazan’s declaration of her passion for Taema after the latter’s performance. The first poetic phrase, an actual *uta makura* or codified turn of phrase, suggests the waterfall conventionally located near the nun-priest’s hermitage. However, this phrase also names the spring at Jakkō-in, Kenreimon’in’s hermitage in

Ōhara. In short, the playbook not only makes the stage performance itself into an allusion, but it makes the *mitate* of *Heike* more explicit—in a manner as playful as the *mitate* itself.

The other two poetic phrases offer the same double view of *Isshin onna*’s seduction plot. At one level, they forecast other plot events. *Sarashi nuno*, a type of cloth known in poetry since the eighth-century, had to be washed numerous times before being set out in the sun or snow to bleach. The phrase thus evokes the moment when Taema’s sister allegedly washed cloth in the river near Kazan’s hermitage.

Kamikiri yanagi, meanwhile, points to Taema’s surprise tonsure of Kazan near the end of the act—and, since *kamikiri* is another name for a widow, the siblings’ seductive performance.⁷⁰ Both phrases also, however, suggest outside referents relevant to *Isshin onna*’s theme and plot. In the Edo period, “bleaching” (*sarashi*, more literally “exposure”) also denoted a criminal punishment.⁷¹ Exposure, and punishment, are also recurring concerns in this plot. Finally, both “hair-cutting” and “willows” suggest the licensed quarters, closely related to the kabuki in real life and a frequent subject of performance.⁷² Here, too, the playbook seems to preview the performance and prompt further reflection on it. In the account of Taema’s mousetrap, the false lovers joke about spiders and so-called “spider-prostitutes.”⁷³

⁶⁷ To be precise, the playbook gives the setting, “the moon of Ohara” (*kore Ohara no tsuki*). See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 170. The alternate transcription appears on 174, at the start of the actual seduction plot. Motofuji gives the more familiar “Ōhara” throughout.

⁶⁸ One thinks here of *Denki*’s full title, *Gempei Narukami denki*, which Motofuji translates as *Tales of the Gempei and Narukami*. As noted earlier, *Gempei* denotes the Genji and Heike families and, by extension, the civil wars they conducted. It is possible that the playwright of *Isshin onna* meant for audiences to recognize the shared allusion to the famous *sekai* in the *mitate* of Kenreimon’in; as Motofuji notes, the two plays were performed only nine months apart. See Motofuji, “A Study of *Narukami*,” pp. 75 and 86, respectively, for his translation and comments.

⁶⁹ Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 170.

⁷⁰ Like many noblewomen, “Kazan” had only taken the tonsure symbolically when she became a nun. Taema cuts off the emperor’s hair in the hopes of embarrassing her rival and thus ending her bid for Taema’s lover.

⁷¹ See the entry for *sarashi* in *Iwanami kogo jiten*, rev. ed. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1990), particularly the subheadings for *sarashinuno* and *sarashimono*.

⁷² Cutting off one’s hair constituted one way that a prostitute could pledge her sincerity to her lover; see the entry for “*kamikiri*” in *Kōjien* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993).

⁷³ The sisters’ performance has the female lover slipping her hand into Taema’s robes under the pretense of pulling out a spider (*kumo*) and making suggestive references to the eponymous prostitutes (*yorōgumo*) the prostitutes. The reference perhaps also puns on Taema’s famous association with



Figure 2. Illustration of seduction scene from *e-iri kyōgen bon* of *Isshin onna* (from Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki kessakushū*, vol. 1, pp. 176-177).

Isshin onna: the playbook (illustrations)

As with its *Denki* counterpart, *Isshin onna*'s playbook also offers visual tributes to the play, including another creative rendition of the seduction scene (Figure 2). This playbook illustrates only its first four acts, giving the picture a slightly higher profile than in the earlier book. Once again, we cannot be sure of the artist, although Takano and Kurogi, noting the resemblance to the play guides produced in the Kansai region, suggest a Torii-school adherent.⁷⁴ If the attribution is correct, one would expect the illustrations to explore the ludic dimensions of the performance.

The illustration of the seduction scene richly answers this expectation. Like the picture from the earlier playbook, this one is split across two pages, with a narrow band (perhaps highly stylized clouds) separating the depiction of two different moments in performance. The top panel shows Taema's bedroom (recognizable as such both from its ornamen-

clouds, a homonym for spider. For the line, see Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 175, and Motofuji, "A Study of *Narukami*," 94 (text and note 147). On the association of willows and prostitutes, see Tara Adrian, "*The Tale of Genji*'s Third Princess in Torii Kiyomitsu's 'Floating World,'" *Occasional Papers in East Asian Studies* (St. Louis: Washington University in St. Louis, spring 2000) 38.

⁷⁴ *Genroku kabuki*, 152.

tal screens and the plot summary in the text). This setting is itself noteworthy as a very literal nod to the famous seduction.

The treatment of the characters is still more interesting. The artist begins with Taema's lover, labeled with his name (Yamatonosuke). Neither in this label nor any of the others does the artist identify the actor himself, although all of the costumes bear crests. The character seems to kneel, exposing one *tabi*-clad foot, as he holds a letter and weeps into his sleeve. His hair stands slightly on end, from shock. His gaze directs the viewer to the source of both the letter and his distress: the dead body of his brother (Wakasanosuke), shown with blood spurting out of the abdomen after his ritual self-disembowelment. The brother has killed himself in order to persuade Taema's lover to restore order to the court by accepting the love of the empress. Taema's evil stepmother (*keibo*) looks on from his upper left, staring with a worried look the other side of the room, directing our attention to the picture's other half.

There, the first character we see is Taema's father (presumably labeled Ōi no zenji for his last formal post, although this part of the picture is difficult to see clearly). He seems to exchange glances with his wife. Below him sits Taema, actually furthest left; her name appears above her on the standing screen. She sits next to her sister (Yaegakihime), the dead man's lover. Both weep. Again, all three characters wear robes emblazoned with the actors' crests. However, this time Taema wears a new hairstyle, distinct from both the coiffure of her stepmother (similar to that Taema wears in the *Denki* playbook) and that of her sister.

As my description suggests, the artist does not supply the actor's names directly, either here or in the bottom half of the portrait. The effect is to highlight the storyline rather than the performance, while still recording both. Everything is framed by a seeming representation of the fictional house, with the veranda on the far right (partially obscured by a sprig of cherry blossoms from the garden) and the wood flooring of an interior room on the far left.⁷⁵

As in the picture of the scene from *Denki*, the bottom half of the illustration shows the seduction

⁷⁵ I do not recognize the black object located on the boards. In the context of a noble household, it might be a lacquered box or box set.

itself. On the left, the nun-priest (labeled *Kazan no ama*, the nun *Kazan*) collapses from her veranda into what appears to be either a small waterfall or a particularly rough stretch of the river depicted in calmer curves on the inner edges of the page break.⁷⁶ As in the earlier illustration of the scene, the water is depicted relatively realistically; while it is difficult to connect the two parts of the river and to imagine how the hermitage stands on top of it, they are clearly pictures of water rather than depictions of a stage set.

The portrait of *Kazan* also suggests the exercise of artistic license. The playbook's summary of the seduction scene does not specify that the emperor fell into the water, nor does it mention anyone fishing her out of it. However, the writer does recount a relevant piece of alleged dialogue. In *Taema's* play within a play, her sister compares her counterfeit passion to the river's churning waters.⁷⁷ Either the artist has captured a missing moment from the live performance, or he is alluding to this speech, perhaps both.

In short, the scene shows the nun-priest literally falling in love or, perhaps, lust, since water is an erotic element. (Kabuki's love scenes are called *nureba* or "wet scenes.") The illustration immerses the viewer in the world of the story, while highlighting an element only accessed in performance: that is, in the words from *Taema's* sister's speech. *Kazan's* label, meanwhile, highlights the cross-gendering of the nun-priest in this variation on the (female) seduction plot. All of this gives the reader-viewer a lot to think about, even as she considers the picture itself.

The portrait of *Kazan's* fall becomes even more interesting when one compares her figure to the other women in this half of the illustration. As the empress falls, caught in the act of fainting from her veranda, she reveals both of her feet and her hands. Conventional depictions typically conceal the

woman's body, as the portraits of the other female characters generally attest. *Kazan's* free-fall allows the artist to show all four limbs (more precisely, her hands and feet). This exposure over water lends new meaning to the *sarashi numo* discussed earlier, even as it suggests the character's derangement.

The portraits on the other side of the page break (and river) display the same fascinating mixture of fictive and theatrical details. *Taema* and her sister, again labeled, stand back to back as they watch the nun fall. Atypically, each shows an artfully placed foot in its *tabi*. This contrived pose returns the viewer to the world of the stage. It is easy to imagine the dramatic moment on stage, the actors pausing to create the spectacular tableau. The sisters' hairlines—almost reversed from the upper-half of the image and strikingly different from those of the women in the background—also underscore the theatricality of the moment.

Moreover, *Taema* is now dressed as a man. To her left, next to the anxious attendants, stand two more "men": *Kyōsuke*, *Taema's* retainer for this scene (standing next to the women and named in the text), and a comic servant, carrying a sword, crouching at the bottom left.⁷⁸ Strikingly, none of the four minor figures are labeled (nor do the names of any appear in the cast-list).

While their robes bear the usual crests, the effect is to highlight the importance of the main characters and, again, of their particular actions in this part of the show. Perhaps that is why *Yaegaki's* attendants wear "normal" hairstyles, although there may be a simpler explanation. Depicting them with the relative realism that marks the nun and water certainly highlights the performance within the performance. As before, it also presents the reader with new objects of interest, displacing both the performance and its "summary" in the text.

⁷⁶ The text repeatedly refers to a *takigawa* or rough river/rapids, which conveniently combines the kanji for both options I list.

⁷⁷ See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 178; Motofuji, "A Study of *Narukami*," 94. When she says this, *Yaegaki* also compares herself also notes that a hair from her head could leash a large elephant, another allusion to the story of *Ikkaku* the Transcendent.

⁷⁸ I am not certain about this part of the picture. It is possible that the third standing figure is another of the sister's attendants, which would make the crouching man *Taema's* servant. Unfortunately, the cast-list does not name either character, which makes it difficult to check the roles against the identities of the actors. It makes sense that the standing character would be *Taema's* servant, since (in addition to the visual cues discussed above), she is close enough to *Taema* to join in the masquerade.

Naritasan funjin Fudō 『成田山分身不動』 (The Split Fudō of Naritasan, 1703); Morita-za, fourth month⁷⁹

While the seduction plot inspired other plays immediately after *Isshin onna*—and some related playbooks—the last piece I will discuss here is *Naritasan Funjin Fudō* (hereafter *Naritasan*). It appeared four years after *Isshin onna*. However, in most ways *Naritasan* recalls *Denki*. Like *Denki*, *Naritasan* featured the standard priest with a grudge against the rain gods. As with *Denki*, Danjūrō I wrote and starred in it. He once again also wrote the playbook, which lists him under the penname Mimasuya Hyōgō.⁸⁰

Judging from this account, *Naritasan* fused the world of the seduction with (among other things) several Noh plays about Ono no Komachi, the famous Heian poet and beauty. It also revisited Noh's treatment of Ikakku the Transcendent. Kominz thus calls *Naritasan* “an excellent example of a nō collage play.”⁸¹ As he notes, the five-act play became one of Danjūrō's biggest hits, filled with “lust, ambition, betrayal, self-destruction, and redemption.”⁸² In other words, *Naritasan* contained an especially arresting stage performance.

Nonetheless, *Naritasan* again seems to have enriched its show with ludic invitations, not least in the scene based on the seduction plot. First comes the title. As noted earlier, the phrase *Naritasan* names Danjūrō's family temple, devoted to the worship of Fudō. The complete title thus both names the

god and suggests the devotions of the man who both wrote the play and performed one of the two titular *funjin* (literally, split bodies) or facets of Fudō himself. By extension, the title also suggests Danjūrō's *yagō* and his *aragoto*-style acting, both discussed earlier. The title even suggests a relevant plot event. In the fourth act of the play a disguised Kuronushi (that is, Danjūrō) apparently made a pilgrimage to Naritasan itself. Judging from the illustration of that scene, the only thing that revealed his identity was the actor's own *mimasu* crest on his costume.⁸³ *Naritasan*'s label thus previews both the stage show and suggests (or encourages) a playful response to it.

Naritasan also played casting games. The three leads all reprised roles or relationships from *Denki*. As noted, Danjūrō returned as the priest, here identified as Ōtomo no Kuronushi (fl. 885-987). Kuronushi was one of the Heian period's so-called *rok-kasen* (Six Poetic Immortals), like Komachi.⁸⁴ Sawanojō returned as the priest-Kuronushi's seducer, here Komachi herself. The viewer watching *Naritasan* could easily compare the scene on stage to memories (or second-hand accounts, including those found in playbooks) of Danjūrō and Sawanojō's encounter in *Denki* and other productions.

Danjūrō's son Kuzō reprised a different stage relationship. In *Denki*, as noted earlier, he had appeared as Taema's (that is, Sawanojō's) son. In *Naritasan* Kuzō appeared as both Kūkai (774-835), the Buddhist teacher and supposed inventor of the *kana* alphabet, and one half of the split Fudō of the title: the diamond-world avatar known for his wisdom. As suggested earlier, Danjūrō himself played Fudō's other half, the avatar of the “womb world” that produces the diamond world.⁸⁵ As a result, in *Narita-*

⁷⁹ My discussion relies on the text and images found in Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 569-599. For Motofuji's summary and partial translation, see “A Study of *Narukami*,” 100-109. Kominz gives the title as “The Avatars of the Narita Temple Fudō.” See *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 230.

⁸⁰ See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 570. It is not clear whether the book appeared in advance of the performance.

⁸¹ *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 88. All told, Kominz lists six Noh plays as sources. As his footnote details, the Komachi-themed plays were: *Sōshi arai Komachi*; *Kayoi Komachi*; and *Sekidera Komachi*. Motofuji also suggests a debt to *Sotoba Komachi*; see “A Study of *Narukami*,” 109.

⁸² *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 88.

⁸³ See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki kessakushū*, 592. Kuronushi appears holding a sedge hat on the bottom right. Danjūrō's crest of three concentric squares is clearly visible on his right knee. For Motofuji's summary of the scene, see “A Study of *Narukami*,” 108.

⁸⁴ To be consistent with my earlier renderings of *sennin*, here abbreviated to *sen*, I should perhaps call them the Six Poetic Transcendents.

⁸⁵ Kūkai and the diamond world (*kongōkai*) Fudō were traditionally linked, as the numerous depictions of Kūkai holding a vajra (also *kongō*) and some of his religious titles attest. For the

san, Kuzō essentially portrayed the child of the character played by his father. While this particular casting game is hardly unique to plays on the seduction plot, it marks another kind of *modoki* of *Denki*, for any fans keeping count.

According to the playbook, Danjūrō performed similar magic with *Naritasan*'s staging of the seduction plot. Like *Isshin onna*, *Naritasan* presents the seduction scene in Act III, the structural heart of the performance. The scene apparently rehearsed several of the elements found in the productions discussed here. Komachi reportedly approached Kuronushi's hermitage "looking like a female wood-seller" and leading an ox by a rope (a picture of this occurs in Figure 4, discussed below).

The disguise suggests an *Oharame*, the female peddlers from the Ohara region where *Isshin onna*'s seduction took place. The presence of the ox reinforces this association, since none of the other earlier plays on the seduction include the animal, and the play gives no reason for Komachi's particular disguise or the ox's presence. *Naritasan* also recycles more general elements from plays like *Denki*. The seduction features the conventional debates (again missing from *Isshin onna*) over "Taema"'s identity and the same avowals that the priest resembles her dead lover. While Takano and Kurogi note *Naritasan*'s marked influence on the later *Narukami*—including very similar pantomime and massage scenes—the original audience would inevitably have noted the play's debts.⁸⁶

Finally, *Naritasan* seems to have offered a wealth of internal allusions to the seduction scene. According to the playbook, Komachi's visit to Kuronushi's hermitage appeared between what Motofuji calls "free adaptation[s]" of other stories about the female poet.⁸⁷ The first, in Act II scene one,

significance of these worlds, see Motofuji, "A Study of *Narukami*," 109 note 166.

⁸⁶ *Genroku kabuki*, 570. As Motofuji points out, *Naritasan* also previews *Narukami*'s denunciation speech, with its recounting of the original Indian tale about the priest. Such parallels are unsurprising given that Danjūrō's son Kuzō, who performed in both *Denki* and *Naritasan*, wrote the later piece.

⁸⁷ "A Study of *Narukami*," 101. Motofuji refers here specifically to the treatment of *Sōshi arai Komachi*, but he characterizes *Naritasan*'s use of the other story in much the same way. It is unclear

depicts *Sōshi arai Komachi* (Note-book Washing Komachi). The second, in Act III scene two, showcases *Kayoi Komachi* (best known in English as "Komachi and the Hundred Nights").⁸⁸ Both scenes contain leitmotifs related in different way to both the seduction plot in general and this particular staging of it.

A brief summary of the two sources suggests the general relationship. *Sōshi arai Komachi* famously has the poet wash a manuscript clean to rebut charges of plagiarism levied by Kuronushi. *Kayoi Komachi* shows her cruelly bringing a suitor to the breaking point. As my accounts of earlier plays attest, the seduction plot employs many similar images and plot points: washing (echoed in *Denki*'s playbook reference to Kume), accusations, avowals of honesty, and the on-going tension between desire and its satisfaction.⁸⁹ By sandwiching the seduction between these stories, *Naritasan* previews and then underscores these crucial motifs. It also suggests, however, the extent to which Danjūrō encouraged viewers to recall other scenes at key points in the performance.

Within *Naritasan* itself, meanwhile, the juxtapositions with Komachi's legend also apparently functioned ironically. The poet's innocence of plagiarism, for example, served to counterpoint her guilt in the seduction scene—where she apparently did not wash anything, unlike in other versions of the seduction plot. Her vigorous seduction of the priest, meanwhile, contrasted sharply with her coolness to her suitor in *Kayoi Komachi*. Conversely, the pairing also stressed Taema's deceptiveness. While Komachi and Shōshō appear to be on good terms in *Naritasan*, her cruelty is the legendary suitor's chief

whether Motofuji refers to the Noh plays noted earlier or other versions of the legend.

⁸⁸ Motofuji mistakenly refers to Act II in his discussion of this part of the play. See "A Study of *Narukami*," 102. I borrow Keene's title for *Kayoi Komachi* (literally, "Visiting/Courting Komachi"); see Keene, ed., *20 Plays of the Noh Theatre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

⁸⁹ More byzantine connections link Kuronushi and Kūkai with Kume the Transcendent, although these pairings seem too obscure to be active in *Naritasan* itself. Curious readers can consult the *Kōjien* entry for "Kumebe" and Hickman, "On the Trail of Kume the Transcendent": 23 note 23.

complaint.

It hardly bears mentioning that the viewer's sympathies must have vacillated accordingly. In this way, *Naritasan* accomplished one other apparent hallmark of performances on the seduction plot: forcing the viewer into an enjoyable variation of the position of the priest and his acolytes, who never quite know what to think, or where to look.

***Naritasan*: the playbook (text)**

Like the playbook for *Denki*, one could consider Danjūrō's written version of *Naritasan* a kind of primer on the play's ludic backdrop. It appeared in the same month as the performance (like *Isshin onna*), bearing another striking surtitle: *Shōshō momoyo guruma Tōrō kayoi Komachi* ("Shōshō and the Carriage of the Hundred Nights, The Praying-Mantis Visiting Komachi."⁹⁰ The phrases again name one of the show's highlights: its *mitate* of the *Kayoi Komachi* story, here linked both to Komachi's faithful suitor Fukakusa no Shōshō and the praying mantis who visits her as part of that subplot. Since the insect is itself a manifestation of Kuronushi's angry spirit, the surtitle gives the first preview of the titular "split bodies," although the first-time reader or viewer will not necessarily know this.

This reference provides further material for the reader's contemplation. For one thing, it replaces *Isshin onna*'s spiders with another insect, one associated with the poetic season of incipient death.⁹¹ The link is appropriate: Kuronushi commits suicide late in the play because of his unrequited love for Komachi. Perhaps, like the spiders in *Isshin onna*, the reference is also supposed to evoke linguistic echoes. The phrase *tōrō no ono* (the hatchet of the mantis) has been proverbial since *Heike* for futile resistance.⁹² This association again resurrects memories of *Isshin onna*, with its ongoing *mitate* of

⁹⁰ Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 570.

⁹¹ On the autumnal associations of the mantis, see *Gappon haiku saijiki*, rev. ed. (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1974), 632. The English translation is misleading; Japanese poetry guides list no association between bug and priest.

⁹² See *Kōjien*, under *tōrō*. The initial syllables of the phrase would then evoke Ono no Komachi, who triggers Kuronushi's metamorphosis.

Kenreimon'in.

More striking is the surtitle's lack of any reference to Narukami's seduction. Presumably Danjūrō meant to emphasize *Naritasan*'s variation on *Momoyo guruma*, a Komachi-themed piece by Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725) first performed in Kansai in 1684.⁹³ Certainly early critics saw *Naritasan* through that prism. Several contemporary records list *Naritasan* by the title *Komachi Kuronushi Momoyoguruma* ("Komachi, Kuronushi, and the Carriage of the Hundred Nights").⁹⁴ The missing reference surely also, however, plays with the reader's expectations. Most plays on the seduction plot foreground this element in their title, as do both of the playbooks considered here. By leaving it out, Danjūrō forces readers to imagine the entire seduction plot, literally recasting it as a distraction from the production's main elements.

Danjūrō also makes shrewd use of his table of contents. Like the earlier playbooks, this text gives each act its own title. Each begins with the phrase *Wakoku no* ("Our country's") and then names the figure or object that purportedly inspired this part of the performance. Intriguingly, the structure here is the reverse of that suggested by the surtitle. None of the acts' labels refers to Komachi or anyone associated with her. Instead, Act III, with the seduction scene, is called "Our Country's Ikkaku." Like Kuronushi in his denunciation speech, Danjūrō makes the debt to the Indian story explicit—this time in print. Beneath this title, like the others, he lists the act's main character in smaller print. For this act, it is Kuronushi—the nominal protagonist.

The small print above the act's title also repays attention. Here, in each case, Danjūrō gives four short phrases. The first and third are linked by grammar and puns to the indented second and fourth. The alternating phrases are also structurally parallel: one and three are comprised of verb clauses, while two and four give paired nouns. The small print above the title for Act III tentatively reads as fol-

⁹³ For the playbook of *Momoyo Komachi*, see Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki kessakushū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1925). The play apparently also featured *Rokkasen* poets.

⁹⁴ For the alternate listings of *Naritasan*'s title, see Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 570. They do not make the link to Chikamatsu's play explicit.

lows:

Koi o suru

Pursuing his love,

Sugata Narihira

(In) appearance Narihira

Omoi o wakuru

Sharing his resolve,

Katachi Tsurayuki

(In) figure Tsurayuki⁹⁵

Like the playbook's surtitle, these lines refer to a different aspect of the plot than that advertised in the larger print. Ariwara no Narihira (noted earlier in my discussion of *Narukami*) and Ki no Tsurayuki (ca. 872-945) are two more famous Heian poets. In *Naritasan*, they were apparently also the disgruntled lovers of two other male characters: Shōshō, Komachi's legendary suitor; and Ono no Yoshitane, her brother. The poets reportedly accompanied these men to Komachi's house in the second, *Kayoi Komachi*-themed half of the act. Danjūrō's heading draws attention to an important and again spectacular part of the performance, the scene in which the four men—all played by leading actors—discover Kuronushi's spirit in the guise of an insect.⁹⁶ However, the lines' repeated stress on appearance (*sugata*, *katachi*) and the reference to division (*wakuru*) again preview important elements of the seduction.

The stress on appearance and splitting resurfaces on the very next page, in the cast-list.⁹⁷ Danjūrō naturally appears twice, for his roles as Kuronushi and the womb-world Fudō. However, under the large heading of "playwright" (*kyōgen sakusha*), we again find the familiar pairing of small and large print. The large print gives Danjūrō's name for a third time. Its tiny preface reads Mimasuya Hyōgo,

⁹⁵ See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 571. Motofuji does not mention this page, nor do Takano and Kurogi discuss it. While I am not satisfied with my transcription, the lines seem sufficiently important to warrant mention here. This page of the playbook deserves more attention.

⁹⁶ See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 570, for this subset of the cast-list. They refer to the gathering of the four actors in question as a "splendid line-up" (*rippana kaobure*).

⁹⁷ See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 571. This page appears only in modern print.

the penname noted earlier, confirming both the equivalence of the two parts in these labels and also the smaller script's role as a gloss. This again suggests that the lines about Narihira and Tsurayuki are important to appreciating the "Ikkaku" act—and to the reader that Danjūrō alerts to this fact.



Figure 3. Cover illustration from *e-iri kyōgen bon* of *Naritasan funjin Fudō* (from Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki kessakushū*, vol. 1, p. 569).

***Naritasan*: the playbook (illustrations)**

Like the other two playbooks, Danjūrō's written version of *Naritasan* includes some noteworthy illustrations. Kominz notes an attribution to Torii Kiyonobu, credited earlier for the pictures of *Denki*, and Torii Kiyomasu.⁹⁸ The artwork again simulta-

⁹⁸ *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 84. The attribution comes in the label to Figure 14, which depicts the right half of the illustration here labeled Figure 4. According to Lane, Kiyomasu (whose

neously depicts both the performance and its normally invisible allusive dimension.

This time, I begin my discussion with the playbook's cover (Figure 3). While the texts for *Denki* and *Isshin onna* no longer have clear jacket illustrations, according to Takano and Kurogi, *Naritasan's* first portrait of the stage is itself famous.⁹⁹ Sawanojō (identifiable by his crest) appears as Monju (Skt. *Manjusri*), the bodhisattva of wisdom. He wears Monju's crown and seems to sit or stand on his lion to the lower right. A delicate foot is just visible near the left side of the lion's head. Danjūrō and Kuzō sit lower on either side as the two versions of Fudō; Danjūrō is on the right.

Once again, the costumes and iconography both educate the viewer and compete for his attention. The crests on the robes clearly identify both actors, while the two sets of flames, sword, and lasso (conventional attributes of the god) suggest the characters. One can also see both sets of feet. Danjūrō's caricatured facial features, eyes crossed in his characteristic *mie*, here do double duty; they suggest both the god and Danjūrō's own *aragoto* performance. Since the lion's face resembles the caricature of Danjūrō, the artist may even suggest the actor's other role as the villainous Kuronushi, here as at the end of the play (when he turns into the avatar of Fudō) effectively rendered prostrate.¹⁰⁰

This cover illustration serves several roles for the reader of the playbook (and the viewer of the

relationship to Kiyonobu is uncertain) was active from the 1690s to the 1720s. See *Images from the Floating World*, 61.

⁹⁹ On the cover's fame, see Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 570. The playbook for *Denki* reproduced in this volume has no cover, and it is possible that there was no such picture, although most of the books collected there have them. The image on *Isshin onna's* cover (see 151) is damaged. It seems to show Taema in male costume in the lower left, suggesting that this cover, too, helped viewers to visualize the performance.

¹⁰⁰ On this point it is instructive to compare the cover illustration with the picture for Act V, which depicts the trio and lion in slightly different postures. Sawanojō's apparently full head of hair in the later picture constitutes another significant difference. For the picture, see Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 597.

performance). First, and pragmatically, it identifies the play's three leads. Second, it shows at least two of them—Danjūrō and his son—in their most spectacular moments on stage. The puzzle here is Sawanojō. While the same triad appears in the playbook's illustration for Act V, the text does not mention Komachi's transformation into Monju. Perhaps this was an oversight, or a victim of the book's abridgement of the performance; the table of contents seems to confirm that Komachi (and thus Sawanojō) was conflated with Monju at the end of the play.¹⁰¹ The effect, however, is to prompt an association that cannot be explained by the subsequent account of the performance. The link between Komachi and Monju is left to the reader's imagination, just like a ludic prompt on the stage.

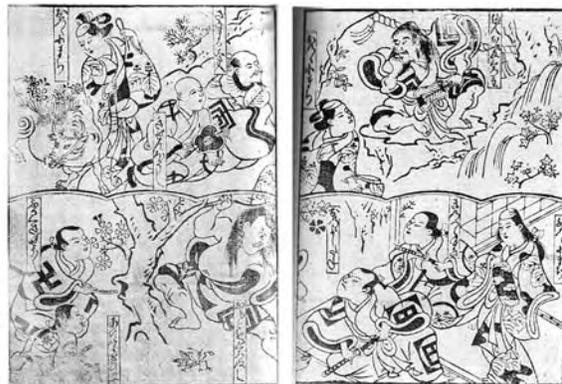


Figure 4. Illustration of seduction scene from *e-iri kyōgen bon* of *Naritasan funjin Fudō* (from Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki kessakushū*, vol. 1, pp. 586-587).

At the same time, the cover illustration is clearly humorous. First there is the suggestion that all of the actors, not just Danjūrō, are gods, whatever the official reputation of the theater. Second, the picture clearly associates Komachi (Sawanojō's more prominent role in this piece) with Monju, known in the Edo period as the patron saint of same-sex love.¹⁰² As noted earlier, Narihira and Tsurayuki,

¹⁰¹ The table of contents gives the act's title as "Our Country's Monju" and lists Komachi as the main character underneath.

¹⁰² On Monjū's association with male love, see e.g. *The Life of an Amorous Woman and Other*

the poets discussed earlier with respect to Act IV, grew angry with their lovers for fixating on Komachi. The cover picture ironically turns this character—or rather, the man who played her—into the very incarnation of their different preference.

Finally, there is the illustration of the seduction scene itself (as noted earlier, Figure 4). As in *Denki*, a scalloped line divides the top and bottom halves of the two pages. The seduction proper appears in the top half of the picture. In the top left, as Kominz notes, we see Kuronushi and Komachi.¹⁰³ As in the pictures of *Isshin onna*, the labels give only the character's names: "The Transcendent Ōtomo no Kuronushi" (sennin Ōtomo no Kuronushi) and "Ono no Komachi."

Both actors are, however, identified by their crests (with Komachi wearing the hairstyle seen on Taema in the illustration from the *Denki* playbook). Kuronushi sits, fascinated, at the edge of his waterfall, once again realistically depicted, while Komachi looks alluringly up at him over her left shoulder. Only after noting this iconic scene does the eye travel left, to the priest's two acolytes (Sarumarū Tayū and Kisen Hōshi, two more Heian poets) and another picture of Komachi, this time leading an ox carrying firewood on its back. A few cherry blossoms scattered on top of the firewood evoke a plot point from an earlier act.¹⁰⁴ Once again, all three of these characters wear costumes emblazoned with the actor's crest.

This half of the picture offers two intriguing variations on the performance it illustrates. The more obvious innovation is the presence of those two Komachis; in the pictures discussed earlier, the top and bottom halves of these illustrations only depict one moment of the performance. Here, how-

ever, the artist begins with the focal point of the seduction. Then, after depicting the on-stage audience, he returns to the scene's opening moments. The repetition perhaps also humorously underscores a line from the playbook and thus (given Danjūrō's authorship) probably the performance. When Kuronushi begins to suspect Komachi's true identity, she defuses his suspicions by claiming that people often mistake her when she goes to the city to sell firewood; for that reason, she is known as Ono no Otsū. By showing Komachi the wood-seller and Komachi the temptress, the artist playfully reproduces her excuse in his portrait of the scene itself.

At the same time, however, the artist makes sure to label Komachi clearly by repeating her full name in another label. The choice parallels his identification of Kuronushi's acolytes. As noted earlier, these tags name two Heian poets (who also appear elsewhere in the plot). However, according to the playbook, at the beginning of this act those poets took religious names: respectively, Kōyō the Transcendent and Tsūfū the Transcendent (Kōyō sennin, Tsūfū sennin), respectively.¹⁰⁵ By giving the supporting characters their "real" names, but specifying that Kuronushi is a transcendent, the artist foregrounds the *mitate* of Ikkaku's story. Indeed, it privileges the *mitate* over the variation on earlier performances like *Denki*, which as noted earlier gave the priest a different title. Moreover, the picture highlights the range of deceptions practiced in this scene. While Komachi is the scene's star performer in this sense, it bears noting that Kuronushi's acolytes—like their counterparts in almost every version of the seduction found in kabuki—are not especially religious. In this play, they go to the mountains to keep Kuronushi company (and, on a practical level, to complete the *mitate*).

The bottom half of the illustration, which ostensibly depicts *Naritasan's* variation on the *Kayoi Komachi* story, also highlights several important aspects of the seduction scene. It begins with Komachi (again marked with her full name) standing in the far right, apparently on the edge of the veranda of her house. Beside her crouch Ki no Tsurayuki and, to his lower left, Ono no Yoshitane (as noted

Writings, trans. Ivan Morris (New York: New Directions, 1963), 95. Kūkai (again played by Kuzō) has a similar association. See *The Great Mirror of Male Love*, trans. Paul G. Schalow (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 7 and 56.

¹⁰³ *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 84.

¹⁰⁴ In Act II, Komachi manages to make some reluctant cherry trees bloom with a poem. This poem in turn provokes Kuronushi's malicious charge of plagiarism. See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku Kabuki*, 578-79. Motofuji's summary appears in "A Study of *Narukami*," 101-2.

¹⁰⁵ See Takano and Kurogi, *Genroku kabuki*, 583. This part of the text comes immediately before the relevant illustration, at least as reproduced in the volume just noted.

earlier, Komachi's brother). They are caught in the moment of drawing their swords. All three figures gaze left, into the garden and across the page break. On the other side of the page break stands the object of their attention: the priest, here represented twice. The first version, a human figure simply labeled "Ōtomo no Kuronushi," stands in a powerful *mie*, left leg extended, right hand clutching a branch of the cherry tree he stands beneath. His hair is in wild disarray, revealing him to be overmastered by his emotions, and his facial features—notably shorn of the facial hair of the top picture—create the standard caricature of Danjūrō himself.

Beneath him, unlabeled, stands the praying mantis discussed earlier. (Since the mantis is actually Kuronushi's jealous spirit, it is possible that the label "Ōtomo no Kuronushi" instead refers to the man and the insect.) The blooming cherry tree, like the cherry blossoms on the ox in the top half of the picture, evokes Komachi's victory in the poetry contest noted earlier. Finally, to their left, come Fukakusa no Shōshō and beneath him Ariwara no Narihira, both with hands on their swords and seemingly staring back at the other armed pair.

While these images repay attention both on their own terms (that is, as depictions of *Naritasan's* Act III scene two in performance) and as part of the general composition, their view of the seduction is intriguing. By juxtaposing the two portraits of Kuronushi with the two portraits of Komachi, the artist does more than simply represent four moments in performance. He also conveys the degree to which both protagonists conflate multiple personas: the actors, the Heian poets, the originally Indian characters, and the roles each assumes (in some cases unwittingly) in "Komachi's" seduction of the priest. The virtue of the illustration, and the playbook more generally, is that it can reveal all of these things at once—with time to untangle their interrelationships. On the other hand, the reader can lose himself looking, without further stimuli from a moving performance to recall him to the matter at hand: in this case, the rest of the physical playbook.

Conclusions

In the preceding pages, I have argued two related points: 1) that kabuki's entertainment value depends on both physical and recollected stimuli;

and 2) that Edo-period kabuki, in particular plays and playbooks about Narukami, combined these stimuli to unusually potent effect. By using the sensory dimensions of the stage and page to engage viewers' minds in this playful fashion, Ichikawa Danjūrō I and his contemporaries tapped into details sure to excite knowledgeable theatergoers. Of course, not every reader or theatergoer could have recognized the wide set of stories and performances the plays discussed here both invoked and evoked. However, given the short time span in which these plays were performed, and their production for a relatively small audience within the same city, it seems likely that many theatergoers recognized many of the allusions and hidden jokes. Moreover, readers and viewers alike clearly enjoyed these ludic moments, even (perhaps especially) those that teased fans for their infatuations—in this case, by putting them in the position of the characters on stage and/or in the text. Danjūrō and his competitors would hardly have continued mounting these plays or investing performances and playbooks with extra ludic entertainments had this not been the case.

Such playfulness is hardly exclusive to kabuki, or to early modern Japan. While one thinks in this context of art-house cinema, with its frequent return to the plight of the actor and the seductions of theatrical entertainment, my favorite analogy for the movements discussed in this article comes in a more commercial series: *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) and its sequel, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2004). Both films, based on books inspired by Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, play games with the audience, notably in the use of actor Colin Firth. In the books, the heroine fantasizes about Firth, famous for his real-life role as Mr. Darcy in an adaptation of Jane Austen's novel. In the second book, Jones even gets to interview Firth about his experience with the part.

The films delighted fans of the books by casting Firth as Jones's love interest, Mark Darcy. However, the interview scene—in which Jones, now involved with Mark Darcy, met her former-crush Firth—did not make it to movie theaters. This is presumably because no one unfamiliar with the books would have understood it. The scene did, however, survive for a smaller audience: the presumably more knowledgeable members of the fan-base who bought the DVD of the sequel. This was surely in part a marketing decision; judging from lay reviews, a number

of fans of the book hated the rest of the film.¹⁰⁶ By including such a tempting extra, the company increased sales to this constituency at least.

This story seems to confirm my claim that ludic kabuki was more than a tactical response to Edo-period constraints. Rather, it tapped into a human desire for stimulation at all levels, particularly when offered in the form of a game, or self-portrait.

At least one contemporary actor seems to recognize this. As Kominz details, in 1985, when the current Ichikawa Danjūrō XII (1946-) assumed the hereditary name, he “led two chartered trains full of kabuki fans and Buddhist faithful on a pilgrimage to” the family temple at Naritasan; moreover, he subsequently continued to make semi-annual visits and other trips.¹⁰⁷ One can easily see here an attempt to re-train audiences to recognize the stage’s allusive dimensions. Nor was this Danjūrō XII’s only return to the Edo-period. In 1992 he produced a revival of *Naritasan funjin Fudō*, based in part on the playbook.¹⁰⁸ While I have not seen the play, it resurrected one of the casting games noted earlier: Danjūrō’s son played Kūkai and one half of Fudō, just as in the original production with Danjūrō I.

It is possible that other actors will follow the current Danjūrō’s lead and restore the holistic temptations of the Narukami plays and of Edo theater generally. For this to work, however, modern audiences will have to learn a lot more about current plays and actors, and the theater will perhaps have to accept more accessible (e.g., contemporary) plotlines and allusive content. If this happens, the mys-

tery will not be what makes kabuki entertaining, it will be how the theater negotiated its new set of historical constraints to refocus our attention and recapture our hearts.

¹⁰⁶ See, for instance, the buyer comments on the Amazon page devoted to *The Edge of Reason*, or the page at “international movie database” www.imdb.com.

¹⁰⁷ See *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 229. Since Kominz’s book was published, Danjūrō may have cut back on these visits. The actor endured tiring bouts with cancer in 2004 and 2005, and in a 2007 interview with *The Japan Times* he stressed that he is not particularly religious. Of course, as noted above, these visits are not solely spiritual in nature. For the interview, see <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fl20070902x1.html> (accessed 1 August 2011).

¹⁰⁸ The performance took place at the Kabukiza. See Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 229-31.