

Kibyōshi in the Harvard-Yenching Library: A Guided Tour

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Scholarship on the woodblock-printed comic-book known as the “yellowback” (*kibyōshi* 黄表紙) received a hefty boost recently with the completion in 2004 of Tanahashi Masahiro’s *Kibyōshi Overview* (*Kibyōshi sōran*), a massive work in five volumes spanning some 3,500 pages and providing précis for virtually all 2,500 or so extant *kibyōshi*.¹

This is an ironically substantial monument for a genre that was relatively ephemeral, having been produced and primarily consumed from 1775 to about 1806, confined in its readership mostly to the denizens of Edo (present-day Tokyo), and above all else irrepressibly lighthearted. Yet as an urbane comicbook for adults that both was arguably one of the most popular genres of its day and also remains a valuable repository of cultural history illustrated, the *kibyōshi* perhaps merits such weighty treatment.

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¹ Tanahashi Masahiro, *Kibyōshi sōran*, in *Nihon shoshigaku taikei*, vol. 48, nos. 1-5 (Seishōdō shoten, 1986-2004). The first three volumes contain publishing information and précis; the fourth, several indices; and the fifth, mostly reproductions (mostly in black and white) of cover art.

Thankfully, during his couple of decades surveying libraries and museums and private collections in Japan for individual works, Professor Tanahashi left just about no stone unturned. The result, with its comprehensive indices, can serve as an encyclopedia not just of the *kibyōshi*, but also of nothing less than the Japanese popular imagination of the day, albeit as glimpsed through the ingeniously distorted lens of the genre.

What might be counted as the only conspicuous omission in this magnum opus—at least to a non-Japanese scholar interested in the *kibyōshi*—is that not one archive outside of Japan was consulted, let alone visited. Since not all *kibyōshi* are to be found in Japan, after all, a comprehensive survey in non-Japanese collections should probably be undertaken, eventually. Here, however, I take a more modest and decidedly local first step by providing a kind of “guided tour” of *kibyōshi* in the Rare Book room at the Harvard-Yenching Library, most of which have never before been transcribed into modern Japanese, let alone translated into or even discussed in English. Two other affiliated collections—one at Harvard’s Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Art and the largest one at Museum of Fine Arts, Boston—shall be left for future surveys.

The *Kibyōshi*

The Harvard-Yenching Library can boast a small but captivating collection of *kibyōshi*. Produced by the most popular literary and artistic lights of the day—and merely one of many genres of “playful literature” known as *gesaku* 戯作—the typical *kibyōshi* was mass produced in one to three volumes, with black-and-white interior pictures dressed up by occasionally colorful frontispieces affixed to soft yellowish covers. Although long ignored as a kind of pulp fiction, interest in the *kibyōshi* has been growing over the past few decades in the West as well as in Japan, no doubt as part of both the “Edo boom” and the realization that the *kibyōshi* might be a distant progenitor of the multibillion-dollar a year industry that is the modern *manga*.²

² The *kibyōshi* is also compelling unto itself, of course, as an expression of the rich visual-verbal, comic, and popular imaginations of the Edo-period Japanese. For more on this in English, see Adam L. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan*, in Harvard East Asia Monographs, no. 279 (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006).

Sixteen *kibyōshi* are listed in the catalogue *Early Japanese Books at Harvard-Yenching Library*.³ Of these, at least one is of questionable attribution: the copy of Santō Kyōden's 山東京傳 (1761-1816) *Diary Penned by a Two-Headed Brush with Virtue and Vice* (*Ryōtō hitsu zen'aku nikki* 「両頭筆善悪日記」, 1799) appears not to be an original Edo-period *kibyōshi*.⁴ Although its panels of printed text and pictures are the right size, the physical pages are much larger than the usual 5 x 7 inch mid-sized (*chūbon* 中本) format invariably observed by the genre, and its paper and ink are uncannily pristine. This particular work may well be a facsimile reproduction, then, or at least a reprinting from a later age—perhaps the Meiji period (1868-1912)—but it is most likely not a “genuine” *kibyōshi*.

Conversely, it might be argued that there are actually more *kibyōshi* in the collection than the catalogue has hitherto acknowledged, for several works categorized as “bluebooks” should more aptly be considered *kibyōshi*. This is because the bluebook (*aohon* or *aobon* 青本) was a loosely defined comicbook genre that actually includes both *kibyōshi* as well as earlier works for children—or at least for semiliterate readers.

To expand upon this slightly, during the late eighteenth century the line between genres was typically amorphous. Works could be categorized—and often were categorized—in more than one way. It is oftentimes exceedingly difficult to determine a genre, then, only by the color of its cover. Not all books with blue covers are *generically* bluebooks; nor are all books with yellow covers *generically* yellowbooks, since the covers of some generic bluebooks faded to yellow. (In this sense, the term *kibyōshi* actually refers more to comicbooks with “yellowed”

covers than with “yellow” covers.) This is why most specialists today, like Tanahashi, differentiate between the genres of bluebook and yellowbook less by cover color—especially since many covers have gone missing (as is the case with a few of the works in the Harvard-Yenching collection)—but more by the presumed readership based on the general level of the content of the story and the complexity of its visual-verbal idiom. Simply put, books with either blue or yellowed covers for children tend to be bluebooks, and books with either blue or yellowed covers for adults tend to be *kibyōshi*.

One example of a *kibyōshi* that the catalogue miscategorizes as a bluebook is Kyōden's *Master Flashgold's Abiding Dream* (*Kingin sensei zōka no yume* 「金々先生造化夢」, 1794)(Fig 1). The adult content of the story alone no doubt qualifies this piece as a *kibyōshi*. In fact, this is the consensus among leading specialists: Tanahashi lists *Master Flashgold's Abiding Dream* in *Kibyōshi Overview*; and Mizuno Minoru includes it in one of the five volumes devoted to the *kibyōshi* within *Santō Kyōden's Collected Works* (*Santō Kyōden zenshū*). Thus, *Master Flashgold's Abiding Dream* should probably be recategorized as a *kibyōshi*.⁵

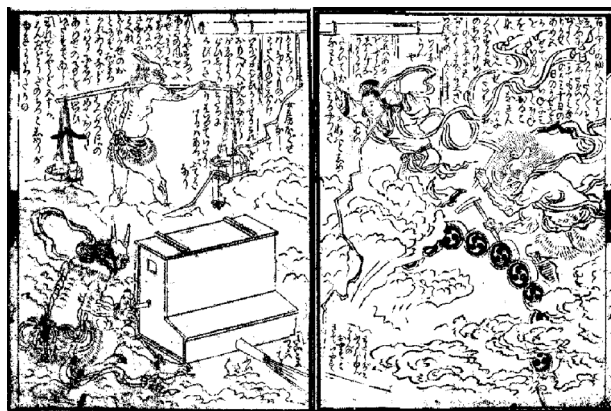


Figure 1 Scene from *Master Flashgold's Abiding Dream* (*Kingin sensei zōka no yume*, 1794).⁶

³ Oka Masahiko and Aoki Toshiyuki, ed., *Hābādo enkei toshokan washo mokuroku* = *Early Japanese Books at Harvard-Yenching Library* 「ハーバード燕京図書館和書目録」 (Yumani shobō, 1994), pp. 37-38.

⁴ The titles of *kibyōshi* are challenging to render in English because they often contain complex forms of wordplay that typically become clear only with a close reading of the work, something that is particularly difficult when the work has never before been annotated or transcribed into modern Japanese. Even Japanese scholars find *kibyōshi* titles daunting, which is probably why Tanahashi himself as a rule refrains from explaining titles in *Kibyōshi Overview*.

⁵ See Tanahashi, *Kibyōshi sōran* 2 (Seishōdō shoten, 1989), pp. 387-389 and Mizuno et al., eds., *Santō Kyōden zenshū* 3 (Perikansha, 2001), pp. 547-568.

⁶ *Kibyōshi* written by Santō Kyōden and illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Similarly, of the 34 bluebooks and blackbooks (*kurohon* or *kurobon* 黒本) in the catalogue—the two related genres are lumped together into the same category—a dozen or so are treated as *kibyōshi* by Tanahashi in *Kibyōshi Overview*. These works are:

(1) *The Life of Kusunoki Masashige* (*Kusunoki ichidaiki* 「楠一代記」, 1794). Written by Rakugetsudō Sōshi 落月堂操后. Harvard-Yenching Library catalogue #324

(2) *Ōtsu's Specialty Products* (*Ōtsu no meibutsu* 「大津名物」, 1781). Written by Iba Kashō 伊庭可笑 and illustrated by Kitao Masanobu 北尾政演. HYL #332

(3) *Trilateral Intrigue of the Soga Brothers* (*Sanbukutsui murasaki Soga* 「参幅对紫曾我」, 1778). Illustrated and presumably written by Koikawa Harumachi 恋川春町. HYL #333

(4) *The Invisible City Revisited* (*Shin kakurezato* 「蛤金久連里」, 1788). Illustrated by Torii Kiyoshige 鳥居清重. HYL #335

(5) *The Young Prince's Bow-Pulling Feat* (*Yōkun yunzei no isaoshi* 「幼君弓勢績」, date unknown). Anonymous. HYL #338

(6) *The Kurama Goblin Vendetta* (*Katakiuchi Kurama tengu* 「敵討鞍馬天狗」, 1779). Written by Bunkeidō 文溪堂 and illustrated by Torii Kiyotsune 鳥居清経. HYL #339

(7) *Master Flashgold's Abiding Dream* (*Kingin sensei zōka no yume* 「金々先生造化夢」, 1794). Written by Santō Kyōden 山東京傳 and published by Tsutaya Jūzaburō 蔦屋重三郎. HYL #340

(8) *Début of the Black-Capped Golden Carp* (*Hatsuyaku kogane no eboshi uo* 「初役金烏帽子魚」, 1794). Written by Santō Kyōden 山東京傳 and illustrated by Jippensha Ikku 十返舎一九. HYL #341

(9) *The Flowery Tale of Masters Gold and Silver* (*Natori no kiku kōhaku chōja* 「名取菊黄白長者」, 1779). Written and illustrated by Santō Kyōden 山東京傳. HYL #342

(10) *The Salutory Story of a Soul Restored* (*Enju hangontan* 「延寿反魂談」, 1789). Written and illustrated by Santō Kyōden 山東京傳. HYL #343

(11) *Nonomiya's Proverbially Profitable Gam-bol* (*Kotowaza Nonomiya mōde* 「諺野々宮儲」, 1784). Illustrated and presumably written by Kitao Masayoshi 北尾政美. HYL #344

(12) *A Mother and Daughter Laid to Rest, Part One: A Tale of Winter Snow* (*Oyakozuka zenpen Tōsetsu monogatari* 「親子塚 冬雪物語」, 1804). Written by Nansenshō Somahito 南仙笑楚満人 and illustrated by Utagawa Toyokuni 歌川豊国.⁷ HYL #345

(13) *A Mother and Daughter Laid to Rest, Part Two: A Tale of Spring Snow* (*Oyakozuka kōhen Shunsetsu monogatari* 「親子塚 春雪物語」, 1804). Written by Nansenshō Somahito 南仙笑楚満人 and illustrated by Utagawa Toyokuni 歌川豊国. HYL #346

Although Tanahashi considers all 13 of these to be *kibyōshi*, one might take issue with him on as many as 3 works: (1) *The Life of Kusunoki Masashige* (*Kusunoki ichidaiki*), on the grounds that it exceeds by 20 pages the usual 30-page length of the longest *kibyōshi*; (4) *The Invisible City Revisited* (*Shin kakurezato*), since its story hardly rises above a relatively straightforward updating, in an overly simplistic visual-verbal idiom, of the children's story about the split-tongue sparrow; and (8) *Début of the Black-Capped Golden Carp* (*Hatsuyaku kogane no eboshi uo*), since it is really only lightly illustrated, with long extended passages of text without any pictures at all, and therefore as something other than a comicbook per se, cannot be a *kibyōshi* by definition.

Thus, setting aside for now the caveat that not everything in Tanahashi's *Kibyōshi Overview* is indisputably a *kibyōshi*, in a liberal reinterpretation, subtracting 1 title for the facsimile version of *Diary Penned by a Two-Headed Brush with Virtue and Vice*, but moving 10 titles from the category of bluebook to that of *kibyōshi*, the Harvard-Yenching

⁷ Tanahashi lists the illustrator for this and the next piece as Toyohiro 豊広. Tanahashi, *Kibyōshi sōran* 3 (Seishōdō shoten, 1991), p. 237.

Library might be said to have a revised total of about 25 *kibyōshi* in its collection. This number is larger than the 16 works previously thus classified.

Still, this is not a great number, to be sure. It is merely a small percentage of the approximately 3,387 titles—accounting for 13,828 books and manuscripts—in the Harvard-Yenching's rare book collection. True, this number represents a significant portion of the mid-Edo genres of playful literature in the collection, to wit: 13 fashionbooks (*sharebon* 洒落本), including Santō Kyōden's masterwork (*The Stylishly Slangy*) *Latticed Bordello* ((*Tsūgen*) *Sōmagaki* 「通言総雛」, 1787); 5 “sentiment books” (*ninjōbon* 人情本), including some by leading *ninjōbon* author Tamenaga Shunsui 為永春水 (1790-1843); 7 “multivolume comicbooks” (*gōkan* 合巻), such as *Revenge of the Two Butterflies* (*Katakiuchi futatsu chōchō* 「敵討双蝶々」, 1807); 2 jokebooks (*hanashibon* 噺本); and 34 titles catalogued as blackbooks and / or bluebooks, but 24 if going by the adjusted numbers. This means that, by my reckoning, the 25 *kibyōshi* in the collection account for one third of the 76 works of Edo *gesaku*. Even so, this is only a fraction of the collection's Edo-period works at large, including novellas of the floating world (*ukiyo-zōshi* 浮世草子), reading books (*yomihon* 読本), broad sheets (*jitsuroku* 実録), funnybooks (*kokkeibon* 滑稽本), and so forth.

And it is certainly not a great number by the standards of *kibyōshi* collections in Japan. The Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library (*Tōkyō chūō toshokan* 東京中央図書館) in Hibiya houses approximately 1,300 *kibyōshi* in its Kaga Collection (*Kaga bunko* 加賀文庫) alone—not counting the *kibyōshi* in its Special Acquisitions Collection (*Tokubetsu kaiage bunko* 特別買上文庫) and Tokyo Collection (*Tōkyō shiryō* 東京資料). The National Diet Library and the Toyo Bunko (*Tōyō bunko* 東洋文庫) have approximately 1,000 *kibyōshi* each. The *kibyōshi* in several university libraries, like the Ebara Taizo Collection (*Ebara Taizō korekushon* 荻原退蔵コレクション) at the University of Kyoto, or the collection at Waseda University, can be counted in the hundreds. Even the Matsuura Historical Museum (*Matsuura shiryō hakubutsukan* 松浦史料博物館) in Hirado—one of the most far-flung places from Edo on the three major islands of Japan at the time—has approximately 340 *kibyōshi*, which is over tenfold larger than the Harvard-Yenching's batch. Granted,

the daimyo Matsuura Seizan 松浦静山 (1760-1841) must have collected these during his mandatory attendance in the shogun's capital. Yet his collection is testament to how popular the *kibyōshi* was and how much larger even Japanese collections distant from Edo remain today.

Nor is the Harvard-Yenching *kibyōshi* collection the largest by the reduced standards outside Japan, for that matter. The British Library in London has approximately 100 titles, though some of these may well be duplicates or reprintings; the Art Institute of Chicago seems to have as many as 72 *kibyōshi*;⁸ the University of California at Berkeley lists about 40 in its catalogue;⁹ the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, only 13;¹⁰ Mount Holyoke College houses about 10 works in its Special Collection; and the C. V. Starr Library at Columbia University, which can boast an otherwise first-class collection, regrettably has only a single catalogued *kibyōshi*.¹¹ Of course, these numbers might be low, if the Harvard-Yenching collection is any indication, since it is possible that some *kibyōshi* in these collections may also have been misclassified as bluebooks.

Nevertheless, when considering the *kibyōshi* in the Harvard-Yenching Library along with the score of *kibyōshi* in the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, and the 150-200 *kibyōshi* in the archives of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston—many of which have yet to be catalogued—then the grand total of *kibyōshi* in the extended Harvard-affiliated network is undoubtedly one of the greatest, if not the greatest, in the Western world.¹² It may even add up to be among the top 25 collections anywhere, including Japan.

⁸ My thanks to Ms. Janice Katz of the Art Institute of Chicago for this number.

⁹ Oka Masahiko et al., eds., *Mitsui bunko kyūzō Edo hanpon shomoku: Kariforunia Daigaku Bākūrē-kō shozō = Edo Printed Books at Berkeley* (Yumani shobō, 1990), pp. 140-143.

¹⁰ My thanks to Professor Timon Screech of the School of Oriental and African Art for this number.

¹¹ My thanks to the Japanese Studies Librarian at the Starr Library, Ms. Sachie Noguchi, for this number. Ms. Noguchi also informs me that although Professor Okuda Isao of Seishin University is in the process of cataloguing hitherto uncatalogued works in the Starr's rare book collection, no *kibyōshi* have yet been unearthed.

¹² My thanks to Ms. Rachel Saunders of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston for this information.

Brahmin Benefactors

Just why Boston houses such a formidable collection should not be too hard to divine. Boston was, during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, at the direct epicenter of a seismological flow of Japanese art—lowbrow as well as highbrow—toward the Western world at a time when the Japanese themselves were largely dismissive of what was then considered to be lowbrow forms like the woodblock print (*ukiyo-e*) and its sisters, particularly printed chapbooks (*kusazōshi* 草双紙) like the redbook (*akabon* or *akahon* 赤本), blackbook, bluebook, yellowbook, and multivolume comicbook.¹³

Be that as it may, one may well wonder how and why the Harvard-Yenching Library came to possess any *kibyōshi* at all when the Museum of Fine Arts was seemingly absorbing almost anything Japanese? Although there is no definitive answer, it is possible that some of the Bostonians who collected Japanese art decided, for one reason or another, to direct a fraction of their bounty toward Harvard's Sackler Museum and / or Yenching Library. The *kibyōshi* was such a bestselling genre in its day that anyone collecting popular literature and art in Japan even a century or so after the genre's heyday could not but have ended up with some titles in the pot, however cognizant he may or may not have been of the nature and value of the *kibyōshi* in the first place. Perhaps some *kibyōshi* were simply acquired as an example of Japanese children's picture books, for although possessed of adult content, to the untrained eye, most works in the genre appear decidedly juvenile.

One might also speculate that the majority of the open-minded and deep-pocketed Bostonians who built the Japanese collection in the MFA must have had close ties with Harvard, since it is hard to imagine prominent figures in Boston who did not. As it turns out, the facts would seem to support this conjecture. For instance, one of the foremost contributors of the Japanese art to the MFA, Ernest Francisco Fenollosa (1853-1908), although famously associated with Tokyo Imperial University (now the University of Tokyo) as an instructor of Philosophy, was graduated from Harvard College in 1874. That same year, Dr. William Sturgis Bigelow (1850-1926), another of the principal contributors, had obtained his M.D. from Harvard before traipsing off to Europe to study bacteriology under Louis Pasteur and then onto Japan, where he became friends with

the likes of Fenollosa and Okakura Tenshin 岡倉天心 (a.k.a. Okakura Kakuzo 1863-1913). Dr. Charles Goddard Weld (1857-1911), who generously underwrote much of Fenollosa's collecting, came from a family with Harvard connections spanning four centuries, including one recent governor. And the painter Denman Waldo Ross (1853-1935), who bestowed many artworks upon the MFA, taught at Harvard. To make a long story short, of the major collectors and donors of Japanese art to the MFA, all but Tenshin and the famous Orientalist Edward S. Morse (1838-1925) were Harvard men. It is therefore not inconceivable that one or more of these local scions, in addition to building arguably the largest collection of *kibyōshi* (not to mention Japanese art) in the Western world, also donated a few to the college.

In the case of the bluebooks and blackbooks that might be reclassified as *kibyōshi*, most of these were purchased in 1954 through a vendor by the name of J. K. Morse (whose connection to Edward Morse, if any, is unclear). At least that is the name that has been stamped onto most of the works in question. A handful of others bear the red seal of one Horikoshi Yoshihiro 堀越文庫. Although no accurate records have been kept, it appears that Horikoshi donated a large sum of books—over 10,000 titles (including many first editions of Japanese, Manchurian, and Western literary works)—to Harvard, apparently through a certain Dr. Cleaves. After being graduated from Tokyo Imperial University with a degree in Japanese literature, Horikoshi became a principal of a Japanese middle school in Tientsin 天津 in then-occupied Manchuria. When the war ended, he was repatriated (only to die the following year, as it turns out), though prior to that he was unable to ship his private library back to Japan. Thus, he leapt at the offer of two Harvard graduates—one being noted historian Donald Shively (class of 1944)—to arrange for his collection to be donated to their alma mater, which it was in 1946.¹⁴

Skewed, Eaten, and Doodled

However one explains the existence or reckons the number of *kibyōshi* at the Harvard-Yenching

¹³ For a detailed discussion of these genres, see Kern, *Manga from the Floating World*.

¹⁴ For more on Horikoshi Yoshihiro, see Kuniko Yamada McVey, "Hābādo Yenchin toshokan nihongo korekushon no raireki to kosei," in Suzuki Jun, ed., *Hābādo daigaku Enkyō toshokan no Nihon koten-seki* (Yagi shoten, forthcoming 2008).

Library, the collection strikes one, upon initial glance, as having two primary shortcomings. First, the works catalogued as *kibyōshi* are skewed toward the later periods of the genre's history; only 2 of the 16 come from the so-called "Golden Age" of the genre that was the mid 1780s.¹⁵ These 2 are: *Beyond the Pale-ings of the Billion Worlds* (*Daisen sekai* 「大千世界」, 1784), by Tōrai Sanna 唐来参和 (discussed more fully below); and *Otohome, Princess of the Sea* (*Kore otohome* 「是男度比女」, ca. 1784), by one Kenkō 嫌好.¹⁶

Kenkō's piece, it is worth mentioning, performs an "intertwining" (*naimaze* 綱い交ぜ)—and serves as a "latter day" (*gonichibanashi* 後日話) updating—of the legends of Urashima Tarō 浦島太郎 and Momotarō 桃太郎. This it does by marrying the descendants of these two characters, the wealthy Tarōhachi 太郎八 and the maiden Otome おとめ [sic], to each other. The story goes on to describe how Tarōhachi squanders his money in the pleasure quarters and is about to elope with a courtesan when he suddenly wakes up from what has all along been a dream. Although this ending would have been familiar to readers from the very first *kibyōshi*—Koikawa Harumachi's *Master Flashgold's Splendiferous Dream* (*Kinkin sensei eiga no yume* 「金々先生栄華夢」, 1775) had a similar *dénouement*—by now the gimmick must have seemed particularly passé as well as contrived. No wonder critics have generally dismissed this piece as lacking the comic "zing" of comparable stories.

Of the 14 remaining catalogued pieces, 8 date

¹⁵ For more on the periodization of the *kibyōshi*, see Uda Toshihiko, "Kibyōshi no sekai: Hyōgen ga daiichigi no kimyō na bungaku kūkan," in *Yurika*, vol. 10, no. 4 (April 1978), pp. 101-107. A slightly modified version of this periodization is followed in Koike Masatane, Uda Toshihiko, Nakayama Yūshō, and Tanahashi Masahiro, eds., *Edo no gesaku [parodī] ehon*, in *Gendai kyōyō bunko 1037-1040* (Shakai shisōsha, 1980-1983).

¹⁶ A few sources claim that *Kore otohome* was published in 1783. However, it is mentioned in *Edo miyage* as having been published in 1784. Furthermore, its cover design is identical to other works issued in 1784 by the work's publisher Murataya. For a transcribed version of this text, see Mikan Edo Bungaku Kankōkai, *Mikan kibyōshisen 1* (Mikan Edo bungaku kankōkai, 1956), pp. 29-39.

from the 1790s and 6 date from the early years of the nineteenth century. There are no pieces from the 1770s, however, meaning that the collection fails to provide so much as a fleeting glimpse of the *kibyōshi* in its vibrant early years. This lack of balance can be considered one of the major weaknesses of the collection. Even counting the 10 bluebooks in the catalogue as *kibyōshi*, the lopsidedness evens out only slightly; for of these, 3 were published in the 1770s, 2 were published in each subsequent decade, and 1 is of unknown date of issuance. In short, the Harvard-Yenching collection is skewed toward the post-Kansei Reforms *kibyōshi* that have not been hailed as the finest exemplars of the genre.

The second drawback of the collection is that not one of its catalogued entries bears its original woodblock-printed pasted-on frontispieces (*hari edaisen* 貼り絵題簽). Although one would not expect to find frontispieces gracing the few works that have been remounted, either as a kind of personal collectanea (*gōseibon* 合成本) or as a preservation measure in a later age, since remounting often entails discarding the original covers, it is nonetheless disheartening that *all* of the original works are shorn of their cover art. Moreover, this absence is disturbing, since it means that someone must have ripped off the colored and flashy frontispieces from the covers, perhaps to frame or to sell on the open art market, thereby desecrating these rare works of popular art.

One of the bluebooks that may be a *kibyōshi*, however, bears the frontispiece to its first volume. This is Iba Kashō's *Ōtsu's Specialty Products* (*Ōtsu no meibutsu* 「大津名物」, 1781), which was illustrated by Kitao Masanobu (Fig 2). Interestingly, the very next year, Masanobu—a.k.a. Santō Kyōden—would go on to publish his debut *kibyōshi*, *Those Familiar Bestsellers* (*Gozonji no shōbaimono* 「御存知商売物」, 1782). *Those Familiar Bestsellers* contains a scene in which the personified character Ōtsu Print 大津絵 (*Ōtsue*) from *Ōtsu's Specialty Products*—visible in the "dream bubble" of the frontispiece here, above the lantern—plays a prominent role. In fact, both stories open with scenes in which the figures depicted within pillar prints (*hashirae* 柱絵) in the background leap out of their artistic confines, literally, to "come to life" self-reflexively as personified characters within the stories themselves. Thus, in writing *Those Familiar Bestsellers*, Kyōden undoubtedly borrowed a few artistic ideas from *Ōtsu's Specialty Products*, which he himself had also illustrated, after all.



Figure 2 Frontispiece to *Ōtsu's Specialty Products* (*Ōtsu no meibutsu*, 1781).¹⁷

Most of the *kibyōshi* in the Harvard-Yenching collection are in relatively good shape otherwise, with foxing, dampstaining, and similar blights of wear and tear not appreciably affecting more than a few volumes. One of the badly damaged works is *Revenge of Edo's Golden Nuggets Girl* (*Edo sunago musume katakiuchi* 「江戸砂子娘敵討」, 1804, written by Kyōden and illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa 北尾重政). This is actually a notable piece, providing humorously confabulated etymologies (*kojitsuke* 故事付) for many of the famous people and places of the day (though the story is set several centuries earlier). Another one, titled *Quintuple Cut-Down at the Watermelon Stand* (*Goningiri suika no tachiuri* 「五人切西瓜斬売」, 1804, written by Kyōden and illustrated by Eishōsai Chōki 栄松斎長喜), is a wonderfully inventive “house succession piece” (*ōie sōdōmono* お家騒動物) involving per-

¹⁷ *Kibyōshi* written by Iba Kashō and illustrated by Kitao Masanobu. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

sonified characters based on foods popular in Edo. Unfortunately, and rather ironically, the Harvard-Yenching copy is more than a little worm-eaten.¹⁸

Regrettably, several of the volumes also have been effaced by hand coloring and / or doodling in black ink on some of the blank pages, perhaps by younger readers (particularly in the case of the blue-book, *The Flowery Tale of Masters Gold and Silver*, *Natori no kiku kōhaku chōja* 「名取菊黄白長者」). In *Mongaku's Subscription List* (*Mongaku kanjinchō* 「文覚勧進帳」, 1793, written by Nansenshō Somahito 南仙笑楚満人 and illustrated by Utagawa Toyokuni 歌川豊国), one reader has made a sketch, inside the front cover, of one of the characters on the very first page of the story (**Fig 3**). This sketch may have been made circa 1815, since a handwritten note on the back cover, in what appears to be the same ink as the sketch, bears the corresponding year (Bunka 12 文化十二年). This sketch could only have defiled the pristine condition of this particular *kibyōshi*. However, it both adds to our knowledge of the life of works in the genre as material objects, and provides an example of how one reader seems to have been inspired to try her or his own hand at comicbook illustrating—perhaps not unlike some *manga* fans today.



Figure 3 A reader's sketch (right) of a character (left). From *Mongaku's Subscription List* (*Mongaku kanjinchō*, 1793).¹⁹

¹⁸ For a transcribed version, see Hanasaki Kazuo, *Edo arakaruto* (Miki shobō, 1986), pp. 109-134.

¹⁹ *Kibyōshi* written by Nansenshō Somahito and illustrated by Utagawa Toyokuni. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Overall, then, the physical condition of the collection's *kibyōshi* is somewhat disappointing. A few pieces at the MFA are similarly vexed, it might be mentioned for comparison's sake, yet overall, my impression, after having thumbed through nearly a hundred titles, is that long years of isolation have admirably preserved its *kibyōshi*. Thus, the works in the Harvard-Yenching Library have either not fared as well over the years, or else were never in peak shape when originally acquired.

Strengths of the Collection

Happily, the Harvard-Yenching collection has many virtues. For one thing, it provides some representative aspects of the genre. Santō Kyōden's *Tsukiji Zenkō's Mathematical Manual for Merchants* (*Tsukiji no Zenkōki* 「通氣智之錢光記」, 1802), for instance, includes at the end of its first fascicle a notice of newly issued titles by several different authors (Fig 4).²⁰ For another thing, ten professional authors are represented in the collection of works catalogued as *kibyōshi*. Nine of these authors penned one work each. Some are major writers of the period (though not necessarily most famously in the *kibyōshi*), such as Shikitei Sanba 式亭三馬 (1776-1822), Jippensha Ikku 十返舎一九 (1765-1831), and Kyokutei Bakin 曲亭馬琴 (a.k.a. Takizawa Bakin 滝沢馬琴, 1767-1848). Other authors, though perhaps obscure to the average student of Japanese literary history, were popular in their own day, such as Kanwatei Onitake 感和亭鬼武, Kenkō 嫌好, Nansenshō Somahito 南仙笑楚満人, Sakuragawa Jihinari 桜川慈悲成, Shitchin Manpō 七珍萬宝, and Tōrai Sanna 唐来参和.

Missing from the roster, however, are many of the greatest authors of the genre: Hōseidō Kisanji 朋誠堂喜三二, Ōta Nanpo 大田南畝, Ichiba Tsūshō 市場通笑, Shiba Zenkō 芝全交, Shinra Banshō 森羅万象, and the progenitor of the *kibyōshi* himself, Koikawa Harumachi 恋川春町. In this respect, as mentioned above, the Harvard-Yenching collection may be wanting.

²⁰ The title of this work pivots the name Tsukiji Zenkō, which refers not to Morishima Chūryō (as the scholar Koike Tōgorō suggests in *Santō Kyōden no kenkyū*) but to the kabuki actor Bandō Zenji, with *Jinkōki*, a mathematical text first published in 1627 but reissued repeatedly throughout the Edo period. In Tanahashi, *Kibyōshi sōran* 3, pp. 66-67.

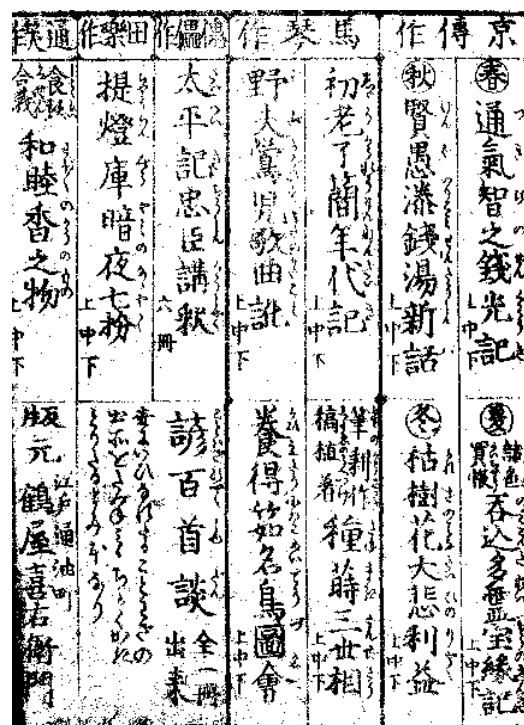


Figure 4 Publishing announcement from *Tsukiji Zenkō's Mathematical Manual for Merchants* (*Tsukiji no Zenkōki*, 1802).²¹

Then again, arguably the most popular author in the genre, Santō Kyōden 山東京傳 (1761-1816), is more than adequately represented. Seven titles of the catalogued *kibyōshi* bear his name. One of these, however, *The Guide to Morality for Dummies* (*Jitsugokyō osana kōshaku* 「実語教幼稚講釈」, 1792, illustrated by Hokusai under the pseudonym Shunrō 春朗), may not actually have been written by Kyōden at all. In fact, there is ample reason to believe that this piece was ghostwritten by Bakin, one of Kyōden's students who would go on to achieve far greater literary distinction in the *yomihon* genre with his masterpiece *The Satomi Clan and the Eight Dogs* (*Nansō Satomi hakkenden* 「南総里見八犬伝」, 1814-1842).

One reason is that the story is highly atypical for Kyōden. Taking as its base text *The Guide to Morality* (*Jitsugokyō* 「実語教」), a well-known children's primer dating to the Kamakura period, and

²¹ *Kibyōshi* written by Santō Kyōden and illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

interjecting a series of lectures on “Mind Study” (*shingaku* 心学) presented by a monk in the form of pictorial storytelling (*etoki* 絵解き), this *kibyōshi* wears its didacticism on its sleeve too blatantly, according to Mutō Motoaki (Fig 5).²² Although it would be foolhardy to assign any moralistic work to Bakin merely because his *yomihon* would later deal famously with the Confucian injunction “commend virtue, condemn vice” (*kanzen chōaku* 勧善懲悪), Bakin is more likely an author than Kyōden, whose depression over the premature death of his beloved wife around that time resulted in a slump in his publishing activities.



Figure 5 Scene from *The Guide to Morality for Dummies* (*Jitsugokyō osana kōshaku*, 1792).²³

²² In Tanahashi, *Kibyōshi sōran* 2, p. 235. For more on Mind Study, see Janine Sawada, *Confucian Values and Popular Zen: Sekimon Shingaku in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993).

²³ *Kibyōshi* supposedly written by Santō Kyōden—but really ghostwritten by Bakin—and illustrated by Shunrō (Hokusai). ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Then again, Bakin’s *kibyōshi* themselves were undeniably marked by a strong didactic bent. This is certainly true of *The Unfathomable Ocean of Fortune and Longevity* (*Fukujukai muryō no shinadama* 「福寿海无量品玉」, 1794, illustrated by Hokusai under the pseudonym Shunrō), which is also in the collection.²⁴ The story centers around Fudarakuya Daijirō 普陀落屋大次郎, who is disowned for having squandered the family fortune on women in the pleasure quarters. Daijirō and his wife, and then those close to them, begin to question their lifestyle, and eventually see the light of Buddhist teachings.

Another reason is that Bakin himself confessed—in both his biography of Kyōden (*Iwademo no ki* 「伊波伝毛乃記」, 1819) and his study of mid-Edo period authors (*Kinsei mono no hon Edo sakusha burui* 「近世物之本江戸作者部類」, 1834)—that he ghostwrote two of Kyōden’s *kibyōshi*: *The Stinky Potted Plant at the Dragon King’s Palace* (*Tatsunomiya konamagusa hachinoki* 「龍宮羶鉢木」, 1793) as well as *The Guide to Morality for Dummies*.²⁵ Other writers at the time likewise recognized Bakin as the true author of these pieces.²⁶

Granted, it was standard practice for members of an artistic atelier to execute a work and have the master sign it. However, this is one of the earliest known cases of *kibyōshi* ghostwriting. Since the *kibyōshi* had already become a phenomenally popular form of mass literature—with the names of authors commanding a reading public in a way analogous to brand names on commercial goods²⁷—it is possible that either Kyōden or his publisher had Bakin use the Kyōden moniker simply to sell copies.

²⁴ This work was later reprinted—suggesting its popularity—under the title *Yōjin kanshin* 「用心肝心」.

²⁵ In Mizuno Minoru, *Santō Kyōden nenpukō* (Perikansha, 1991), p. 45.

²⁶ In Tanahashi Masahiro, *Kibyōshi sōran* 2, p. 236.

²⁷ For more on this subject, see Adam L. Kern, “The Writer at His Desk: Authorial Self-Fashioning in the Adult Comicbooks (*Kibyōshi*) of Early Modern Japan,” in Wilt Idema, ed., *Books in Numbers: Conference Papers in Celebration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Harvard-Yenching Library*, in *Harvard-Yenching Library Studies* 8 (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard-Yenching Library, 2007), pp. 267–307.

In that sense, this work is important to the history of professional authorship in Japan. In fact, it may even be more valuable as an example of ghostwriting than if this were merely another work by Kyōden.

It is well known in Japanese studies that many, if not most, of the greatest professional woodblock artists illustrated various forms of popular literature like the *kibyōshi*. The Harvard-Yenching collection includes a respectably representative sampling: 3 or so works by Hokusai (1760-1849) (1 under the pseudonym Shunrō 春朗, 1 under Kakō 可候, and possibly 1 under Hokushū 北周); 3 works by Utagawa Toyokuni 歌川豊国 (1769-1825); and 4 works by Kitao Shigemasa 北尾重政 (1739-1820), the head of the ukiyoe school bearing his name and one of the most prolific *kibyōshi* illustrators. (Actually, one work the catalogue identifies as having been illustrated by Shigemasa—*Tsukiji Zenkō's Mathematical Manual for Merchants*—bears Toyokuni's name on the title slip. If true, there would be 4 works by Toyokuni and only 3 works by Shigemasa in the collection.) Eishōsai Chōki 栄松斎長喜 (fl. ca. 1780 to the early 1800s), Katsukawa Shun'ei 勝川春英 (1762-1819), and Kenkō 嫌好 (dates unknown) are represented by 1 work each.

In the case of the two works that bear no name of an artist, the author himself—Kyōden and Ikku—can be presumed to have provided the pictures. Kyōden's piece (or at least the facsimile of it), *Diary Penned by a Two-Headed Brush with Virtue and Vice*, is discussed below in greater detail. Ikku's piece, *A Book of Revenge in Reverse* (*Tatakiuchi henjutsu no maki* 「擲討変術巻」, 1796), it is worth mentioning, comically inverts the standard vendetta story by having the avengers, the brothers Suikakunosuke 倅角之助 and Mōtarō 鳴太郎, frantically avoid avenging their father's death, while the “avenger,” one Ishinoue Sanpei 石上三平, desperately tries to get assassinated.

One work notable for its curious illustrations, *The Back-Alley Palm Reader* (*Urayasan mitōshi zashiki* 「裡家算通坐敷」, 1803, written by Kyōden, illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa), represents a relatively late *kibyōshi*, since the genre is customarily said to have petered out in 1806.²⁸ Drawing on physiognomy, palmistry, and fortune-telling (*hakke*

八卦), this “satirical parody book” (*kojitsuke ugatsu kokkei mitatemono* 故事付穿つ滑稽見立物) lampoons a variety of people's deportment as contrasted with their characters (Fig 6).



Figure 6 Physiognomy charts from *The Back-Alley Palm Reader* (*Urayasan mitōshi zashiki*, 1803).²⁹

Another captivating work is the little-known *Field Guide to the Monsters of Japan* (*Bakemono Yamato honzō* 「化物和本草」, 1798, written by Santō Kyōden, illustrated by Hokusai under the pseudonym Kakō). This title playfully alludes to *Field Guide to Japan* (*Yamato honzō* 「大和本草」, 1709), Kaibara Ekken's 貝原益軒 renowned compendium of *materia medica*. *Field Guide to the Monsters of Japan* is part of a trilogy of *kibyōshi* that transforms images of plants and trees, various implements (*dōgu* 道具), and assorted phenomena (*jishō* 事象), into some kind of amusing “visual pun” (*mitate* 見立) on shape-changing monsters (*bakemono* 化物).³⁰ Hokusai's illustrations are superb—imaginative, surprising, engrossing—and include renderings of the famed money tree (*kane no naruki* 金のなる木), a two-headed brush (*ryōtō fude* 両頭筆), and a monster that is comprised of a love letter, a cobweb, and spectacles, among other disparate objects that speak to the richness of the contemporaneous popular imagination (Fig 7).

²⁹ *Kibyōshi* written by Kyōden and illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

³⁰ The other two are *Hyakka chō mitate honzō* 『百化帖準擬本草』 and *Fudetsu mushikoe no toridori* 『笔津虫音禽』. In Tanahashi, *Kibyōshi sōran* 2, p. 599.

²⁸ For a transcribed version, see Mikan Edo Bungaku Kunkōkai, *Mikan kibyōshisen 2* (Mikan Edo bungaku kankōkai, 1959), pp. 114-132.



Figure 7 Imaginatively concocted creature from *Field Guide to the Monsters of Japan* (*Bakemono Yamato honzō*, 1798).³¹

Storied Collection

Several of the stories are quite compelling unto themselves. One that might interest English readers, since its two base texts have been translated (unlike almost all other *kibyōshi* mentioned in this article), is *Diary Penned by a Two-Headed Brush with Virtue and Vice* (*Ryōtō hitsu zen'aku nikki* 「両頭筆善悪日記」, 1799, written and presumably illustrated by Santō Kyōden—though, again, this particular specimen is probably a later reprinting).³² The base texts are: Kyōden's celebrated *Fast-Dyeing Mind Study* (*Shingaku hayasomegusa* 「心学早染艸」, 1790), about a man, named Ritarō 理太郎, pulled this way and that by tiny creatures whose faces are represented by circles containing the Chinese characters for “virtue” (*zen* 善) and “vice” (*aku* 悪);³³ and Kyōden's less well-known *Unseamly Silverpiped Swingers* (*Sogitsugi gingiseru* 「扮接銀煙管」, 1788), about the life, loves, and vicissitudes of a pair of one-bodied two-headed twins.³⁴

In *Diary Penned by a Two-Headed Brush with Virtue and Vice*, the wife of Yamakawa Momoemon

山川屋桃右衛門 (in a scene more textually than visually reminiscent of the Peach Boy legend) finds a pair of peaches floating down a river. Well after she and her husband have eaten one peach each, she gives birth to two-headed offspring (**Fig 8**).



Figure 8 Two-headed twins suckling at their mother's breasts. From a reprinting of the *kibyōshi* titled *Diary Penned by a Two-Headed Brush with Virtue and Vice* (*Ryōtō hitsu zen'aku nikki*, 1799).³⁵

As the twins grow, it becomes clear that one head is meek, honest, and hard working, whereas the other is aggressive, deceitful, and lazy (**Fig 9**).



Figure 9 Virtue is industrious, working an abacus as he keeps the books, while Vice is indolent, making rude remarks as he enjoys a smoke. From a reprinting of *Diary Penned by a Two-Headed Brush with Virtue and Vice* (*Ryōtō hitsu zen'aku nikki*, 1799).³⁶

³¹ *Kibyōshi* written by Kyōden and illustrated by Kakō (Hokusai). ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

³² A transcribed version can be found in Mizuno, *Santō Kyōden zenshū* 4 (Perikansha, 2004), pp. 311-331.

³³ Translated by Chris Drake in Haruo Shirane, ed., *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology* (New York: Columbia University, 2002), pp. 711-729.

³⁴ Translated in Kern, *Manga from the Floating World*, pp. 427-506.

³⁵ Written and presumably illustrated by Kyōden. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

³⁶ ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

The conflict between the two comes to a head, so to speak, afflicting even their dreams (Fig 10). Eventually an exorcist uses a mallet to pound Vice into a lump, leaving Virtue in tact, an artificially contrived happy ending that could only have been received by contemporary readers, in an age of increasingly enforced sumptuary regulations, as unrealistic to the point of sharp irony. In fact, it is said that *Two-Headed Brush* influenced subsequent works in this respect, most notably Shikitei Sanba's *kibyōshi* titled *A Plug for the Miraculously Healing Bodywarmer* (*Wataonjaku kikō no hikifuda* 「綿温石奇効報条」).³⁷



Figure 10 Two-headed twins dreaming a common dream. From a reprinting of *Diary Penned by a Two-Headed Brush with Virtue and Vice* (*Ryōtō hitsu zen'aku nikki*, 1799).³⁸

One of the only “Golden Age” pieces in the collection is Tōrai Sanna's *Beyond the Pale-ings of the Billion Worlds* (*Daisen sekai kakine no soto* 「大千世界牆外」, 1784, illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa).³⁹ Published only a year after Sanna's début in any genre of playful fiction—the fashionbook titled *The Three Creeds on Passion* (*Sankyōshiki* 「三教色」, 1783)—this is the first *kibyōshi* bearing Sanna's name, though it has been suggested that Sanna had previously served as a ghostwriter to author Shimizu Enjū 志水燕十. Be that as it may,

³⁷ In Tanahashi, *Kibyōshi sōran* 2, p. 676.

³⁸ ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

³⁹ Sanna's title is rendered this way into English in Regine Johnson, “Tōrai Sanna and the Creation of Difference,” in *Japan Review*, vol. 7 (1996), pp. 83-97.

Sanna's piece has a brilliant conception: it treats the creation of the cosmos in the classic *Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon shōki* 「日本書紀」, 720) as though it were the result of a contemporary gathering of kabuki playwrights at the beginning of the year to determine the “worlds” of plots and characters to be staged. Thus, the “world setting” (*sekai sadame* 世界定め) of the kabuki theater is taken literally, reinscribed into the cosmogony sequence of one of Japan's most sacred texts. Set in the mythical age of the gods, Sanna's story retraces the transition from prehistoric chaos and non-differentiation, to the creation of all things (*banbutsu* 万物) and the arising of the various deities themselves (Fig 11). The story was so well received, Shikitei Sanba hailed it as one of the two dozen greatest masterpieces of the genre. Certainly the story sparked the imagination of other authors as well as readers, for several *kibyōshi* borrowed its comic premise. Aside from Kyōden's *Fast-Dyeing Mind Study*, there was Hōseidō Kisanji's 朋誠堂喜三二 *The Celestial Path's Account Book* (*Tendō daifuku chō* 「天道大福帳」, 1786).

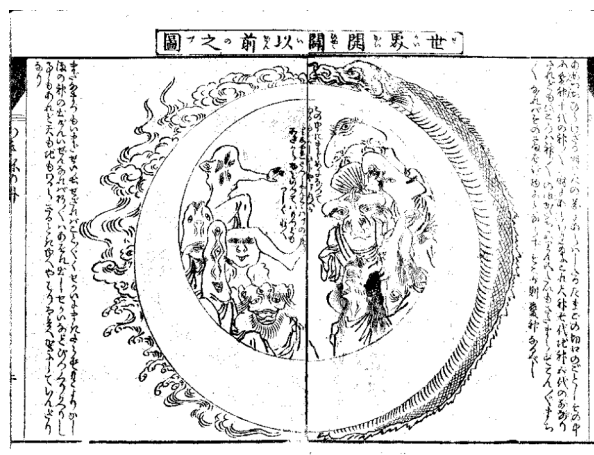


Figure 11 Beginning of the cosmos according to *Beyond the Pale-ings of the Billion Worlds* (*Daisen sekai kakine no soto*, 1784).⁴⁰

Tōrai Sanna 唐来参和 (1744-1810) himself is one of the more colorful figures in the history of Edo's playful fiction, having renounced his samurai

⁴⁰ *Kibyōshi* written by Tōrai Sanna and illustrated probably by Kitao Shigemasa. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

status to become an urban townsman (*chōnin* 町人) merchant and take up writing professionally. He was a member of Ōta Nanpo's leading coterie of madcap poetry (*kyōka* 狂歌), wrote a smattering of fashion-books and multivolume comicbooks as well, and became one of the "Six *Kibyōshi* Immortals" (*kibyōshi rokkasen* 黄表紙六歌仙), though he penned only about twenty *kibyōshi*, including the palindromically titled *Chop Not The Roots of The Money Tree* (*Kiruna no ne kara kane no naruki*

きるなのねからかねのなるき
「莫切自根金生木」, 1785). Sanba, who had been one of Kyōden's protégés, is said to have integrated the "San" of Sanna's name into his own. Moreover, Sanna actually became the proprietor of a brothel. According to Bakin, Sanna was "[o]riginally a retainer for a highly-placed family, during the Tenmei era, he had reason to become a *chōnin*. He married into the family that ran the brothel Izumiya in Honjo Matsui-chō. He took over the business and came to be called [by the merchant appellation] Izumiya Genzō."⁴¹

Another work in the collection, Shitchin Manpō's *The About-Face Bestowal of Abundant Beauty* (*Sono henpō hōnen no mitsugi* 「其返報豊年貢」, 1790, illustrated by Katsushika Shun'ei—or at least in his style), is significant as one of the *kibyōshi* that partook in genuine political satire through the technique of *reductio ad absurdum*. Published during the Kansei Reforms (and reprinted two years later under the title *Haru wa hanasaku sakusha no yaezaki* 「新春花作者再咲」), this piece couched its criticism of the government's sumptuary regulations by poking fun at similar measures half a millennium earlier, during the reign of the sagacious ruler Hōjō Tokiyori 北条時頼 (1227-1263), who famously disguised himself to mix with commoners. In Manpō's story, the populace takes Tokiyori's exhortations to their extreme, mistaking frugality for stinginess, the result being that restaurants, tea houses, and candy shops go out of business. Watermelon merchants discount the cost of their rinds, even (**Fig 12**). Tokiyori realizes that the populace has taken his words too literally when, in disguise, visiting the house of a certain Sano Genzaemon 佐野源左衛門, the latter chops down his potted tree for firewood to keep his visitor warm.



Figure 12 Watermelon stand from *The About-Face Bestowal of Abundant Beauty* (*Sono henpō hōnen no mitsugi*, 1790).⁴²

Another work in the collection, one that does not seem to be well known, illustrates the twilight of the *kibyōshi* genre, which in its last years increasingly came to be given over to the kind of dramatic complexity and violence of the multivolume, or *gōkan*. The *kibyōshi*, titled *Twice-Flowering Eightfold Vengeance* (*Kaerizaki yae no adauchi* 「返咲八重之仇討」, penned by Kanwateri Onitake and illustrated by Hokusai under yet another pseudonym, Hokushū), was published in 1805, a year before what most scholars accept as the final batch of *kibyōshi*. It is even possible that this work might be thought of as an early *gōkan*.

Set during the fourteenth century, the story begins with a disagreement between two followers of the Ashikaga minister Momoi 桃井, Lord of Harima, that quickly escalates into a duel to the death. When one of these followers, Kani Sogorō 可児増五郎, kills the other, Kohaya Gendayū 小早源太夫, the latter's son Gennosuke 源之丞 enlists the aid of a martial arts master Daikan Kenzō 大館賢三 to exact revenge. Master Kenzō indeed kills Sogorō. But instead of being rewarded for his fearless efforts, he

⁴¹ In Bakin, *Kinsei mono no hon Edo sakusha burui* (1834), pp. 34-35. Cited in Johnson, "Tōrai Sanna and the Creation of Difference," p. 85.

⁴² *Kibyōshi* written by Shitchin Manpō and illustrated probably by Katsushika Shun'ei. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

is poisoned; for Gennosuke is afraid that word would leak that he had not settled the score himself. The story concludes when one of Kenzō's disciples, Makino Manpei まきの万平, suspicious about his master's death, extracts the truth from the local doctor about the poison and proceeds to take his own revenge upon Gennosuke. Needless to say, this is not the sort of lighthearted romp that for a quarter century had epitomized the *kibyōshi* genre (Fig 13).



Figure 13 Heads roll in *Twice-Flowering Eightfold Vengeance* (*Kaerizaki yae no adauchi*, 1805).⁴³

Finally, there is Sakuragawa Jihinari's 桜川慈悲成 (b. 1762) *A Tale of Virtue in the First Degree* (*Daiichi ontokuyō monogatari* 「第一御徳用物語」, 1794). In spite of having been illustrated by the great Utagawa Toyokuni, the story probably outshines the charming pictures. The piece is an imaginative installment in the long line of *kibyōshi* (and other stories, for that matter) about dreams, dream pillows, and the confusion of dream with reality. A certain man by the name of Fukukurō 福九郎, who sleeps by night and naps all day, strikes upon the idea of starting a business peddling people's naps. His neighbor Mune'emon むね右衛門 erects the "Sleep Inclined Hut" (*Nemukean* 寝向庵) to attract prospective nap sellers. Eventually, the Seven Gods of Fortune (*Shichifukujin* 七福神), worried about the adverse effects of nap mongering upon humankind, force Fukukurō to give up his sack of naps wherein he has been storing the world's supply of

"sleep essence" (*minki* 眠気). In a satirical gesture against the utopian vision espoused by Confucians of a hardworking populace, Daikokuten, along with the other gods on their fabled treasure boat, casts the nap sack to the Western Seas, whereupon naps are supposedly dispelled forever from the face of the earth (Fig 14).



Figure 14 The god Daikokuten dispelling naps. From *A Tale of Virtue in the First Degree* (*Daiichi ontokuyō monogatari*, 1794).⁴⁴

Concluding Remarks

And so does our guided tour of the Harvard-Yenching collection of *kibyōshi* draw to a close in the short span of a dream during an afternoon snooze. Although small, slightly lopsided, and in less than ideal shape, the collection is nonetheless fascinating if wonderfully quirky. If I am correct in reckoning that the 16 titles listed in the catalogue *Early Japanese Books at Harvard-Yenching Library* should be revised to 25 titles, then the collection is also larger than previously believed.

This number depends on my definition of the *kibyōshi*, which is *not* simply any book with yellow covers. Rather, in the foregoing I have effectively defined the *kibyōshi* as a sophisticated comicbook, combining words and pictures in complex fashion, intended primarily for adults. Although the *kibyōshi* usually bears yellow covers, sometimes its covers can be blue. The *kibyōshi* usually comes in three fascicles of 10 pages measuring approximately 5 x 7 inches, though there are examples of one, two, and,

⁴³ *Kibyōshi* written by Kanwatei Onitake and illustrated by Hokushū (Hokusai). ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

⁴⁴ *Kibyōshi* written by Sakuragawa Jihinari and illustrated by Utagawa Toyokuni. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

in some rare cases, five fascicles in this size, but never four (the Japanese word for which being infelicitously homophonous with “death”), and never more than five. Furthermore, the *kibyōshi* was only published from 1775 to 1806 (though there are a few exceptions), so later reprints—particularly those in a different format—would hardly qualify as a *kibyōshi*. Finally, most *kibyōshi* in Japan are listed in Tanahashi’s *Kibyōshi Overview*, though one might quibble with Tanahashi on some minor points.

According to this criteria, then, it would seem that the official catalogue of the Harvard-Yenching Library lists some works as *kibyōshi* that really are something else and conversely lists as something else works that really are *kibyōshi*. If so, then one naturally wonders if a similar situation obtains in other collections outside of Japan. One imagines, perhaps, that lurking in such collections are some as-yet undiscovered hidden gems.

Appendix I: Selective List of Works, Authors, Illustrators, and Publishers

NB HYL numbers derive from the catalogue *Early Japanese Books at Harvard-Yenching Library*.

Bakemono Yamato honzō 「化物和本草」 (*Field Guide to the Monsters of Japan*, 1798). *Kibyōshi* written by Santō Kyōden, illustrated by Kakō (Hokusai), and published by Yamaguchiya. HYL #350

Bunkeidō 文溪堂

Daiichi ontokuyō monogatari 「第一御徳用物語」 (*A Tale of Virtue in the First Degree*, 1794). *Kibyōshi* written by Sakuragawa Jihinari, illustrated by Utagawa Toyokuni, and published by Izumiya Ichibei. HYL #361

Daisen sekai kakine no soto 「大千世界牆の外」 (*Beyond the Pale-ings of the Billion Worlds*, 1784). *Kibyōshi* written by Tōrai Sanna, illustrated probably by Kitao Shigemasa, and published by Tsutaya Jūzaburō. HYL #357

Edo sunago musume katakiuchi 「江戸砂子娘敵討」 (*Revenge of Edo’s Golden Nuggets Girl*, 1804). *Kibyōshi* written by Santō Kyōden, thought to have been illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa, and pub-

lished by Tsuruya. HYL #354

Eishōsai Chōki 栄松齋長喜

Enokimotoya 榎本屋

Enju hangontan 「延寿反魂談」 (*The Salutary Story of a Soul Restored*, 1789). *Kibyōshi* (miscatalogued as a bluebook) written and illustrated by Santō Kyōden. HYL #343

Fukujukai muryō no shinadama 「福寿海无量品玉」 (*The Unfathomable Ocean of Fortune and Longevity*, 1794). *Kibyōshi* written by Kyokutei Bakin, illustrated by Katsukawa Shunrō, and published by Tsuruya. HYL #363

Goningiri suika no tachiuri 「五人切西瓜斬売」 (*Quintuple Cut-Down at the Watermelon Stand*, 1804). *Kibyōshi* written by Santō Kyōden, illustrated by Eishōsai Chōki, and published by Tsutaya Jūzaburō. HYL #353

Gozonji no shōbaimono 「御存知商売物」 (*Those Familiar Bestsellers*, 1782). *Kibyōshi* written and illustrated by Kitao Masanobu.

Hatsuyaku kogane no eboshi uo 「初役金烏帽子魚」 (*Début of the Black-Capped Golden Carp*, 1794). Illustrated book written by Santō Kyōden, illustrated by Jippensha Ikku, and published by Tsutaya Jūzaburō. HYL #341

Hokusai 北斎 (a.k.a. Katsushika Hokusai 葛飾北斎, Hokushū, Kakō, Shunrō)

Hokushū 北周 (a.k.a. Hokusai)

Hōseidō Kisanji 朋誠堂喜三二

Ichiba Tsūshō 市場通笑

Iba Kashō 伊庭可笑

Iseji 伊勢治

Iwatoya 岩戸屋

Izumiya Ichibei 和泉屋市兵衛

Jippensha Ikku 十返舎一九

Jitsugokyō osana kōshaku 「実語教幼稚講釈」
(*The Guide to Morality for Dummies*, 1792).
Kibyōshi supposedly written by Santō Kyōden—but
ghostwritten by Bakin—illustrated by Shunrō (Ho-
kusai). Published by Tsutaya Jūzaburō. HYL #348

Kaerizaki yae no adauchi 「返咲八重之仇討」
(*Twice-Flowering Eightfold Vengeance*, 1805).
Kibyōshi written by Kanwatei Onitake, illustrated by
Hokushū (Hokusai), and published by Iwatoya. HYL
#356

Kanwatei Onitake 感和亭鬼武

Kakō 可候 (a.k.a. Hokusai)

Katakiuchi Kurama tengu 「敵討鞍馬天狗」
(*The Kurama Goblin Vendetta*, 1779). *Kibyōshi*
(miscatalogued as a bluebook) written by Bunkeidō,
illustrated by Torii Kiyotsune, and published by
Iwatoya. HYL #339

Katsukawa Shun'ei 勝川春英

Kenkō 嫌好

Kingin sensei zōka no yume 「金々先生造化
夢」(*Master Flashgold's Abiding Dream*, 1794).
Kibyōshi (miscatalogued as a bluebook) written by
Santō Kyōden, illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa, and
published by Tsutaya Jūzaburō. HYL #340

Kinkin sensei eiga no yume 「金々先生栄華
夢」(*Master Flashgold's Splendiferous Dream*,
1775). *Kibyōshi* written by Koikawa Harumachi and
illustrated by Hōseidō Kisanji.

Kiruna no ne kara kane no naruki 「莫切自根
金生木」(*Chop Not The Roots of The Money Tree*,
1785). *Kibyōshi* written by Tōrai Sanna and illus-
trated by Kitagawa Chiyojo.

Kitagawa Chiyojo 喜多川千代女

Kitao Masanobu 北尾政演 (a.k.a. Santō
Kyōden)

Kitao Masayoshi 北尾政美

Kitao Shigemasa 北尾重政

Koikawa Harumachi 恋川春町

Kore otohime 「是男度比女」(*Otohime, Prin-
cess of the Sea*, 1784). *Kibyōshi* in two fascicles
written and illustrated by Kenkō and published by
Murataya. HYL #360

Kotowaza Nonomiya mōde 「諺野々宮儲」
(*Nonomiya's Proverbially Profitable Gambol*, 1784).
Kibyōshi (miscatalogued as a bluebook) illustrated
and presumably written by Kitao Masayoshi, and
published by Tsutaya Jūzaburō. HYL #334

Kusunoki ichidaiki 「楠一代記」(*The Life of
Kusunoki Masashige*, 1794). Some kind of
picturebook written and presumably illustrated by
Rakugetsudō Sōshi. Published by Tsutaya Jūzaburō.
HYL #324

Kyokutei Bakin 曲亭馬琴 (a.k.a. Takizawa
Bakin)

Mongaku kanjinchō 「文覚勸進帳」(*Mon-
gaku's Subscription List*, 1793). *Kibyōshi* written by
Nansenshō Somahito, illustrated by Utagawa Toyo-
kuni, and published by Enokimotoya. HYL #349

Murataya 村田屋

Nansenshō Somahito 南仙笑楚満人

Natori no kiku kōhaku chōja 「名取菊黄白長
者」(*The Flowery Tale of Masters Gold and Silver*,
1779). *Kibyōshi* (miscatalogued as a bluebook)
probably written and illustrated by Santō Kyōden.
HYL #342

Nishimiya Shinroku 西宮新六

Ōta Nanpo 大田南畝

Ōtsu no meibutsu 「大津名物」(*Ōtsu's Spe-
cialty Products*, 1781). *Kibyōshi* (miscatalogued as a
bluebook) written by Iba Kashō, illustrated by Kitao
Masanobu, and published by Iwatoya. HYL #332

Rakugetsudō Sōshi 落月堂操庵

Ryōtō hitsu zen'aku nikki 「兩頭筆善惡日記」
(*Diary Penned by a Two-Headed Brush with Virtue and Vice*, 1799). *Kibyōshi* written and presumably illustrated by Santō Kyōden—though the HYL copy is a later reprinting. HYL #351

Sakuragawa Jihinari 桜川慈悲成

Sanbukutsui murasaki Soga 「参幅对紫曾我」
(*Trilateral Intrigue of the Soga Brothers*, 1778). *Kibyōshi* (miscatalogued as a bluebook) illustrated and presumably written by Koikawa Harumachi and published by Urokogataya. HYL #333

Santō Kyōden 山東京傳

Shiba Zenkō 芝全交

Shikitei Sanba 式亭三馬

Shimizu Enjū 志水燕十

Shin kakurezato 「蛤金久連里」(*The Invisible City Revisited*, 1788). Bluebook illustrated and presumably written by Torii Kiyoshige. HYL #335

Shinra Banshō 森羅万象

Shitchin Manpō 七珎萬宝

Shunrō 春朗 (a.k.a. Hokusai)

Shunsetsu monogatari 「春雪物語」(*Tale of Spring Snow*, 1804). A.k.a. *A Mother and Daughter Laid to Rest, Part Two: A Tale of Spring Snow* ((*Oyakozuka kōhen*) *Shunsetsu monogatari* 「親子塚 春雪物語」). *Kibyōshi* (miscatalogued as a bluebook) written by Nansenshō Somahito 南仙笑楚満人 and illustrated by Utagawa Toyokuni. HYL #346

Sogitsugi gingiseru 「扮接銀煙管」(*Unseamly [sic] Silverpiped Swingers*, 1788). *Kibyōshi* written and illustrated by Santō Kyōden and published by Nishimiya.

Sono henpō hōnen no mitsugi 「其返報豊年貢」
(*The About-Face Bestowal of Abundant Beauty*, 1790). *Kibyōshi* written by Shitchin Manpō, illustrated probably by Katsushika Shun'ei, and published by Iseji. HYL #359

Takizawa Bakin 滝沢馬琴 (a.k.a. Kyokutei Bakin)

Tamenaga Shunsui 為永春水

Tatakiuchi henjutsu no maki 「擲討変術巻」
(*A Book of Revenge in Reverse*, 1796). *Kibyōshi* written—and presumably illustrated—by Jippensha Ikku and published by Izumiya Ichibei. HYL #362

Tatsunomiya konamagusa hachinoki 「龍宮羶鉢木」(*The Stinky Potted Plant at the Dragon King's Palace*, 1793). *Kibyōshi* supposedly written by Santō Kyōden—but ghostwritten by Bakin—and published by Tsuruya.

Tendō daifuku chō 「天道大福帳」(*The Celestial Path's Account Book*, 1786). *Kibyōshi* written by Hōseidō Kisanji and illustrated by Kitao Masayoshi.

Tōrai Sanna 唐来参和

Torii Kiyoshige 鳥居清重

Torii Kiyotsune 鳥居清経

Tōsetsu monogatari 「冬雪物語」(*A Tale of Winter Snow*, 1804). A.k.a. *A Mother and Daughter Laid to Rest, Part One: A Tale of Winter Snow* ((*Oyakozuka zenpen*) *Tōsetsu monogatari* 「親子塚 前編 冬雪物語」). *Kibyōshi* (miscatalogued as a bluebook) written by Nansenshō Somahito and illustrated by Utagawa Toyokuni. HYL #345

Tsukiji no Zenkōki 「通気智之錢光記」
(*Tsukiji Zenkō's Mathematical Manual for Merchants*, 1802). *Kibyōshi* written by Santō Kyōden, illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa, and published by Tsuruya. HYL #355

Tsuruya Kiemon 鶴屋喜右衛門

Tsutaya Jūzaburō 蔦屋重三郎

Urayasan mitōshi zashiki 「裡家算見通坐敷」
(*The Back-Alley Palm Reader*, 1803). *Kibyōshi* written by Santō Kyōden, illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa, and published by Tsuruya. HYL #352

Urokogataya Magobei 鱗形屋孫兵衛

Utagawa Toyokuni 歌川豊国

Wataonjaku kikō no hikifuda 「綿温石奇効報條」 (*A Plug for the Miraculously Healing Body-warmer*, 1802). *Kibyōshi* written by Shikitei Sanba and illustrated by Utagawa Toyohiro.

Yamaguchiya 山口屋

Yōkun yunzei no isaoshi 「幼君弓勢績」 (*The Young Prince's Bow-Pulling Feat*, date unknown). *Kibyōshi* (miscatalogued as a bluebook) of unknown authorship. Published by Nishimiya. HYL #338

Appendix II: List of Figures

Fig 1 Scene from *Master Flashgold's Abiding Dream* (*Kingin sensei zōka no yume*, 1794). *Kibyōshi* written by Santō Kyōden and illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 2 Frontispiece to *Ōtsu's Specialty Products* (*Ōtsu no meibutsu*, 1781). *Kibyōshi* written by Iba Kashō and illustrated by Kitao Masanobu. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 3 A reader's sketch of a character from *Mongaku's Subscription List* (*Mongaku kanjinchō*, 1793). *Kibyōshi* written by Nansenshō Somahito and illustrated by Utagawa Toyokuni. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 4 Publishing announcement from *Tsukiji Zenkō's Mathematical Manual for Merchants* (*Tsukiji no Zenkōki*, 1802). *Kibyōshi* written by Santō Kyōden and illustrated by Kitao Shigemasa. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 5 Scene from *The Guide to Morality for Dummies* (*Jitsugokyō osana kōshaku*, 1792). *Kibyōshi* supposedly written by Santō Kyōden—but really ghostwritten by Bakin—and illustrated by Shunrō (Hokusai). ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 6 Physiognomy charts from *The Back-Alley Palm Reader* (*Urayasan mitōshi zashiki*, 1803). *Kibyōshi* written by Kyōden and illustrated by Kitao

Shigemasa. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 7 Imaginatively concocted creature from *Field Guide to the Monsters of Japan* (*Bakemono Yamato honzō*, 1798). *Kibyōshi* written by Kyōden and illustrated by Kakō (Hokusai). ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 8 Two-headed twins suckling at their mother's breasts. From a reprinting of the *kibyōshi* titled *Diary Penned by a Two-Headed Brush with Virtue and Vice* (*Ryōtō hitsu zen'aku nikki*, 1799). Written and presumably illustrated by Kyōden. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 9 Virtue is industrious, working an abacus as he keeps the books, while Vice is indolent, making rude remarks as he enjoys a smoke. From a reprinting of *Diary Penned by a Two-Headed Brush with Virtue and Vice* (*Ryōtō hitsu zen'aku nikki*, 1799). ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 10 Two-headed twins dreaming a common dream. From a reprinting of *Diary Penned by a Two-Headed Brush with Virtue and Vice* (*Ryōtō hitsu zen'aku nikki*, 1799). ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 11 Beginning of the cosmos according to *Beyond the Pale-ings of the Billion Worlds* (*Daisen sekai kakine no soto*, 1784). *Kibyōshi* written by Tōrai Sanna and illustrated probably by Kitao Shigemasa. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 12 Watermelon stand from *The About-Face Bestowal of Abundant Beauty* (*Sono henpō hōnen no mitsugi*, 1790). *Kibyōshi* written by Shitchin Manpō and illustrated probably by Katsushika Shun'ei. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 13 Heads roll in *Twice-Flowering Eightfold Vengeance* (*Kaerizaki yae no adauchi*, 1805). *Kibyōshi* written by Kanwatei Onitake and illustrated by Hokushū (Hokusai). ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.

Fig 14 The god Daikokuten dispelling naps. From *A Tale of Virtue in the First Degree* (*Daiichi ontokuyō monogatari*, 1794). *Kibyōshi* written by Sakuragawa Jihinari and illustrated by Utagawa Toyokuni. ©2007 Harvard-Yenching Library.