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Abstract: Hundreds of titles of Chinese fiction were imported to Japan over the course of the Edo period, and certain works became widely familiar to Japanese readers through domestic reprints, annotated editions, commentaries, translations, and adaptations. *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異 (*Strange Tales from Liaozhai Studio*, completed c. 1675-1705, published 1766), Pu Songling's 蒲松齡 (1640-1715) celebrated collection of tales of the "strange," arrived on Japanese shores with remarkable speed, in 1768, just two years after the appearance of the first printed edition in China. Yet the work remained part of the much larger body of imported titles that were never reprinted in Japanese editions and did not attain widespread familiarity. Nevertheless, certain stories from the collection soon resurfaced in the form of a number of Japanese adaptations. As such, the little-explored reception history of *Liaozhai* has the potential to refine our understanding of the processes by which Chinese fiction permeated the Japanese cultural milieu, pointing to the significant role played by manuscript culture and hidden practices of borrowing, reading, and copying. In addition to these broader issues, this article also looks closely at one particular set of adaptations, Morishima Chūryō's 森島中良 (1756-1810) collection *Kogarashi zōshi* 風草紙 (*Tales from the Withering Wind*, 1792). *Kogarashi zōshi* draws on a number of *Liaozhai* stories, and a careful study is revealing of the ways in which Japanese writers engaged with Chinese fiction and what they sought amidst its richness and diversity. In particular, a close reading of selected tales explores the nature of the relationship between the adapter and his source material, as well as the complicated intertextualities at play in the narratives. Chūryō's tales are also situated within the political context of 1790s Japan, demonstrating the author's ambivalent attitude toward authority. The article concludes with an annotated translation of the second story from the collection, a reworking of one of Pu Songling's most popular tales, "The Painted Skin" (*Hua pi* 畫皮).

Keywords: Pu Songling 蒲松齡, *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異, Morishima Chūryō 森島中良, *Kogarashi zōshi* 風草紙, Edo-period Sino-Japanese literary relations, literary translation and adaptation, print culture, manuscript culture, *wakokubon*

Strange Tales from Edo: *Liaozhai zhiyi* in Early Modern Japan

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In the 1797 preface to a slight work of comic pictorial fiction (*kibyōshi*) titled *The Wag-Tale of a Celebrated Fool's Education* (*Oshiedori ahō no kōmyō* 押絵鳥癡漢高名, 1797), Kyokutei Bakin 曲亭馬琴 (1767-1848), soon to emerge as one of the literary giants of early nineteenth-century Japan, expressed his enthusiasm for the Chinese collection that had provided his source material. “One day,” he wrote, “I read Liuxian’s *Strange Tales from Liaozhai Studio* and was immediately satisfied. At length I produced two fascicles in imitation thereof.”¹ Liuxian 留仙 is the courtesy name of the author Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640-1715), while *Strange Tales from Liaozhai Studio* (hereafter simply *Liaozhai*) is his famous collection *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異 (J. *Ryōsai shii*). Indeed, Bakin’s work, a farcical send-up of over-indulgent parenting and naïve book-learning, is immediately recognizable as a creative reimagining of the *Liaozhai* story “The Bookworm” (*Shu chi* 書癡).²

Bakin’s enthusiasm for a recent work of Chinese fiction comes as little surprise. Even among his *kibyōshi* one finds other adaptations, such as a reworking of the story “A Jest over Fifteen Strings of Cash Leads to Disaster” (*Shiwu guan xiyuan cheng qiaohuo* 十五貫戲言成巧禍) from Feng Menglong’s 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) collection *Constant Words to Awaken the World* (*Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言, 1627).³ In later years, Bakin wrote criticism on longer vernacular narratives such as *Suppressing the Demons’ Revolt* (*San Sui pingyao zhuan* 三遂平妖傳) and *The Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳). Most famously, his serialized masterwork *The Chronicle of the Eight Dogs of the Satomi of Southern Kazusa* (*Nansō Satomi hakkenden* 南総里見八犬傳, 1814-1842) owes much to *The Water Margin*—so much so, in fact, that in the preface to one installment he felt

¹ A transcription of the text appears in Seida Keiko, “Honkoku Kyokutei Bakin no kibyōshi (3),” *Komazawa tanki daigaku kenkyū kiyō* 5 (1977), pp. 71-84.

² The source story was first noted in Mukai Nobuo, “Kansei nendai ni okeru Bakin chosaku no ni san ni tsuite,” *Biburia* 61 (1975), p. 25. Bakin’s title alludes to a scene in which the protagonist’s wife, an illustration of a beautiful woman that materializes in the flesh, teaches her naïve husband about sex with the help of a toy monkey that pounds rice with a pestle—filling in for the wag-tail bird from which Izanami and Izanagi learn the same.

³ See Karashima Takeshi, tr., *Hakuan kyōki* [*Pai’an jingqi* 拍案驚奇], in *Zen’yaku Chūgoku bungaku taikei*, ser. 1, vol. 15 (Tokyo: Tōyō bunka kyōkai, 1958), pp. 441-43. Karashima’s discussion is mentioned in Mukai, “Bakin chosaku no nisan ni tsuite,” p. 22.

the need to point to the distinctions between his own literary aims and those of his Chinese predecessor.⁴

While Bakin may have been more prolific and widely read than most, his enthusiasm for Chinese sources was by no means exceptional. Chinese books were imported to Nagasaki in great quantities throughout much of the Edo period, and from there they entered libraries and personal collections across Japan. Although it was, in the final analysis, the Chinese ship captains themselves who decided what books to bring to Japan, they had an obvious economic incentive to tailor their cargo to Japanese preferences, and interested parties, including the Tokugawa bakufu itself, were able to pass on specific requests through bookseller liaisons.⁵ The captains were required to submit inventory lists of the books they imported, and extant records such as the *Shōhaku sairai shomoku* 商舶載來書目 and the *Hakusai shomoku* 舶載書目 offer an invaluable window onto the titles and quantity of these books. Reproductions have been published by the Japanese historian Ōba Osamu 大庭脩, who has also written extensively on Sino-Japanese exchange in the early modern era; through the efforts of Joshua Fogel, some of Ōba's ground-breaking work has appeared in translation in this journal and elsewhere.⁶

A glance at these documents reveals that, percentage-wise, fiction comprised a relatively small portion of imported texts and was vastly outweighed by materials such as local gazetteers, Buddhist sutras, and commentaries on the classics. In absolute terms, however, a great many titles of Ming-Qing fiction reached Japanese shores over the course of the Edo period. Some of these attained a wide readership and were eagerly reworked into translations and adaptations for the domestic market, with particular popularity afforded to vernacular narratives such as *The Water Margin*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義), and *Journey to the West* (*Xiyouji* 西遊記), and to collections of tales including Qu You's 瞿佑 *New Tales by Lamplight* (*Jiandeng xinhua* 剪燈新話) and Feng Menglong's vernacular *Sanyan* 三言 collections. The mid-

⁴ See Glynne Walley, "I Would Rather Be a Faithful Dog than an Unrighteous Man": Virtue and Vice in Kyokutei Bakin's *Nansō Satomi hakkenden*" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2009), pp. 84-85.

⁵ For a brief discussion, see Peter Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), pp. 297-98.

⁶ Ōba Osamu, *Edo jidai ni okeru Chūgoku bunka juyō no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1984), and *Edo jidai no Nit-Chū hiwa* (Tokyo: Tōhō shoten, 1980). The latter appeared as a series of translations in volumes 8 through 13 of *Sino-Japanese Studies*, and a revised translation of the full work was published as *Books and Boats: Sino-Japanese Relations in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Portland, Maine: Merwin Asia, 2012). For the import catalogs themselves, see Ōba, *Edo jidai ni okeru Tōsen mochiwatari-sho no kenkyū* (Suita-shi: Kansai daigaku shuppanbu, 1967), pp. 238-739, and *Hakusai shomoku*, 2 vols. (Suita-shi: Kansai daigaku shuppanbu, 1972).

century studies of scholars such as Ishizaki Matazō 石崎又造 and Asō Isoji 麻生磯次 did much to elucidate the extent of this reception, and their legacy has been carried on in recent decades by Tokuda Takeshi 徳田武 and others.⁷ In English-language scholarship, Emanuel Pastreich's recent monograph emerges from this lineage, but with a particular focus on vernacular fiction and a concern not merely with how such narratives were adapted, but with how they shaped the very discourses surrounding literary production.⁸ The extent to which imported Chinese texts influenced early modern Japanese literature was undeniably enormous, and the sheer number of imported titles has prompted Jonathan Zwicker to assert that "virtually the entire literary imagination of late imperial China [...] was available to the Japanese reading public by the nineteenth century."⁹

But how would readers actually have encountered these texts? *New Tales by Lamplight*, to take one prominent example, circulated narrowly in manuscript form among Gozan monks after its arrival in Japan in the first half of the sixteenth century. Wider readership, however, came only when an imported copy of the Korean annotated edition *Chōndŭng sinhwa kuhae* 剪燈新話句解 (J. *Sentō shinwa kukai*) was reprinted with Japanese reading marks in Kyoto in 1648. This domestic edition was itself reprinted at least twice. As the text became more widely available, Japanese adaptations at last began to appear, among them Asai Ryōi's 浅井了意 (d. 1691) famous *Talisman Dolls* (*Otogibōko* 伽婢子, 1666), but also less well-known collections such as *The Jeweled Curtain* (*Tama sudare* 多満寸太礼, 1704), which contains a half-dozen adaptations from *New Tales by Lamplight* among its twenty-seven stories.¹⁰ The story "The Peony Lantern" (*Mudan deng ji* 牡丹燈記) in particular attained enormous popularity across a wide range of genres and media, including oral storytelling.

In converting a single imported copy into a run of hundreds of copies, such domestic editions, known as *wakokubon kanseki* 和刻本漢籍 ("Chinese books printed in Japan"), or simply *wakokubon*, made Chinese texts available to a much wider audience.

⁷ See, for instance, Asō Isoji, *Edo bungaku to Shina bungaku: kinsei bungaku no Shina-teki genkyō to tokuhon no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1946), Ishizaki Matazō, *Kinsei Nihon ni okeru Shina zokugo bungakushi* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1940), and Tokuda Takeshi, *Nihon kinsei shōsetsu to Chūgoku shōsetsu*, in *Nihon shoshigaku taikei*, vol. 51 (Musashimurayama-shi: Seishōdō shoten, 1987).

⁸ Emanuel Pastreich, *The Observable Mundane: Vernacular Chinese and the Emergence of a Literary Discourse on Popular Narrative in Edo Japan* (Seoul: Seoul University Press, 2011).

⁹ Jonathan Zwicker, *Practices of the Sentimental Imagination: Melodrama, the Novel, and the Social Imaginary in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), p. 135.

¹⁰ Kigoshi Osamu, "Kaidai," in Kigoshi, ed., *Ukiyozōshi kaidan shū*, in Takada Mamoru and Hara Michio, eds., *Sōsho Edo bunko*, vol. 34 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1994), pp. 338-40.

In many cases they fostered further accessibility through the addition of reading marks, glosses, and other aids. Such annotation was especially critical for texts written in vernacular Chinese. *The Water Margin*, for instance, became one of the most popular and influential works of Chinese literature in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Japan, but the process by which it was assimilated and became “readable” unfolded over many decades.¹¹ Even for texts in classical Chinese, annotations performed a valuable service to many readers, and not just those of average literacy. When the writer Morishima Chūryō 森島中良 (1756-1810) reread *New Tales by Lamplight* shortly before his death, for example, he recalled with dismay how little he had understood when he had bought a copy and begun to read it thirty years earlier, in his mid-twenties. He had been, in his own words, “a rabbit fording a river.”¹² No doubt the task would have been harder still without the help of the reading marks included in his copy, the Kyoto edition of 1648.

But what percentage of imported texts were reprinted for the Japanese market? There are a number of challenges that arise in attempting to quantify the scale of reception. Most obviously, there is the basic matter of determining what books were imported and which were reprinted in Japanese editions, when the vast majority of the books and the documents pertaining to them are no longer extant. There is also the fact that titles sometimes changed in reprinting, or portions of texts were excerpted or rearranged and issued under new titles. Feng Menglong’s *Sanyan*, by way of example, arrived in Japan in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, and in the 1740s and 1750s Oka Hakku 岡白駒 (1692-1767) and his student Sawada Issai 澤田一齋 (1701-1782) prepared selected stories from the three collections (along with a smattering of vernacular tales from other sources) and published them under new titles in three *wakokubon* editions with reading marks and Japanese glosses. These came to be popularly known as the “*Sanyan* printed in Japan,” or *Wakoku Sangen* 和刻三言.

The absence of a comprehensive catalog even of those *wakokubon* that do survive presents a further challenge. The best single resource is the Zenkoku Kanseki Database 全国漢籍データベース maintained by the Institute for Research in Humanities at Kyoto University.¹³ The entries, however, include imported books and modern reprints in addition to *wakokubon*, and results must therefore be carefully inspected item by item. A

¹¹ For a thorough study of this process of assimilation, see William Hedberg, “Locating China in Time and Space: Engagement with Chinese Vernacular Fiction in Eighteenth-Century Japan” (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2012).

¹² See Okada Kesao, “Morishima Chūryō bannen tansaku: arui wa bunjin no gengo uchū,” *Nihon bungaku* 32.1 (1983), p. 69.

¹³ <http://kanji.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/kanseki>. A second online database, hosted by the National Institute of Japanese Literature, offers little documentation and includes entries which upon inspection of the original items are revealed to be actual Chinese books, not *wakokubon* (as in the case of *Liaozhai*, for instance).

second valuable resource is Nagasawa Kikuya's 長澤規矩也 *Wakokubon kanseki bunrui mokuroku* ("Classified Catalog of Chinese Books Printed in Japan"), the most extensive printed catalog.¹⁴ Yet as the work of a single scholar, it inevitably falls short of comprehensiveness, and its scope is not limited to the Edo period but extends to woodblock and facsimile editions from the Meiji, Taishō, and early Shōwa eras.

Nevertheless, in spite of their limitations and the difficulties involved in their use, these resources, when coupled with the Nagasaki import records, allow various angles for quantifying the reception of imported Chinese texts. One option is a title-by-title analysis, and an initial comparison of 200 randomly selected titles from Ōba with the Kyoto University database and Nagasawa reveals only sixteen, or eight percent, that were reprinted as *wakokubon*. Of course, not all *wakokubon* that were printed remain extant, and the figure of eight percent is undoubtedly somewhat low. Revising the estimate upward, however, depends on an accurate estimation of the survival rate of *wakokubon*—a thorny problem indeed.

A cruder but less laborious method is to compare the total number of titles in Ōba with the total in Nagasawa. The raw numbers, in excess of 7,000 for the former versus around 2,000 for the latter, suggest a reprint rate of somewhat less than thirty percent. In contrast to the preceding estimate, however, this is very much an upper bound, and various corrections would lead to revising it downward. For one, the fragmentary nature of the import records means that the number of imported titles would have been considerably higher than 7,000. Additionally, while the issue of the survival rate of *wakokubon* might lead us to think of 2,000 as also being a lower bound, the fact that Nagasawa includes entries that postdate the Edo period, coupled with effective overcounting resulting from *wakokubon* that reprinted the same material under different titles, suggests that the number of titles in Nagasawa more likely overstates the extent to which texts were available.

A third perspective involves turning to the catalog of one of the most voluminous Sinological collections of the Edo period, and one with strong representation in fiction, as well: that of the Shōheikō 昌平黌, the bakufu academy. Limiting the scope of inquiry to works of fiction classified as *xiaoshuo* 小説 under the *zi* 子 division within the *sibu* 四部 "four branches" scheme, one counts 219 titles, as opposed to 53 in Nagasawa.¹⁵ That is to say, this single collection by itself contained more than four times as many titles of fiction as the total number known to have been printed domestically over the duration of the Edo period.

¹⁴ Nagasawa Kikuya, ed., *Wakokubon kanseki bunrui mokuroku*, revised edition (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 2006).

¹⁵ See Ogawa Takehiko and Kanai Yasushi, eds., *Tokugawa bakufu zōshomoku (Shoshi shomoku shirīzu 16)* (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 1985), vol. 10, pp. 54-59, and Nagasawa, ed., *Wakokubon kanseki bunrui mokuroku*, pp. 144-51.

These three approaches to the problem at hand suggest that while many titles were reprinted—indeed, there were even significant works that survived in Japanese editions but were lost in China—a far greater number were not. The reliance on imported titles to argue for the permeation of late imperial Chinese texts, then, is potentially misleading. After all, a title need signify only one or two copies of a work, and in many instances this seems in fact to have been the case. If, as Chūryō's remark above suggests, it was difficult for a text to penetrate in unannotated form, it was all the more difficult if no copies were made for commercial dissemination. In short, while the import records alone might suggest that much of the library of late imperial China was available to Japanese readers, such a claim should at the very least not be accepted at face value. It might even be in need of a corrective.

Liaozhai, as a work which was never printed in a Japanese edition, offers an opportunity to explore this question further. It is not known for certain when the collection first came to Japan, or in what form. Pu Songling composed his tales over the period from roughly 1675 to 1705, and they circulated in manuscript for many decades before first appearing in print in Zhao Qigao's 趙起杲 Qingketeing 青柯亭 edition of 1766. It is possible, if unlikely, then, that *Liaozhai* came to Japan in manuscript form prior to 1766. The first recorded copy came aboard a Chinese vessel in 1768, however, and the close timing suggests that it was likely the Qingketeing edition. Two additional copies arrived a quarter-century later, in 1794, and another sixty years were to pass before three more were imported in 1854.¹⁶

What happened to these copies? Bakin, although he drew on "The Bookworm" in the *kibyōshi* mentioned above, does not seem to have owned either a printed edition or a manuscript copy.¹⁷ *Liaozhai* does appear in the catalog of the Shōheikō, and several copies survive in other collections, including one in the Kagetsu Bunko at the Ueda City Library in Nagano Prefecture previously owned by a *haikai* poet active in the Kaei era (1848-1854) under the name Mugean 無礙庵, as well as another in the Akimoto Bunko, the collection of the Akimoto clan of the Tatebayashi Domain now housed by the Tatebayashi City Library in Gunma Prefecture.¹⁸ Unfortunately, examination of the extant copies does not yield much information about previous ownership or the journeys the volumes took on their way from China to their final owners. The Shōheikō copy, at least, we may surmise to have entered the academy's collection directly from Nagasaki.¹⁹

¹⁶ For the relevant entries, see Ōba, *Edo jidai ni okeru Tōsen mochiwatarisho no kenkyū*, pp. 253, 575, 687.

¹⁷ Bakin's principal catalog of his personal library is reprinted in Hattori Hitoshi, ed., *Bakin kenkyū shiryō shūsei* (Tokyo: Kuresu shuppan, 2007), vol. 5, pp. 793-820.

¹⁸ The latter was quite possibly acquired after the Edo period, as the collection was added to through 1917; the unmarked copy of *Liaozhai* yields no clues.

¹⁹ See Kornicki, *The Book in Japan*, p. 381, on the bakufu's preference for books that did not have previous Japanese owners.

Even half a century ago, *Liaozhai* was thought to have been almost completely unknown in Edo Japan and to have had no influence on writers of the period.²⁰ Certainly the tales never attained the wide readership or general familiarity enjoyed by earlier collections of classical tales such as *New Tales by Lamplight* or earlier works of vernacular fiction such as *The Water Margin*, which, in addition to being variously translated, annotated, and commented on, became known to an enormous readership through numerous adaptations. For this, *Liaozhai*'s relative newness may have been in part to blame.

But a surprising number of people *were* reading Pu Songling's tales. Writing to his younger brother in the autumn of 1801, for example, the literary luminary Ōta Nanpo 大田南畝 (1749-1823) mentioned the "recent" collection *Liaozhai*—its author referred to only as "a man of Qing," perhaps suggesting that Pu Songling himself had not yet attained wide name-recognition—alongside the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, *Soushenji* 搜神記, and *Youminglu* 幽明錄 as an example of a text by a man of letters interested in the supernatural.²¹ In the 1820s and 1830s, six of Pu's stories depicting the administration of justice were reproduced in Tsusaka Tōyō's 津阪東陽 (1758-1825) *Collection of Legal Cases* (*Chōkō ian* 聴訟彙案, 1831; preface dated 1806), while fourteen stories appeared in Japanese translation, by way of Sun Zhu's 孫洙 (1711-1778) *Paimenlu* 排悶錄 (preface dated 1770), in Ishikawa Masamochi's 石川雅望 (1754-1830) *Paimenlu: A Vernacular Translation* (*Tsūzoku haimonroku* 通俗排悶錄, 1828-1829).²² A decade or two later, when the scholar Doi Gōga 土井聶牙 (1818-1880) jotted down several dozen must-have titles at the request of a student, *Liaozhai* was among them.²³

In addition to these examples, recent scholarship has gradually uncovered a number of literary adaptations of stories from *Liaozhai*, beginning possibly as early as 1773 and certainly no later than 1786.²⁴ Edo fiction abounds with tales of the strange and

²⁰ See, for instance, Masuda Wataru et al., tr., *Ryōsai shii* [*Liaozhai zhiyi*], in *Chūgoku koten bungaku zenshū*, vol. 21 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1958), p. 434.

²¹ The letter is reproduced in Hamada Giichirō, ed., *Ōta Nanpo zenshū*, vol. 19 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989), p. 40.

²² Although several *Liaozhai* stories included in *Paimenlu* are omitted, Masamochi's collection still contains fourteen translated tales from *Liaozhai*. For the full list of stories translated by Masamochi, as well as their original sources, see Tokuda Takeshi, "Yomihon to Shinchō hikki shōsetsu: *Kinko kidan*, *Tsūzoku Haimonroku* ni tsuite" (1989), in *Edo kangaku no sekai* (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1990), pp. 260-64.

²³ The list, titled *Gōga's List of Essential Texts* (*Gōga-ō hissu shomoku* 聶牙翁必須書目), was likely written around the mid-1840s. It is reproduced in *Shinagaku* 2.10 (1922), pp. 70-75.

²⁴ Bakin, however, seems to have been the only adapter to acknowledge his source by name. The earlier date is the year of publication of Seita Tansō's 清田儋叟 (1719-1785) *Two Tales from*

spectacular, reflecting an almost obsessive interest in the anomalous, and while vernacular narratives of the “mundane” (to use Pastreich’s term) enjoyed their appeal and shaped new literary discourses, *Liaozhai* appealed to this other sensibility. All in all, there are now known to have been more than a dozen adaptations from *Liaozhai* contained in nearly ten published works of fiction.

Although these numbers are put in perspective when one considers the dozens upon dozens of adaptations of works such as *The Water Margin* or *New Tales by Lamplight*, they still constitute a respectable showing. Indeed, it seems remarkable that a mere handful of known imported copies (and only one prior to 1794) could have triggered such a response in the absence of a *wakokubon* edition. Yet there is evidence that *Liaozhai* was not alone in this regard, and that a work did not necessarily have to be reprinted to attain sufficient circulation to be reworked in a Japanese adaptation. As an example, there is the case of Zhang Chao’s 張潮 (1650-c. 1710) *New Tales of Yu Chu* (*Yu Chu xinzhì* 虞初新志, preface dated 1700), from which the first story was adapted in 1717, over a century before the appearance of the first *wakokubon* edition in 1823, and, in a reminder of the incomplete nature of the historical record, even predating the first entry in the import lists.²⁵

What all of this points to is a hidden reception history: one that did not leave its traces in the form of printed books, publishers’ catalogs, or ownership seals. Simply put, the availability of commercial copies on the open market may not have been as critical a factor as one might think, because it was not necessary to buy or to own a book in order to read it. As early as 1683, the Confucian scholar Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁齋 (1627-1705) recorded in his diary that he had borrowed a copy of Feng Menglong’s *Constant Words to Awaken the World* from a seller of Chinese books—again predating the first and only entry for the work in the Nagasaki records, which is dated 1727, as well as Hakku and Issai’s editions of the mid-eighteenth century.²⁶ Those with access were able to read volumes in the Momijiyama Bunko 紅葉山文庫 (the bakufu library) or the collections of the Shōheikō or the various domainal academies. Tanaka Joan 田中恕庵, an obscure

Medieval Times (*Chūsei nidenki* 中世二伝奇, 1773), the second story of which possibly draws on “The Painted Skin” (*Hua pi* 畫皮), while the later date corresponds to Tsuga Teishō’s 都賀庭鐘 (1718-c. 1794) *Leaves of Crabgrass* (*Hitsujigusa* 莠句冊, 1786), the third story of which draws on “Hengniang” (*Hengniang* 恆娘). See Tokuda Takeshi, ed., *Shōseihai tsuketari Chūsei nidenki* (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 1976), p. 472, and Tokuda, “Teishō to *Seiko kawa* [*Xihu jiahua*], *Ryōsai shii*,” in *Nihon kinsei shōsetsu to Chūgoku shōsetsu*, p. 230.

²⁵ Tokuda Takeshi, “*Min Shin gundan to Gu Sho shinshi* ‘Gonin den,’” *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 50.6 (2005), p. 30.

²⁶ On the entry in Jinsai’s diary, see Nakamura Yukihiro, “Kogidō no shōsetsuka-tachi,” in *Kinsei sakka kenkyū* (Tokyo: San’ichi shobō, 1961), p. 132. Quoted in Ogata Tsutomu, “Kaisetsu,” in Ogata, ed., *Shōsetsu sangan* (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 1976), p. 867.

provincial samurai from what is now Gunma Prefecture, spent many days copying books by hand at the Shōheikō over the course of several years in the 1830s.²⁷ As mentioned, the academy's collection had by itself four times as many works of fiction as were available on the open market, and *Liaozhai* may very well have been among the books he or the many others like him copied for their personal libraries.

Those without access to large institutional collections could simply borrow from their circle of acquaintances. While early modern scribes were perhaps not quite as quick as advocated by the Genroku-era educator Kaibara Ekiken 貝原益軒 (1630-1714), who urged borrowers to return books within one day per volume borrowed (allowing an extra day for particularly large volumes), they could be remarkably fast and prolific nonetheless.²⁸ When the Tōhoku merchant and nativist scholar Uchiike Nagatoshi 内池永年 (1763-1848) lent two volumes of current scholarship to an acquaintance in the Nihonmatsu domain for copying, the man returned the items several months later with an apology for his lateness. In the interim, however, his letter explained, “everyone else in the domain” had copied them as well.²⁹

As these examples illustrate, even in the Edo period, with its deserved reputation as a golden age of print culture, there remained many uses for handwritten texts. Draft manuscripts remained of course a necessary precursor to printed texts, and these aside there were, it almost goes without saying, vast quantities of literature composed in private with no eye to commercial publication. For certain types of public literary production, such as play scripts and other texts for the theater, manuscript remained the norm out of both convention and practical concerns, while for others, such as underground vernacular histories (*jitsuroku*), it was necessitated by regimes of censorship and political control. In specific contexts, manuscript copies even remained viable in the commercial sphere, available for purchase or rented out by the period's numerous lending libraries.³⁰ Lastly, there were of course all manner of handwritten documents and records, among them the catalogs of private and institutional collections such as those referenced in this article.³¹ These catalogs themselves reveal that a significant portion of many private collections

²⁷ On Joan, see P. F. Kornicki, “Manuscript, not Print: Scribal Culture in the Edo Period,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 32.1 (2006), pp. 27-32.

²⁸ Ekiken, *Kadōkun* 家道訓, in Ekiken-kai, ed., *Kaibara Ekiken zenshū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Ekiken zenshū kankōbu, 1911), p. 457.

²⁹ Takahashi Akinori, “‘Hanpon’ no ‘shahon’ o tsukuru no wa naze ka: Tōhoku no kokugakusha Uchiike Nagatoshi o rei ni,” *Nao de la China* 6 (2004), p. 28.

³⁰ On manuscripts as commodity, see Nakajima Takashi, “Hanpon jidai no ‘shahon’ to wa nani ka,” in *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 42.11 (1997), pp. 49-53.

³¹ For a thorough treatment of the uses of manuscript in early modern Japan, see Kornicki, “Manuscript, not Print: Scribal Culture in the Edo Period.”

was composed of manuscript. Bakin, as a well-known bibliophile, had an enormous personal library, of which nearly one in four titles was hand-copied.³² Nagatoshi, for his part, owned roughly 2,500 volumes, including large quantities of both manuscript and printed materials; in at least one instance, he possessed manuscript and print copies of the same work, having first acquired the text in manuscript form, then purchased it a second time with the publication of a revised print edition.³³

Nevertheless, there were, to be sure, those who felt nostalgia for what they saw as a vanished age of manuscript culture. One such figure, the nativist scholar and waka poet Katō Enao 加藤枝直 (1692-1785), complained that his contemporaries simply acquired printed editions of the *Kokinshū* without ever copying out the poems by hand themselves. Following the example of the Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728), who was said to have copied out the *Wenxuan* in its entirety three times on the back of sheets of scrap paper, Enao copied the *Kokinshū* three times by hand.³⁴ Likewise with senior councilor Matsudaira Sadanobu 松平定信 (1758-1829), the architect of the Kansei Reforms who in his memoir *An Account of My Self-Cultivation* (*Shugyōroku* 修行録, c. 1823) recounted with pride the many copies he had produced of great works of literature, including *The Tale of Genji*, *Tales of Ise*, the *Man'yōshū*, and all of the twenty-one imperial anthologies of poetry.³⁵

While Enao in particular admired the artistry of accomplished calligraphers of the past, such promotion of hand-copying was not rooted in aesthetic concerns alone. It was also a technique of discipline and, as Sadanobu's title suggests, self-cultivation. The act of copying forced careful, word-by-word engagement with a text and was an integral part of studying the classics and improving one's own compositional skill. Printed editions may have brought the canon to a much wider readership, but they were also seen, paradoxically, as distancing readers from the texts. The easy availability of literature gave traditionalists cause for concern and led them to reaffirm the importance of manuscript.

We have seen that such worries were in part unfounded. Manuscript culture continued to thrive in many contexts, and the numerous hand-produced copies of the classics that survive from the Edo period should give pause even regarding the

³² See Hattori, ed., *Bakin kenkyū shiryō shūsei*, vol. 5, pp. 793-814. Bakin helpfully distinguishes between manuscript and print copies in his own catalog entries.

³³ Takahashi, "'Hanpon' no 'shahon' o tsukuru no wa naze ka," pp. 27-28.

³⁴ In fact, Enao's remarks on copying the *Kokinshū* appear appended to what we may assume to have been his third copy of the anthology. See Suzuki Jun, "Kōya-gire no Edo," in *Waka ga kakareru toki*, vol. 2 of Asada Tōru et al., eds., *Waka o hiraku* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2005), p. 80.

³⁵ Matsudaira Sadamitsu, ed., *Uge no hitokoto, Shugyōroku* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1942), pp. 195, 213.

conservatives' area of greatest concern. Yet it is true that the center of gravity of manuscript culture changed. Early modern scribes worked with an efficiency scarcely fathomable today, but hand-copying still required a significant investment of time and labor. Self-improvement aside, there was little incentive to expend these resources on literary classics readily available for purchase. Manuscript remained strong, however, as a medium for reproducing and circulating texts that were rare or hard to find—whether because they were prohibited by law, out of print, unpublished, or otherwise unavailable on the market.

Liaozhai falls into this category, with the work itself leaving few traces outside of the scattered entries in the import lists. Yet within a few years of its first arrival adaptations began to appear. Clearly many more people were reading the tales than the number of known copies would suggest. Although no manuscript versions seem to have survived in Japan, surely readers were making their own copies and notes as they borrowed the volumes from their acquaintances and made use of the collections at the Shōheikō and other libraries. That is to say, the considerable number of adaptations points to a hidden process wherein imported printed texts gave birth to domestic printed texts through the invisible mediation of manuscript and non-commercial circulation. The dozen or more strange and marvelous Edo-period narratives based on Pu Songling's tales are the surface trace of these hidden practices of borrowing and copying.

Morishima Chūryō's *Tales from the Withering Wind*

The remainder of this article considers the most significant of these adaptations, a collection of tales (*yomihon*) titled *Tales from the Withering Wind: Strange Tales to Make You Clap Your Hands* ([*Hakushō kidan*] *Kogarashi zōshi* 拍掌 奇談 風草紙, 1792).³⁶ The author, the aforementioned Morishima Chūryō, was a member of the prominent Katsuragawa family, hereditary physicians to the shogun. While his older brother, Katsuragawa Hoshū 桂川甫周 (1754-1809), assumed the family mantle and became an accomplished scholar of Dutch learning and medicine, Chūryō, unencumbered by official duties, was free to pursue his own path. From a young age, he came under the tutelage of the polymath author Hiraga Gennai 平賀源内 (1728-1780), with whom he collaborated

³⁶ In his preface, Chūryō writes that “the stories would make good bedtime reading on nights when the autumn wind gusts fiercely,” suggesting that, strictly speaking, “*Tales for the Withering Wind*” might be a more appropriate translation of the title. The phrase “withering wind” also suggests the spine-tingling quality of the otherworldly tales themselves, as well as the bitter weather of early winter, when the preface is dated—not to mention Chūryō's tongue-in-cheek desire that the work might “sell copies as numerous as leaves scattered amidst the withering wind.” See *Kogarashi zōshi*, in Ishigami Satoshi, ed., *Morishima Chūryō shū* (MCS) (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1994), p. 144. Clapping indicates a surprised or amazed reaction, and the subtitle (*tsunogaki*) brings to mind Ling Mengchu's 凌蒙初 (1580-1644) *Slapping the Table in Amazement* (*Pai'an jingqi* 拍案驚奇, 1628).

on several plays for the puppet theater, and in the 1780s he emerged onto the Edo literary scene as an active figure in his own right. It was in the genre of the *sharebon* 洒落本, urbane fiction set in the urban pleasure quarters, that Chūryō arguably made his greatest contribution. His final *sharebon*, *A Provincial Production* (*Inaka shibai* 田舎芝居, 1787), featured a polemical preface denouncing the contemporary taste for sophisticated wit, cruel social satire, and sharp exposé, and the body of the work established a template for dialogue-based fiction set outside the brothel districts, with humor derived from gently comic characterization. This paved the way for later comic narratives such as Jippensha Ikku's 十返舎一九 (1765-1831) *Shank's Mare* (*Tōkaidōchū hizakurige* 東海道中膝栗毛, 1802-1822) and Shikitei Sanba's 式亭三馬 (1776-1822) *Bathhouse of the Floating World* (*Ukiyoburo* 浮世風呂, 1809-1813).

Chūryō pursued Dutch studies as well, and positioned himself as an active participant in a network of scholars that included not only his brother and Gennai, but Ōtsuki Gentaku 大槻玄澤 (1757-1827), the daimyō Kutsuki Masatsuna 朽木昌綱 (1750-1802), and many others. It was through his activities as a de facto scribe for these men's informal discussions that numerous remarkable anecdotes that would otherwise have gone unrecorded made their way into print. Many of these were included in *Various Tales from the Dutch* (*Kōmō zatsuwa* 紅毛雑話, 1787), an accessible collection of short essays on the Dutch and related matters that reached a considerable readership, and its sequel *New Tales of Myriad Lands* (*Bankoku shinwa* 萬國新話, 1789). Chūryō also wrote or planned studies of Ryūkyū, Korea, and rural Japan, compiled the first published Japanese-Dutch dictionary, gathered castaways' reports of foreign lands, and maintained a scrapbook into which he pasted merchandise seals, snippets of foreign text, and other ephemera. All of this paints a picture of Chūryō, not unlike Pu Songling, as a collector of tales. His manuscript collection of castaway narratives, *Strange Reports from Overseas* (*Kaigai ibun* 海外異聞, c. late 1780s-1809), as a compilation of nearly sixty accounts of foreign lands dating back to the late sixteenth century, is particularly striking for its broad parallels to *Liaozhai*, which extend not only to its title, structure, and to a certain extent the content itself, but to the work's preface, with its description of a voluminous set of strange tales scattered across the compiler's desk.³⁷

Tales from the Withering Wind, too, is an act of collecting and salvaging the strange. Six of the collection's nine stories are primarily adaptations from *Liaozhai*, making it the most substantial engagement with Pu Songling in all of Edo fiction.³⁸

³⁷ The preface and afterword are reproduced in Okada Kesao, "Morishima Chūryō no mita kaihi no bunka: *Kōmō zatsuwa*, *Bankoku shinwa* o chūshin ni," *Kokubungaku kenkyū* 151 (2007), pp. 69-70.

³⁸ A seventh draws in part on *Liaozhai*. The full extent of Chūryō's debt to Pu Songling was first explored in Tokuda Takeshi's article "Kogarashi zōshi to Ryōsai shi" (1980), in *Nihon kinsei shōsetsu to Chūgoku shōsetsu*, pp. 336-70.

Indeed, although Chūryō does not explicitly acknowledge his source, his description of his collection in its preface as a “rare book” (*chinsho* 珍書) suggests both the strangeness of its source material and *Liaozhai*’s literal rarity as a text in Japan. Salvaging, Linda Hutcheon observes, is the flipside of literary appropriation. This notion had a foundational place in the East Asian tradition, where authors of tales of the strange often claimed, borrowing Confucius’ words, to “transmit but not create.”³⁹ But transmission is not a passive process. It involves gathering, selecting, revising, rewriting, and anthologizing—in short, choosing what to pass on (and what not) and in what form. As a transmitter, Chūryō shows a keen eye, his choices including two *Liaozhai* stories now considered among the finest: “The Painted Skin” (*Hua pi* 畫皮) and “The Cricket” (*Cuzhi* 促織).

That said, *Tales from the Withering Wind* is more than simply an exercise in salvaging what remains available elsewhere. For Pu Songling and other chroniclers of the strange, “transmitting but not creating” was often more literary conceit than actual practice. Chūryō, as an adapter, is more forthcoming about his work’s fictionality, but he still nods to the blurring of fact and fiction, writing in his preface that he had “written up a slew of utter fictions as if they had actually happened.” Modern readers are inclined to view adaptations with suspicion or contempt, as derivative and inferior versions of the “original,” but writers in the Japanese and Chinese tradition were less burdened by such anxieties of influence. The ability to work skillfully within the confines of tradition was not only acceptable, but a key measure of literary value. Indeed, Chūryō shows great creativity in adapting his sources to a new language and cultural context, transforming and interweaving storylines, adding a profusion of colorful detail, and enriching his narratives with a dense web of allusion drawing on a wide swath of the Chinese and Japanese literary tradition.

Chūryō foregrounds this intertextuality in his preface, which he signs with the pseudonym Master Shinra (Shinrashi 森羅子), a shortening of his often-used comic penname Shinra Manzō 森羅万象 that further suggests a reading as “a new Master Luo” (Shin-Rashi 新羅子). That is, he slyly positions himself as a modern-day Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中 (J. Ra Kanchū), the author to whom *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *The Water Margin* were conventionally attributed. Chūryō also models himself after Tsuga Teishō 都賀庭鐘 (1718-c. 1794), addressing his readers, in a self-deprecatory nod to the preface to *A Garland of Stories* (*Hanabusa sōshi* 英草紙, 1749), with the caveat that “the words and phrases that blossom forth from these pages are clumsy, and you may privately consider them unrefined.”⁴⁰ The beginning of Chūryō’s preface elaborates on

³⁹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 8. The Confucius quotation is from the *Analects*, 7.1.

⁴⁰ *Kogarashi zōshi*, in *MCS*, p. 144. Teishō writes: “All you gentlemen who read this, you will find that our unadorned phrases do not do justice to the word ‘garland,’ but if you would overlook this it would bring us great happiness.” See *Hanabusa sōshi*, in Nakamura Yukihiko, Takada

his literary lineage, tracing a progression from *New Tales by Lamplight* and the vernacular stories of Feng Menglong and others through their Japanese adaptations in the hands of Ryōi, Teishō, and their imitators. The account echoes in miniature the history of Chinese fiction presented in Feng's preface to *Stories Old and New* (*Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小説, 1620-1621), and as such is sometimes cited for its value demonstrating the contemporary understanding of the historical progression from Chinese tales to the Edo *yomihon* by way of the Kamigata *yomihon* and its imitators.

Nevertheless, Chūryō omits mention of two figures of particular significance to his own work. The first of these, Pu Songling himself, may seem to have been neglected in an effort to pass off the relatively unfamiliar plots as Chūryō's own. Given, however, that Chūryō openly positions his work within the tradition of Japanese adaptations of Chinese fiction, the reason likely lay elsewhere. For one, to spell out one's sources, which in Chūryō's case included several other works in addition to *Liaozhai*, was to spoil the enjoyment readers derived from making such connections themselves. It would also have broken with convention. Ryōi and Teishō had themselves refrained from naming their sources, and this did not, as Chūryō's preface indicates, prevent others from identifying the collections from which they had drawn their material.

The second figure conspicuously absent from Chūryō's preface is Ueda Akinari 上田秋成 (1734-1809). Yet regardless of the fact that *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* (*Ugetsu monogatari* 雨月物語, 1776) had not yet achieved the canonical status it enjoys today, *Tales from the Withering Wind* shows the subtle influence of its predecessor both in occasional resonances in the choice of setting and in glancing allusions in the prose itself.⁴¹ As a whole, too, Chūryō's collection has many features in common with the adaptations of Akinari and Teishō. He writes in a highly allusive style, drawing on almost the full range of the classical Japanese tradition and including many learned disquisitions in a Chinese vein. His collection, moreover, comprises a set of nine independent stories set throughout the country—from the distant, rural north to the northern coast of Kyushu; from the environs of Edo to the outskirts of Kyoto. Yet none of the tales takes place *in* the cities where many writers made their home, and all are set at a remove in time, too, typically in a specific historical context where the specter of warfare lurks beneath the surface.

Mamoru, and Nakamura Hiroyasu, eds., *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, vol. 78 (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1995), p. 20. Ōtaka Yōji notes the parallel in "Edo yomihon no tenkai: Kansei, Kyōwa nenkan," in Yokoyama Kuniharu, ed., *Yomihon no sekai: Edo to Kamigata* (Tokyo: Sekai shisōsha, 1985), p. 11.

⁴¹ Chūryō was clearly familiar with *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* and was possibly the first to attribute the work to Akinari. See Ishigami Satoshi, "Kaidai," in *MCS*, p. 386, and Sonoda Yutaka, "Kogarashi zōshi to *Ugetsu monogatari*," *Edo sōsho bunko geppō* 32 (accompanying *MCS*) (1994), p. 7.

In these regards, *Tales from the Withering Wind* might be described as a Kamigata *yomihon* written by a son of Edo. Chūryō's lifestyle would seem to support such a reading: free to reside in his brother's household without financial concern, he can be seen as a *bunjin* literatus of the sort associated with Akinari and his generation. At the same time, however, Chūryō's preface concludes with a plea for money and a reference to his desperate publisher which, while tongue-in-cheek, point to the *yomihon*'s increased commercialization and the rise of the Edo professional. And the work itself also looks forward to the stylistically distinct Edo *yomihon* that would come into its own in the following decades. Compared to the works of Teishō and Akinari, the tales are written in a more accessible, vernacular style and feature scenes of a more gruesome, visceral nature, and one observes as well something of the didacticism that was to become a conspicuous feature of later narrative fiction.⁴²

It might be more accurate, then, to consider Chūryō's collection as representing a transitional phase between the Kamigata and Edo *yomihon*. A close reading of several tales in the following section brings the work's particular qualities into clearer focus. At the same time that Chūryō's tales are positioned in relation to those of his precursors, particularly Akinari and Ryōi, in their overt didacticism, and even an undercurrent of satire, one also sees a reflection of the unique political context of 1790s Japan.

Tales from the Withering Wind: Obsession, Didacticism, and Satire

Nowhere is Chūryō's immersion in the world of his Kamigata forebears more evident than in the fifth tale of the collection, an adaptation of Pu's "The Gentleman from Fengyang" (*Fengyang shiren* 鳳陽士人) that evokes the allusivity, mystery, and poetic qualities of Akinari in particular.⁴³ Many of Chūryō's stories hinge on characters' unexpected encounters with apparitions who appear as manifestations of their anxieties, obsessions, and desires. Judith Zeitlin observes obsession to be the site of boundary-crossing between subjects and objects in *Liaozhai*.⁴⁴ The distance between the obsessed and the object of his or her obsession is closed by the "strange," linking the world of ordinary experience and the realm of spirits, ghosts, and the supernatural. Chūryō's fifth story, titled "How Three People Were Strangely Wounded in a Dream" (*Muchū no kai sannin kizu o etaru koto* 夢中の怪三人疵を得たる話), features just such an unexpected,

⁴² Bakin's work in particular is often characterized as "promoting virtue and chastising vice" (*kanzen chōaku* 勧善懲悪), a phrase with a long history in Sino-Japanese literary discourse that came to be closely associated with him through the criticism of Tsubouchi Shōyō 坪内逍遙 (1859-1935).

⁴³ Following the example of Teishō, the titles of Chūryō's tales are often somewhat unwieldy, and the character 話, ordinarily read *hanashi*, is consistently glossed *koto*.

⁴⁴ Judith T. Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 61-97.

boundary-crossing encounter, and it blurs the line between dream and reality, as well, depicting a wife, husband, and brother separated in space but joined by a dream whose effects carry into the waking world.

The story unfolds in the Kyōroku era (1528-1532), the turmoil of the period never mentioned but always lurking as an element of uncertainty behind the scene. The story begins as the horseman Tsuzuki Oribe sets off from his home outside Kyoto to acquire wild horses in the distant east. Months pass without word, and his wife, Shizu, can scarcely endure the pain of separation. Then one autumn night, as she gazes out at the full moon rising in the east, a beautiful girl appears at her side and promises to reunite her with her husband:

Soon the summer he had promised to return came and went, and it was halfway through autumn. Yet still there was no trace of a letter, no hint of news. And so his wife, Shizu, lay alone in their bedchamber, filled with longing.

One autumn night, her sleeves drenched with dew, she gazed eastward at the clear, full moon, thinking *he* must be out there, beneath the distant sky. Would that news might arrive, borne on the wings of the first geese of autumn! As she stood there, her face wracked with sorrow, there was a slight noise as someone slipped in quietly behind her.⁴⁵

With this, the narrative shifts seamlessly into the dream. The girl takes Shizu by the hand and leads her into the clear, bright night toward a promised reunion with Oribe.

It is significant that the shift into the dream takes place as Shizu gazes out at the moon. As in Pu Songling's telling, the unusual brightness of the moonlight amplifies the wife's desire for her husband. But the moon, as that which remains visible to lovers separated by distance, is also a conventional site of longing in Japanese verse. Through the sheer intensity of her desire, Shizu collapses that distance.

Chūryō imparts further significance to the scene through resonances with Akinari and Ryōi. Shizu's predicament shows a striking resemblance to that of Miyagi, the faithful wife in Akinari's "The Reed-Choked House" (*Asaji ga yado* 浅茅が宿) who waits at home through summer and autumn but receives no word from the husband who is separated from her by the Ōsaka Barrier.⁴⁶ The passage also brings to mind the story "A Girl's Spirit Sends a Letter to Her Mother and Father" (*Yūrei sho o bumo ni tsukawas* 幽霊書を父母につかはす) in Ryōi's *Talisman Dolls*. At the end of Ryōi's narrative, the ghost of the female protagonist entrusts a servant with a letter for her parents in far-off Ōmi. The letter relates the longing she feels as, like Shizu, she gazes off at "the distant sky" (*sonata no sora*) and, in an evocation of the legend of Su Wu

⁴⁵ Kogarashi zōshi, in MCS, p. 191.

⁴⁶ Sonoda, "Kogarashi zōshi to Ugetsu monogatari," p. 6.

famously told at the end of the second chapter of *The Tale of the Heike*, hopes in vain that the autumn geese might bring tidings.⁴⁷

As Chūryō's narrative continues, Shizu and the girl wend their way into the night. Eventually Shizu's wooden sandals cause her foot to bleed, and she stops to bind the wound. The girl then takes her by the hand, and the two fly rapidly over the landscape until they arrive at the Ōsaka Barrier, the lovers' "slope of meeting" from classical verse referenced, too, in the poem Miyagi composes in her husband's absence: "I cannot convey my bitter sorrow—tell him, cock of the Ōsaka Barrier, that autumn too will soon pass."⁴⁸ Shizu and the girl then watch as the director of the imperial stables and his retinue process by with dozens of horses. Among the crowd following behind is Oribe, resplendently attired atop a chestnut steed and wearing a wide, lacquered bamboo hat.

Following a tearful reunion, the girl leads the couple to a nearby house, where a banquet awaits. Elegant women provide musical entertainment, and Oribe and the girl grow increasingly intimate with each cup of wine. At length the two retire to an adjacent room, while Shizu looks on helplessly, only now realizing that the house is in fact a brothel. In great distress she runs until she comes to a nearby river. As she is about to throw herself in, a man runs up from behind to restrain her. Thinking it is her husband, Shizu struggles with him and sinks her teeth into his shoulder. It is, however, her younger brother Tōhachi, who, upon finding her missing at home, divined her location and raced in pursuit. Shizu tells him everything that has happened. They then race back to the brothel, where Tōhachi hurls a rock at the girl but strikes and kills Oribe instead. Shizu collapses to the floor.

A moment later she awakens in bed. Her dream is over, yet the pain lingers in her foot, and when she inspects it she discovers it has been tightly wrapped with her sash. The flesh beneath is bloody and torn. The following morning a servant runs in to announce Oribe's return. Hurrying out to greet her husband, Shizu finds him astride a chestnut horse, wearing a wide, lacquered bamboo hat. As he takes off the hat, she notices a large wound on his forehead. Thinking it all very strange, she tells him about her dream, and he reveals that he had the very same dream the night before at an inn by the Ōsaka Barrier. A few moments later, Tōhachi appears, having heard of Oribe's return. He, too, had the same dream, with the tooth marks to show for it.

There is a certain didacticism inherent in the linking of obsession and the strange. The inability to control one's desires is shown to have unexpected, potentially dangerous consequences. But where for Pu this didacticism is often seen in the service of social criticism, in Chūryō, through his decision to set his stories almost uniformly against the upheaval of the distant past, one detects an implicit celebration of the Tokugawa regime.

⁴⁷ Matsuda Osamu, Watanabe Morikuni, and Hanada Fujio, eds., *Otogibōko*, in *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 75 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2001), p. 354.

⁴⁸ *Ugetsu monogatari*, in Nakamura Yukihiro, ed., *Ueda Akinari shū*, in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 56 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1959), p. 61.

There is of course convention to consider, as earlier narratives such as those of Ryōi or Akinari often feature a backdrop of historical unrest. However, one discerns in *Tales from the Withering Wind* a political conservatism in other regards, as well—a quality which, while not completely unambiguous, sets the work apart from these predecessors.

This conservatism comes in the context of the Kansei Reforms, a series of regulations issued between 1787 and 1793 under the leadership of the new senior councilor to the shogun, Matsudaira Sadanobu. The reforms represented the bakufu's attempt to rectify a perceived decline in public morality and affected aspects of everyday life including gambling, prostitution, public bathing, fashion, and the publishing industry—the last of which was seen as encouraging excess or impropriety in the rest. In 1790, several edicts were issued restricting politically sensitive content and anonymous authorship, formalizing censorship regimes, banning the use of historical settings to mask satirical intent, and, more broadly, forbidding all works deemed injurious to public morals.⁴⁹ Lest the publishing world not take these restrictions seriously, the authorities chose to make an example of one of the most popular authors of the day. Three of Santō Kyōden's 山東京傳 (1761-1816) *sharebon* were deemed in violation of the new regulations, and he was placed under house arrest, in manacles, for fifty days. While Chūryō had in fact already turned his back on the sort of risqué material that invited trouble for Kyōden, in this political climate the *yomihon* presented an appealingly safe realm for future literary expression.

Chūryō was not always content, however, merely to let his depictions of the consequences of obsession, impropriety, and excess speak for themselves. In a move suggesting complicity with Sadanobu's reform program, a number of his stories spell out their lessons in no uncertain terms. Such is the case with the second tale in the collection, "How the Lesser Monk of Yokawa Vanquished an Evil Spirit" (*Yokawa no kohijiri akuryō o gōbuku suru koto* 横河の小聖悪霊を降伏する話), an adaptation of what is now arguably the most popular of Pu Songling's tales, "The Painted Skin."⁵⁰ Expanded through a wealth of allusion and detail to several times the length of the original, not only is it the longest of Chūryō's nine stories, but it can be seen to constitute the collection's thematic center of gravity, as well.

In "The Painted Skin," a gentleman named Wang approaches a beautiful young girl on the road and strikes up a conversation. Learning that she has fled a household where she was sent as a concubine and abused, he takes her in and houses her secretly in his private study. The two soon become intimate, and when Wang tells his wife he has taken a mistress, she urges him to end the arrangement lest the girl prove to have run away from a powerful family. He ignores her warning. Several days later, in the marketplace, a Daoist priest informs Wang that his life is in grave danger. He returns to

⁴⁹ The edicts are reprinted in Takayanagi Shinzō and Ishii Ryōsuke, eds., *Ofuregaki shūsei*, vol. 5: *Ofuregaki Tenpō shūsei (ge)* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1941), pp. 809-10.

⁵⁰ A full annotated translation of this story is appended at the end of the present article.

his study to find the door bolted shut. Peering through a window, he looks on as a hideous demon dons a human pelt, transforming itself back into the form of the young girl. Terrified, he locates the priest once more and receives a talisman to ward off the demon. That night, as he lies in bed with his wife, the girl reappears and storms into the bedroom, undeterred by the charm. She tears out Wang's heart and disappears into the night.

The following morning, Wang's younger brother sets out and locates the priest yet again. Together they track down the demon, which has now assumed the guise of an old woman, and the priest dispatches her with a swing of a wooden sword. Wang's wife then begs him to use his powers to bring her husband back from the dead, but he instructs her to seek help instead from a beggar in the marketplace. She finds this man and swallows a lump of phlegm he commands her to eat, dutifully observing the priest's instructions not to offend him on any account. The beggar then wanders off, and she returns home in shame. But as she prepares her husband's corpse, Wang's wife feels the phlegm suddenly rise in her throat and spits it out into his open chest cavity. It has become his beating heart. She binds up the wound, and by the following morning he is restored to health.

Chūryō's adaptation preserves much of this broad outline, but introduces several significant variations and a wealth of allusions to Chinese and Japanese classics. In Wang's place is Kuranuki Koyata, a handsome, refined samurai from the province of Mutsu in the far north. Koyata's ancestors served with distinction in the Later Three Years' War (*Gosannen no eki*) at the end of the late eleventh century, but he himself shows little interest in or aptitude for the martial arts. Instead, he devotes himself exclusively to the composition of poetry. His obsession so consumes him that he turns over the affairs of his main residence to his wife and moves into a small cottage in the mountains where he is able to read and write poetry without distraction.

One autumn evening Koyata hears the sound of crying outside his door. When he goes to look, he finds an attractive girl about sixteen years of age. He consoles her, and the girl, whose name is Uta (meaning "poem" or "song"), relates her tale of sorrow. She was born in Kyoto, but taken eastward after her parents indentured her to an itinerant merchant. When the man attempted to make her his mistress, his wife grew jealous and took to beating the girl viciously. Having narrowly escaped, Uta seems determined to take her own life, but Koyata comforts her and insists that she stay with him until her wounds heal. He promises to find someone to take her back to Kyoto. The girl is overcome with gratitude, and Koyata, too, though "the match of Liuxia Hui" in his moral rectitude, finds himself succumbing to her charms. They spend the night in each other's embrace.

As Ōtaka Yōji observes, Koyata's qualities are not unlike those of Toyoo, the polished but effete protagonist of Akinari's "The Serpent's Lust."⁵¹ Uta, too, bears similarity to Manago, Toyoo's deadly amorous interest. Toyoo first meets her when they

⁵¹ Ōtaka, "Edo yomihon no tenkai," p. 13.

both take shelter in a small hut during a sudden late-autumn downpour. Uta appears on Koyata's doorstep even more desperate, a vulnerable maiden on the verge of taking her own life—like Manago, an elegant beauty from the capital met with hardship in the provinces. The parallels with Akinari underscore Koyata's vulnerability and foreshadow his fate. Indeed, when he passes an itinerant monk on the road one day the seer remarks in a low voice on the aura of death he senses. The moment corresponds to Wang's encounter with the Daoist priest, but also suggests the broadly similar encounter in "A Serpent's Lust" in which an old man recognizes Manago's true nature and offers Toyoo his help. While it is increasingly apparent that Uta is not what she seems, Koyata remains oblivious and gives the incident little thought. Pu Songling's commentary at the end of his tale rings true: "How foolish men are, to see nothing but beauty in what is clearly evil!"⁵²

Koyata returns to his cottage and sneaks up to the window to surprise Uta, but when he peers inside he sees instead a hideous demon with prickly hair, messy fangs, and gleaming eyes (see the accompanying illustration by Kitao Masayoshi 北尾政美 [1764-1824], which appears on page 106). *Tales of Ise* is an important source of literary material throughout Chūryō's collection, and here Koyata, alluding to the famous sixth episode, first thinks she has been "swallowed in a single gulp." He readies his sword. But the very next moment the creature pulls a hide over its head and transforms back into Uta. Both Chūryō's prose and Masayoshi's illustration evoke the act of *kaimami*, the illicit peeping that is central to courtship in the world of *Tales of Ise* and other Heian texts. Here the conventional power imbalance is quickly flipped on end. Koyata peers through a gap and realizes in horror that it is he who is the prey.

The sequence of events that follows, culminating in Koyata's violent death, closely parallels the end of Akinari's "The Kibitsu Cauldron" (*Kibitsu no kama* 吉備津の釜).⁵³ Koyata flees in terror and locates the monk, who gives him a charm to ward off the demon. He rushes home to his main residence, affixes the charm to the gate, and bolts himself in. His wife, Ayase, is shocked as she learns for the first time of his precarious situation. Then they wait, the passage of time captured in evocative turns of phrase, until a violent storm blows up late that night and Uta appears at the gate. The charm only enrages her further, and she tears down the earthen wall, circumventing the gate altogether. She appears at Koyata's bedside and rips out his heart. Declaring that she has at last achieved vengeance against "an ancient foe," she eagerly gulps it down.

The next morning the monk appears at the door to inquire about the events of the night before. He leads Ayase and her men deep into the forest, where they find Uta and

⁵² Zhang Youhe, ed., *Liaozhai zhiyi: huijiao huizhu huiping ben* (LZ), 3 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), p. 123. Translated in John Minford, tr., *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 521.

⁵³ Tokuda, "Kogarashi zōshi to Ryōsai shii," p. 340. For the relevant section in Akinari's text, see Chambers, tr., *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, pp. 150-52.

he vanquishes her with a single blow from his staff. Impressed by his extraordinary powers, Ayase begs him to bring her husband back from the dead. The monk sends her in search of a seeker who can help. Ayase and her men eventually come across a leprous beggar she is certain must be the one. She steels herself and accedes to the man's demands, sucking his sores to ease the pain and eating a lump of filthy rice that glistens with his thick phlegm. In the end she is left disappointed and humiliated with nothing to show for it. But when she returns home to tend to her husband's body, the rice begins to churn in her stomach:

As the stench of blood assaulted her nostrils, the lump rose into her mouth. She raised her hand to stop it, but out it came, dropping straight into the open wound. When she looked down, there was a pool of fresh, hot blood. In the middle was the lump of rice. It had landed right in Koyata's chest cavity, where it lay jumping about vigorously. As she stared at it, there could be no doubt. It was his heart.⁵⁴

Koyata gradually recovers, all that remains of his wound a thin red scar from his chest down to the abdomen.

As in a number of Chūryō's stories, "The Lesser Monk of Yokawa" features some of the overt didacticism that was to become a prominent feature of later *yomihon*. Certainly the source material offered readers a cautionary tale, as alluded to in Pu Songling's concluding remarks and addressed head-on in Dan Minglun's 但明倫 (1782-1853) 1842 commentary, in which he writes: "A man who lets a ghost into his own room, ignores his wife's warning, and is blind to the advice of the Daoist priest, is clearly a man in the grip of a serious sexual delusion."⁵⁵ The dangers of desire is also the lesson Toyoo draws from his ordeal when the old man helps him recognize Manago's true nature: "It is because of the lack of virtue in my heart," he reflects, "that I have been bewitched by the creature these months and years."⁵⁶

But this theme is less pronounced in Chūryō's tale. Koyata is a more passive figure than Wang, and instead of actively initiating interaction with the girl, he has her show up unexpectedly at his door. Nor must he resist his wife's remonstrations. Unlike Wang's wife, Ayase does not warn her husband of danger, as she only learns of his situation after it is already too late. In fact, if we are to interpret Koyata's words to Uta as truthful (and not merely designed to coax her into a relationship), his infertile wife has urged him to take a mistress and he is acting in part at her urging.⁵⁷ Koyata does show

⁵⁴ *Kogarashi zōshi*, in *MCS*, p. 177. See page 114 in the accompanying translation.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Minford, tr., *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, p. 521.

⁵⁶ *Ugetsu monogatari*, in Nakamura, ed., *Ueda Akinari shū*, p. 115.

⁵⁷ See *Kogarashi zōshi*, in *MCS*, p. 164, and page 104 in the accompanying translation.

momentary resolve when he prepares to attack the demon he believes to have devoured Uta, but when he realizes that the demon *is* Uta, this resolve completely dissipates.

The theme of unrestrained sexual desire is overshadowed by an emphasis on the dangers of physical weakness. The morning after Koyata's death, the monk explains the event as having been brought about by the vengeful spirits of women killed by Koyata's ancestors in the Later Three Years' War. Having neglected the warrior's arts valued by his clan for generations, Koyata left himself vulnerable to their trap. More than the dangers of sexual attraction, then, the underlying lesson concerns failure to uphold the samurai's martial traditions. Indeed, the particular obsession that distracts Koyata from his duties is suggested in the girl's very name, Uta, meaning "poetry."

In some sense, the didacticism that runs through many of Chūryō's stories is the inevitable byproduct of the causal linkage of anomalous behavior and anomalous events. Much like Akinari or Pu, in showing the strange to arise through obsession, impropriety, or warfare, he can be seen to criticize these things. But Chūryō frames his stories in a way that brings such implicit didacticism to the surface. For one, he builds a firmer contextual foundation than *Liaozhai*, introducing protagonists more carefully, describing their appearances and backgrounds, often giving them pedigrees dating to actual historical personages, and always placing them in specific settings. Pu, by contrast, typically gives his characters only a surname, if that, and they often appear on the scene with little by way of introduction.

This sort of framing comes at the expense of some of the very "strangeness" of the original. In "The Gentleman from Fengyang," for instance, Pu concludes his tale enigmatically: "But no one knew who the beautiful girl was."⁵⁸ Chūryō's adaptation resolves this vagary, as a diviner reveals the girl to have been the spirit of a prostitute whose grave Oribe inadvertently trampled on his way home. The reader is granted a moment of uncertainty, but it quickly dissipates. Feng Zhenluan 馮鎮巒 (1760-1830) hones in on this issue in his 1818 *Liaozhai* commentary. Feng objects to a reader's complaint that the protagonist of another tale appears and disappears with no explanation, arguing that it was precisely this that gave the story its otherworldliness.⁵⁹

The same might be said of "The Painted Skin," in which Wang launches into his interaction with the girl in the very first sentence and makes but a brief concluding remark about the painful dreamlike state he endured while he was "dead." Koyata, in contrast, encounters Uta only after a substantial account of his noble ancestry, elegant comportment, and, most importantly of all, his all-consuming devotion to poetry. The end of "The Lesser Monk of Yokawa" features a similar, complementary bookend. Neither in this tale nor in any of Chūryō's others are there appended commentaries in the manner of those of Pu Songling's "Chronicler of the Strange" (*yi shi shi* 異史氏). Instead, the story's closing lines present Koyata's self-reflection and recognition of his

⁵⁸ LZ, p. 190.

⁵⁹ LZ, p. 301.

errant ways, concluding with his successful atonement for past sins: “With the brush at his left hand and the sword at his right, he soon restored the luster to his clan’s name.”⁶⁰

Among the most recognizable slogans of the Kansei Reforms was the exhortation for samurai to uphold “the twin paths of the literary and martial arts” (*bunbu nidō*)—the “brush” and the “sword” directly referenced in this final line. As suggested above, Chūryō’s very decision to turn to the *yomihon* suggests a degree of compliance with the Reforms, which sought to rein in the excesses of other genres of popular fiction. In fact, following the publication of *Tales from the Withering Wind*, Chūryō went on to enter the service of Sadanobu, likely beginning late in 1792 and ending in 1797.⁶¹ Among his writings from this interval is *Lessons from a Provincial Capital* (*Hitokotogusa* 鄙都言種, 1796), an illustrated collection of edifying anecdotes designed to be read by parents to their children.

At the same time, while all this suggests a writer closely aligned with contemporary political concerns, it is of course possible that Chūryō’s complicity reflects a practical strategy more than genuine ideological alignment. Indeed, his didacticism can often seem merely perfunctory. In “The Lesser Monk of Yokawa,” much of the reflection on virtue comes in the two formulaic bookends slapped on either side of the titillating and gruesome sequence of events that constitutes the bulk of the narrative. More striking still is the sixth tale in the collection, an adaptation of “The Cricket” titled “A Filial Son’s Spirit Enters a Gamecock and Brings Fortune to His Parents” (*Kōshi no konpaku niwatori to narite chichihaha ni saiwai o ataetaru koto* 孝子の魂魄鶏と成て父母に福を与へたる話) in which Chūryō hones the satirical element of *Liaozhai*. The story’s account of tyrannical rule and peasant hardship can be read as a critique of the shogunal regime not only in its general plot but also on the basis of specific textual clues, and it offers the strongest complication of the author’s apparent political complicity.

The narrative is set in the early fourteenth century at the end of the Kamakura bakufu, under the regency of Hōjō no Takatoki. In place of Koyata’s poetry, Takatoki’s preoccupation is with cock-fighting, his enthusiasm for which we are told “penetrated to the very marrow of his bones.” Aside from recounting his relish for the pastime, the opening passages offer a series of learned and cautionary references concerning the subject at hand, from the case of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang, whose obsession with cock-fighting portended armed conflict, to the sixth-century-BCE feud between the Ji and the Hou, which had its origin in devious tactics used in a cock-fight but later “went so far as to destroy the state.”⁶² While many officials eagerly join Takatoki in his new passion, one man, a Confucian scholar named Nakanori, cites past precedent and predicts calamity.

⁶⁰ *Kogarashi zōshi*, in *MCS*, p. 177. See page 115 in the accompanying translation.

⁶¹ See Ōtsuki Nyoden, ed., *Shinsen yōgaku nenpyō* (Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shigeo, 1927), p. 77.

⁶² Accounts of the feud appear in the *Shiji*, chapter 33, the *Huainanzi*, book 18, and the *Zuo zhuan*, Zhao 25. Chūryō quotes from the *Huainanzi* version.

Following the initial framing, the narrative turns to the consequences of Takatoki's demands for the nearby Kanazawa domain. The domain's governor, Jōen, has endured the indignity of watching all the birds he submitted to Takatoki suffer defeat, but he redoubles his efforts and orders his retainer Agata Tannai to levy one bird from each household in the domain before the upcoming fight. Anyone unable to comply is to be severely punished. Tannai, who realizes that few worthy birds remain in the province, makes it known that he is willing to accept inferior specimens in exchange for a suitable bribe.

At this point we are introduced to Yoji, an unfailingly upright peasant who reveres Jōen with all his being. While his neighbors all furnish the requisite bribe, Yoji considers this an offense to Jōen and is beaten by Tannai for his failure to go along with the arrangement. When the latest birds are inevitably defeated, Jōen discovers Tannai's scheme and has him executed. Jōen's concern, however, is with his own personal humiliation, not the hardship that has been inflicted on his people. He issues another decree and warns that attempts to bribe his men into accepting inferior birds will be severely punished.

More determined than ever, Yoji sets off across Edo Bay to Kazusa Province, where he succeeds in finding a worthy specimen. Shortly after his return, however, his eleven-year-old son, Yonosuke, releases the bird from its cage. It flies straight into the jaws of the neighbor's dog. When Yoji discovers what has happened, he storms off in search of the boy only to find his body floating in a nearby well.

Yoji and his wife pass the night in grief, and the next morning he prepares to go receive his punishment a second time. That very moment, however, they hear a fluttering of wings outside the gate. Yoji rushes out and finds that the bird has revived and is more vigorous than ever. He watches as it drives its spurs between the eyes of the neighbor's attacking dog, killing it effortlessly. Takatoki is delighted to receive such a worthy bird, and Jōen passes on a portion of his lavish reward to Yoji.

The summary thus far suggests that, as in the adaptation of "The Painted Skin," Pu's original is supplemented with a healthy dose of didacticism. Here, too, the historical contextualization that opens the tale is paired with a tidy moralistic conclusion emphasizing the virtues of loyalty and filial piety. The following night, Yonosuke appears to his parents in their dreams. He tells them that after falling into the well he found himself in the underworld, where he was received by Enma, the king of hell. Impressed by Yonosuke's filial pleas and Yoji's loyalty to his ruler, Enma cast the boy's spirit into the dead gamecock to allow him to bring honor to his father. Having accomplished this, his spirit has been planted back in his mother's womb. Sure enough, Yoji's wife becomes pregnant and bears a son who resembles Yonosuke in every way, and the family prospers in the years that follow.

Chūryō's foregrounding of the themes of personal virtue and loyalty represents an important point of departure from his source material. At the same time, however, he retains Pu's concern with the depiction of oppressive rule and the hardship it inflicts. Hōjō Takatoki is chosen for his image in popular consciousness as an archetype of the

debauched, unvirtuous tyrant. This image originates in the *Taiheiki*, where it is an enthusiasm for dog-fighting that “penetrated to the very marrow of his bones” and prompts a Confucian scholar named Nakanori to declare that Takatoki’s actions portend the fall of the state.⁶³ Chūryō borrows extensively from the *Taiheiki*’s account of Takatoki, at times lifting entire turns of phrase.

Both Tokuda Takeshi and Ishigami Satoshi read *Tales from the Withering Wind* as including an element of political criticism.⁶⁴ Tokuda sees a rather broadly conceived critique, if not of the feudal system as a whole, then of those who abuse power and fail to rule with benevolence. Ishigami’s interpretations tend to be more narrowly focused, but they hinge on open-ended evidence that largely fails to convince. Both scholars read a general critique of the Tokugawa regime into the story of Takatoki and his unvirtuous underlings. Yet while Tokuda notes that the abuses of power depicted are even more egregious in Chūryō’s adaptation than in Pu’s original, neither he nor Ishigami provides any specific links between the historical world of the story and the Kansei era in which it was written. They only convince that the tale is a general satire of corruption and misrule, not a targeted satire challenging the current regime.

Yet if any of Chūryō’s tales has the potential to be construed as such, it is this one. Certainly there is precedent for the use of Takatoki as a stand-in for the shogun, most famously and unambiguously in Chikamatsu’s satirical puppet play *The Sagami Lay Monk and the Thousand Dogs* (*Sagami nyūdō senbiki no inu* 相模入道千疋犬, premiered 1714).⁶⁵ Jōen, for his part, is introduced as “the lay monk Kanazawa no Taifu Jōen,” clearly suggesting Takatoki’s adviser and successor as regent, Kanezawa Sadaaki, who is referred to in the *Taiheiki* as “the lay monk Kanazawa no Taifu Sōken.” The reason for the name change becomes clear if we accept the reading of Takatoki as the shogun Ienari. Under this scheme, Jōen and Tannai, as Takatoki’s agents and the effective wielders of power, can be seen to represent Ienari’s senior councilors. Tannai, who is both heartless and corrupt in his execution of the first round of requisitions, evokes Sadanobu’s predecessor Tanuma Okitsugu both in name and action. Jōen, who relieves Tannai of duty, corresponds then to Sadanobu himself. He is equally ruthless, but eliminates corruption; indeed, while Yoji’s fellow peasants resent Jōen’s crackdown on bribery, Yoji is delighted by his straightforwardness. The reading of Jōen as Sadanobu also explains the change of Sōken’s name: the first character of Jōen’s name, *jō* 定, is the “Sada” of Sadanobu.

⁶³ See Helen Craig McCullough, tr., *The Taiheiki: A Chronicle of Medieval Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 131-33.

⁶⁴ See Tokuda, “*Kogarashi zōshi to Ryōsai shii*,” p. 352, and Ishigami, “*Kogarashi zōshi ron*: Morishima Chūryō no taisei hihan,” *Kōdai kokubun ronkō* 27 (1999), pp. 10-20.

⁶⁵ On this work, see Donald H. Shively, “Chikamatsu’s Satire on the Dog Shogun,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 18.1/2 (1955), pp. 159-80.

One observes in this satirical undercurrent to the tale the flipside of the literary convention of setting *yomihon* in the historical past. The same device that suggested complicity with the regime in the tales discussed above here makes possible a reading suggesting a challenge to the status quo. Indeed, the multivalence of Chūryō's collection in this and other regards serves to enhance the already considerable appeal of his strange tales. In a preface to a later *yomihon*, published a decade later, Chūryō claimed that *Tales from the Withering Wind* remained "as popular as the day it was written." We may question his impartiality, as the work's author, but it is true at least that the tales achieved sufficient popular success that they were reissued with new illustrations in 1818 (and then again in 1833) in an unauthorized edition titled *Tales of Unrivalled Strangeness* ([Katakiuchi] *Kōsei kidan* 復讐世奇談), allowing later generations of readers to enjoy them as well.

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“How the Lesser Monk of Yokawa Vanquished an Evil Spirit”
from *Tales from the Withering Wind*, by Morishima Chūryō⁶⁶

Long ago, in the district of Shinobu in the north country, there lived a rural samurai by the name of Kuranuki Koyata.⁶⁷ An ancestor with the same surname had served with distinction for the duration of the Later Three Years’ War and had been rewarded with his own holding of land.⁶⁸ The estate was passed down in uninterrupted succession to Koyata, now the thirteenth generation. Thus was his an exceedingly prosperous family.

At twenty-seven years, Koyata was possessed of clear eyes and a graceful brow. Though born and raised in such a remote locale, in his elegant refinement he was the match of any samurai from the capital. And yet, with the realm long at peace and prosperity in abundance, he neglected the ways of archery and horsemanship, indulging himself solely in the pleasures of poetry. To this end, he had set up a second residence in the mountains of Shinobu, leaving the care of the main house to his wife, Ayase. Sequestering himself in this little cottage, he plumbed the depths of antiquity in pursuit of fragrant blossoms of poetry and traversed seldom-seen stretches of the Way of Shikishima gathering the grasses of verse.⁶⁹

One autumn evening, as the setting sun grew dim behind the trees, the rustle of the wind followed on a flock of wild geese. Ah, how forlorn it was! Even he, one who was free from worries, felt the bleakness of autumn pierce his breast. That very moment, he heard the sound of a woman crying outside the cottage. “How strange!” he thought to

⁶⁶ The translation is based on the text in *MCS*, pp. 162-77, with reference to the original 1792 edition. The two illustrations accompanying the story are reproduced with permission from the copy held by the Library of the Graduate School of Letters and Faculty of Letters, Kyoto University.

⁶⁷ Ōshū (also known as Mutsu Province), the large province encompassing much of the north of the main Japanese island of Honshū, is translated as “north country.” The district of Shinobu occupied the western half of the Fukushima Basin, in the north of what is now Fukushima Prefecture, and included the area that is now the city of Fukushima.

⁶⁸ The Later Three Years’ War (*Gosannen no eki*) took place between 1083 and 1087, with fighting occurring in three of those years. Minamoto no Yoshiie (1039-1106) defeated the Kiyohara clan, hereditary rulers of Dewa Province and Ōshū, the latter recently obtained after they had fought alongside court forces in the Earlier Nine Years’ War (1051-1062). Yoshiie’s victory helped establish Minamoto power in northeastern Japan, bringing stability to the region.

⁶⁹ Shikishima was the residence of emperors Sujin (3rd c.) and Kinmei (r. 539-571), and became a pillow word for the place name Yamato; it later became an appellation for Japan as a whole. The expression “Way of Shikishima” signifies the art of classical Japanese poetry.

himself. “Who could it be?” He walked down the stone path to the brushwood gate and opened it. Outside was a girl, by the sight of her about sixteen years old, and of no ignoble birth. The hem of her robe was drenched with the dew of a thousand grasses, her sleeves damp with the rain of tears. Her breathless sobbing continued, but at the sight of Koyata she started and hastened on her way.

Koyata doubted his eyes. “A woman like you could hardly be mistaken for someone from these parts. Surely you’ve been separated from your traveling companions! Rest here a moment while you wait for them to catch up. To think that you might try to cross these treacherous mountain paths alone!”

“How your words hearten me, my lord! My name is Uta.⁷⁰ I was born in the far-off capital, but at the age of eleven I was indentured to a traveling cloth merchant and brought to the distant east. It was here that I came of age.

“Unbeknownst to me, the man had designs to make me his mistress. This past spring he began to make his intentions known. Though he had cared for me those many years, he was a rough, uncouth fellow, and he tried to sleep with me in my makeshift bed. Even those of little worth can suffer in gloom. I was treated with no more care than a bale of rice on a rice-boat.

“His wife, meanwhile, burned with jealousy. ‘Did you give him what he wanted?’ she would yell, thrashing me by morning and heaping abuse on me by evening. One day, while she was out on a visit to the local temple, he forced himself on me. ‘How about you show some thanks for all my kindness and let me make you mine?’ Just then his wife returned home, earlier than expected. He fled the scene right then and there. As punishment she strung me up from the crossbeams and stabbed me in the thigh with her dagger.

“In agony, I soon had no tears left to shed. I tried to scream, but no sound emerged. As my spirit neared its end, the old woman from next door at last talked her down. My life was spared, but I was driven from the little village. I wandered about until I came to this place. With no one to look after me, I am headed to the Abukuma River, which I have heard is nearby.⁷¹ There I will drown myself, that I might vanish like the bubbles that froth upon its surface.”

“Alas,” thought Koyata as she continued to sob quietly, “there can be no one more unfortunate than this!” He could not help but be greatly moved. “Now, if I do nothing and let her go on her way, she will wake too soon from this dream, this floating world, and one who is still so young will find herself a traveler in the underworld.” He drew nearer. “You say you were born in the capital. Let us talk to the Kyoto merchants in these parts. Perhaps with their help we can work out a way to send you home. Until then, stay here at my house while we await word.”

⁷⁰ The name Uta means “song,” or, as it is surely intended to suggest here, “poetry.”

⁷¹ The second-longest river in northern Japan, the Abukuma runs through the Fukushima Basin before emptying into the Pacific.

“Ah, that there is a man in this world as compassionate as you, my lord! I am grateful for your words. Still, I have heard that my parents passed on more than four years ago. With those close to me now scattered and gone, even if I returned home there would be no one to take me in. Please, leave me as I am. You have shown great generosity already, and I will repay you in the next life. To care for me now would only bind me to this world and delay the inevitable.” Appearing quite resolved to her fate, she rose to her feet.

Koyata stayed her once more. “To save the baby about to fall into the well—that is the true goodness of the human heart.”⁷² Looking the other way would be a violation of one’s conscience. You must entrust your life to my care. If the autumn night wind seeps into the wound where that cruel, heartless woman’s dagger pierced the flesh, it will turn to tetanus. Even medicine from Bian Que himself could not save you then.⁷³ When morning comes I will take you to my main residence, and with my wife’s help we will figure out what is best. Tonight you are to stay here in my humble cottage.”

Koyata took her by the hand and led her inside. “You must have had hardly anything to eat,” he said. He prepared some food and gave it to her. “I have many servants back home, but I enjoy the solitude of life in the mountains and stay here alone, free from the intrusion of others. You may sleep with your heart at ease.”

He brought out some bedding and tucked her in. Then, seating himself beneath the glow of the oil lamp, he comforted her through the night, hoping in the goodness of his heart that he might help her put her life back together. Likewise he lent a sympathetic ear as she recalled the many sorrows she had endured since the day she left her parents’ arms. With his sincere words, soon the girl’s face suggested she had at least in some small measure forgotten her troubles. Koyata was delighted to have thawed her heart, while Uta’s entire being was filled with gratitude at having been rescued from the fiery pit and given the gift of new life.

Finding him such a gentle and refined man, her feelings progressed somewhat rashly. “If I entrust myself to someone like this,” she thought, “there might yet be meaning in living out my life.” Koyata, for his part, though he was a man of rectitude—the match of Liuxia Hui in his adherence to principles—began to find his heart aflutter at her not displeasing figure.⁷⁴ His moral exhortations gave way to intimate whispers, and

⁷² The allegory of the baby and the well is told in the *Mencius*. See D. C. Lau, tr., *Mencius* (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 82-83.

⁷³ Bian Que, whose story is told in chapter 105 of the *Shiji*, was a legendary doctor of antiquity endowed with miraculous diagnostic and curative abilities.

⁷⁴ Liuxia Hui, like Confucius a native of Lu, was a wise and virtuous minister praised in chapters 15 and 18 of the *Analests*. He is said to have embraced a woman to save her from freezing to death, but resisted any temptation to abuse the situation.

that night became the first of a thousand. They pledged their love on shared pillow, joined as the waters of a stream riven by islands.⁷⁵

Soon morning came, and Koyata spoke to Uta as follows: “This is but my private retreat, and everything must be supplied from the outside. Happily, though, my wife has been hoping for a child for some time now, even one from another’s womb. She has been urging me to take a mistress. Let us tell her the truth and have you move to the main residence. There we can care for you together.”

“Your proposal is sensible,” Uta replied. “Yet it is said that ‘though she bore no resentment on her face when the man of old took to visiting Kawachi, within her breast a kettle of water came to a boil.’⁷⁶ She may be of gentle disposition, but if she thinks of me as the woman who stole her husband, who can say what might happen amidst such hatred and jealousy? I would rather wait for you here, to grow like grasses of longing in the sunlight and receive the blessing of the dew. That would be joy enough for me.”

“If that is what you want, then I am happy with it, too.” And so each morning his servants would come from the main residence with the day’s rice and provisions, and Koyata would send them home almost as soon as they had arrived. Uta, having in her earlier life been worked to exhaustion in the kitchen, prepared their meals with great skill. With no walls to separate them, they called each other husband and wife, and Koyata gave not a moment’s thought to his main house. Utterly adrift in Uta’s charms, every moment was spent in that little cottage.

Eventually, however, he began to run low on silver for their expenses. “I had better go and fetch some more,” he said. “While I am away, I will ready some clean garments as well.” The girl tugged at his sleeve. “As close as we have become, even a moment’s parting pains my heart. Don’t keep me pining away here for long!” She began to cry, and he spoke some words to console her. He had hardly made it past the gate before he felt himself pulled backward, as though by his hair, and could not bring himself to go one step further. But he composed himself and continued onward.

When he arrived at the main residence, his servants were startled to see him after so long an absence. They sent in word that the master had returned, and Ayase came out to greet him. “It has been so long since you last came home,” she said, “and each morning the servants head out only to be sent straight back. What is the meaning of all this?” Koyata was caught off guard and brushed the question aside with excuses designed to mask the truth and hide the error of his ways. “Now,” he instructed her

⁷⁵ An allusion to a poem from the twenty-second episode of the *Tales of Ise*.

⁷⁶ An allusion to the twenty-third episode of the *Tales of Ise*, the “well-curb” episode, in which a wife sees her husband off when he embarks upon a visit to a lover in Kawachi, but displays no sign of resentment. The man is suspicious that she might have a lover of her own, but his doubts are quelled when he secretly observes her reciting a poem of longing for him as she applies her makeup. The allusion foreshadows Koyata’s secret observation of Uta (below), which ends with a rather different revelation.

curtly, “something has come up and I need you to have sixty pieces of silver sent up in the morning.” His heart ached at the thought of Uta waiting all alone, and he hurried back without even staying for a cup of tea.

As he neared the crossroads, a mountain ascetic approached from the other direction clad in a tan robe tightly bound with a braided cord, wooden leg-guards, and eight-looped straw sandals.⁷⁷ Hair white as snow flowed disheveled from his head. They passed so close their noses almost touched, and as Koyata went by, the man lingered, pacing back and forth. “What a pitiful sight,” he murmured beneath his breath. “Shrouded in an evil spirit, he sits at the brink of death.” Koyata heard him clearly, but his mind was elsewhere and he gave the incident hardly a second thought. He continued on his way without even a backward glance.

When he reached the cottage and started through the brushwood gate, he found that it had been fastened shut from the inside. As he was about to knock, he stayed his hand. “Why don’t I give her a laugh by sneaking in and surprising her?” he thought. He climbed over the fence. The door to the cottage was also firmly bolted, but a small window around on the north side was cracked open. “She has shown such constant aversion to my watching while she adorns herself. Surely she must be combing her hair!” Ever so quietly, he pressed up to the window and peeked through.

Oh, how horrible it was! The girl was no more. Seated in her place, completely naked, was a creature just like the yakshas one sees in pictures. Koyata inspected it closely, his gaze transfixed. From its head grew what looked like bent iron nails, and its fearsome eyes flashed with intensity to rival sun and moon. Fangs jutted out in disarray, and every inch of its body was covered in prickly hair, as though it had wrapped itself in a hedgehog’s hide.

Koyata was in shock. “Still,” he thought, “this demon may have swallowed Uta in a single gulp, but I will at least avenge her death, even if I am torn to pieces in the process.”⁷⁸ As he eased his sword from its sheath, he noticed Uta’s garments off to the side. Feeling his resolve intensify, he paused to look the scene over once more.

The demon, unaware that anyone was watching, laid out what appeared to be an animal hide. To this it began to apply powder and rouge. When it had finished, it pulled the skin over its head and, with a single shake the length of its body, transformed before his eyes into the figure of Uta. Donning the robes that lay tossed to the side, she tied the sash and combed her sidelocks into place.

⁷⁷ The ascetic is a follower of Shugendō, a Japanese hybrid of Buddhist, Shinto, and other religious beliefs in which ascetic training in the mountains features prominently. The items of clothing described are all part of the traditional Shugendō garb: leg-guards are worn to shield from brambles and other undergrowth, while the sandals reflect the eight petals of the Buddha’s lotus throne.

⁷⁸ An allusion to the sixth episode of the *Tales of Ise*, in which a man and a woman take refuge from a thunderstorm in a dilapidated storehouse; a demon devours the woman in a single gulp, a thunderclap muffling her cry of terror.



“Ah, how displeasing!” she cried, consumed with rage. “That silly Koyata is late. I suppose his wife must have detained him.” Koyata felt every hair on his body stand on end in dread, and he began to grow faint. Yet to think how wretched it would be to die as fodder for a demon! He breathed courage into himself and made to escape, but his legs shook and gave way beneath him. Unable to stand up, he crawled along the ground. Though he had been powerless to resist gazing back when he had left that morning, now even the sound of his own feet made him think the demon was in hot pursuit. He did not once look back.

When he had put a safe distance behind him, he reflected on his situation. “Now I understand! That mountain ascetic who muttered at me as we passed on the road—he was not just anyone. I must find him and beg him to use his powers to drive away the demon!”

No sooner had the thought occurred to him than he discerned amidst the rocky shadows that very monk, resting atop his patterned sunshade with his backpack at his side.⁷⁹ Koyata thought he must be dreaming. “It is just as you warned me,” he cried, kneeling on the ground before him. “My life is to end this very night. Have mercy and save me!” He pressed his head to the ground in desperation.

The monk gazed off into the distance for a few moments without a word. Then, suddenly, he clapped his hands together and spoke.

⁷⁹ The backpack (*oi*), another characteristic element of Shugendō attire, is used to carry sutras, clothing, and other gear.

“I am known as the lesser monk of Yokawa.⁸⁰ More than seventy are the springs I have set off into the mountains and the autumns I have made the return journey.⁸¹ There is no technique that lies beyond my reach, no spirit I have been unable to dispel. Yet this demon exceeds even my ability to contain.

“Nevertheless, the situation is dire, and there is no time to seek another who might help you. Here is an amulet to guard against demons. Ordinarily they are placed in the four corners of the house, but I have only one left. Affix it to your gate. If you avoid doom, you will have been blessed with life where a hundred deaths were to be had.” The monk gave him a yellowed piece of paper upon which were written characters in cinnabar ink.

Koyata’s was the joy of one who has been granted new life. He offered his thanks and hurried home. Though the sun was still high in the sky, he bolted the outer gate shut and affixed the charm to the crossbeam with his own two hands. Then, completely overwhelmed by his predicament, he ran inside. From every pore of his body poured sweat thick as oil, and he shed tears in sheets rough as hempen cloth. He lay there groaning in agony.

Ayase was shocked and appalled. She took Koyata’s hands and pressed them firmly to her lap. “What happened to you, to put you in such an utterly helpless state? Have some propriety in front of the servants! Now get a hold of yourself and tell me what happened.”

“Though it shames me to say so,” he replied, “it is a long story, how my foolishness gave root to disaster.”

His wife had not expected anything quite like this. She began to sob uncontrollably, there being nothing else to do.

Meanwhile, the servants’ children in the next room began to shout in their rough eastern style. “If some sort of monster shows up here, we’ll twist its horns, run a rope through its snout, and tie it up in the cowshed!” As they carried on with abuse of one kind or another, soon the lamps had burned low. When the drum sounded halfway

⁸⁰ The appellation “lesser monk” (*kohijiri*) indicates a monk of ordinary status; hereafter the character is in translation referred to only as “the monk.” “The lesser monk of Yokawa” (*Yokawa no kohijiri*) is also the name of the mountain ascetic (*yamabushi*) who exorcises Lady Aoi in the noh play *Lady Aoi* (his name is sometimes translated as “the holy man of Yokawa”). The character here, too, is a mountain ascetic, a practitioner of Shugendō. Although there is no character by this name in the “Aoi” chapter of *The Tale of Genji*, the exorcist of Ukifune in the chapter “Tenarai” is the Prelate of Yokawa (*Yokawa no sōzu*). Yokawa is one of the three complexes of Enryakuji Temple on Mount Hiei in Kyoto.

⁸¹ Part of the Shugendō training, wherein monks set off from Kumano toward Yoshino in the spring and return in the fall.

through the hour of the ox,⁸² the men who had earlier chattered in excitement lay sprawled on the floor, heads to the west, pillows to the east.⁸³ The night deepened further.

Some time later, a storm blew up with tremendous ferocity. As it gusted violently through the outer gate, a faint knocking could be heard. Koyata and his wife lay awake in bed, not once having closed their eyes. They gasped in fright at the noise and strained their ears to listen.

“Is Master Koyata home? Perhaps his wife has heard tell of the woman who stole away her husband. She would like to see him. Uta has come to see him.” The voice was still distant, but inside the house their bodies froze like blocks of ice. They held their breath and gave no reply.

Uta grew angry. “If you do not send out your husband, I will tear down this gate and come get him myself.” They heard her draw closer and closer. “How hateful, the amulet affixed here! That I should be held back by a charm and unable to pass through—it makes me very angry!” As the sound of her screams and gnashing teeth reverberated in the air above his pillow, only now, at long last, did Koyata release his breath. “The power of the charm will drive the demon away!” he thought hopefully.

Uta stamped the ground in rage. “Very well! It seems I cannot pass through the gate. But it is easy enough to go *this* way!” There was a tremendous scraping noise as she tore down the earthen wall. Then, like a raging whirlwind, the girl appeared before them, a demon in disguise. She charged into the room, robes billowing in front of her. Ayase was overwhelmed by the malevolent aura and fell unconscious on the spot.

Koyata bolted upright and reached for the sword by his pillow.

“How hateful, man’s fickle heart!” Uta cried. “I will show you the error of your ways.” Before the words had even left her mouth, she seized him and pushed back his head. Slashing the flesh with her raptor claws, she tore open a gash from the chest down to the abdomen. She thrust in her hand and pulled out his heart. “It is not only long-awaited vengeance that is mine, but also this tender morsel and fragrant wine!” She devoured the heart with a single gulp and drank his hot spurting blood until there was no more to be had. Smacking her lips loudly, she fled the scene.

The noise jolted the servants from their slumber. “Hey, the demon is here!” they shouted, still groggy and disoriented. “Run a rope through its snout and lead it to the

⁸² Around two o’clock in the morning. The expression “halfway through the hour of the ox” (*ushi mitsu*) was used so commonly that it can be considered to refer more generally to “the dead of night”; the sounding of the drum most likely reflects not a literal event, but an idiomatic turn of phrase, much as one would say “the clock struck two” in English. All manner of frightening things were thought to happen at this time of night, as reflected in the expression “paying one’s respects at the hour of the ox” (*ushi no koku mairi*), meaning to place a curse on someone or to pray for bodily harm to befall them.

⁸³ The unusual Chinese-style turn of phrase suggests that the men have fallen asleep in place without properly settling down for the night.

cowshed!” In their confusion, they could hardly tell up from down, and the women frantically lit some candles. It was then that they saw their master. His body lay covered in blackened blood, his viscera strewn every which way. Ayase was slumped beside him like a bow with severed bowstring. Utterly distraught, the serving men and women stamped their feet and howled in grief. It was a most painful sight.

Soon morning came. A crow cawed in the trees outside, and crimson streaked across the eastern sky. Beneath the eaves, a man stood brushing the morning dew from his garments. When he inquired within, a servant came out to greet him, wiping tears from his face.

“I am known as the lesser monk of Yokawa,” the stranger announced. “There was a disturbance in this household last night, I presume. I would like to know more. What is the condition of the master of the house?”

“I do not know exactly what happened,” the servant replied, “but it was something dreadful, just as you have surmised.”

“I had better have a look in the bedroom.”

He brushed past with nothing more by way of greeting.

The servants kept a respectful distance as the monk inspected the body. “If only I had met him a day or two earlier and been in possession of the full four charms,” he mused. “I might have saved him from stumbling to his untimely death.” He beat his chest and let out a rueful sigh. Then he turned to Ayase, who lay unconscious nearby. Raising his peach-wood staff to the east and lowering it onto her head, he invoked the nine-word incantation.⁸⁴ Slowly she began to revive. When she opened her eyes and beheld the gruesome state of her husband’s body, she gasped in horror.

The monk then spoke in a loud voice as follows:

“I am the mountain ascetic who gave Koyata the amulet. My powers were not equal to the task, and the shame of it brings sweat to my face. But this was no ordinary demon.

“I have reflected on the situation at length. It seems that the unplaced spirits of the women who died at your ancestors’ hands in the Later Three Years’ War linger in this world. Who can say how many winters have come and gone as they have awaited vengeance? But for generations yours was a valiant clan, skilled in the way of archery, and there was no weak spot where they might inflict their wound.

“Yet in the present generation the warrior’s arts have been neglected. Seizing on this weakness, they laid their deadly trap. Koyata was ensnared and met his untimely end. No technique could save him, for it was a thing he invited on himself.

⁸⁴ Shugendō’s nine-character incantation, *rin pyō tō sha kai chin retsu zai zen* 臨兵闘者皆陣列在前, which roughly translates as “Descend, soldiers and warriors, and array yourselves before me,” is based on nearly identical characters that appear in chapter 17 of the *Baopuzi*. The incantation was originally used to ward off evil upon entering the mountains, but came to be adopted as a general protective spell.

“Now, with the skills acquired through many years of training, I will avenge Koyata’s death and eliminate the root of this scourge that would bring his line to an end!” Observing the shifting of the winds, he divined the location of the demon’s secret lair. “Let us be on our way!”

Ayase ordered the women to stand watch beside the body. Then she sprang into action, dagger in hand. The men, too, readied their weapons, saying, “If you need us, we will be right there beside you.” Sending up a loud roar, they streamed forth with the monk at their head.

When they had gone several miles in a southerly direction, they passed through the valley between Mount Akakura and Mount Kuromatsu.⁸⁵ Here the forest grew thick with ancient trees that blocked out the light of the sun. Everywhere they stepped they became ensnared in roots and tendrils. Noxious vapors and fearsome winds enveloped them, and they began to lose sight of each other. Though they could scarcely make out the path ahead, they groped their way forward, refusing to be stopped. At last they came upon a large cavity at the base of a tree.

Standing before the opening, the monk denounced the demon in a booming voice.

“You there—hear my words! You, a vengeful spirit utterly tainted by yin, have inflicted harm on a mortal of clearest, purest yang. Yours is the sin of overcoming yang with yin, and it violates the very laws of heaven.

“Because you were avenging an ancient grievance, you may escape the most severe censure. But to tear a man open and pull out his viscera! The savagery of it! It is worse than mutilating the body of one’s father’s murderer. Surely this is what is meant by ‘going too far in righting a wrong.’ This was your first offense.

“You then feasted upon his heart and drank of his blood, not in the pursuit of vengeance, but solely to indulge your own personal appetites. Who would not despise an act of such sheer brutality? This was your second offense.”

“Finally, there was the charm blessed by the gods of the gate, Toyoiwamado-no-mikoto and Kushiiwamado-no-mikoto,⁸⁶ whose names I tremble even to speak, and by the two mighty generals of the guardian demon warriors⁸⁷ and the four mighty guardian

⁸⁵ Literally, “when they had gone more than two *ri*.” The *ri* was originally a distance of three hundred paces, or somewhat more than half a kilometer; in the medieval period, however, it came to represent a much longer distance, about four kilometers. The mountain names given here appear to be fictional.

⁸⁶ The *Kojiki* gives these as two alternate names of the god of the gate, Amenoiwatowake. In other texts, the names are recorded as belonging to separate deities.

⁸⁷ The Kongō and Misshaku warriors, who often appear together as protective deities at temple gates with their vajra-mallets in hand as weapons.

gods of Mount Sumeru.⁸⁸ In the face of such majesty, one is to kneel before the gate and beg permission to enter. But you smashed the fence and tore down the earthen wall. This is no different than the sin of circumventing a barrier, and for such an offense there can be no escaping retribution. As the laws of man were made three, for these three actions I now condemn you.⁸⁹ Put your hands together and accept your punishment!” His eyes glared fiercely as he spoke.

The next moment, a tremendous noise boomed forth from the cavity, and a foul wind swirled about, enveloping them in a thick, noxious fog. The demon, now in its true guise, stormed out in a fury. “Such hateful words!” she shrieked. “Let me rip out that tongue of yours, loathsome monk!”

She lunged at him, but he showed not the least alarm.

“Wretched creature! Eon upon eon has passed since you left your human form behind and became the demon before me now. With this staff I now erase your past misdeeds.” As he struck her square on the head, there went up a noise that seemed to shake the very mountains. Her body dissolved in front of them, and where she had stood a multitude of will-o’-the-wisps rose and vanished into the distant sky.



⁸⁸ The four guardian gods (Skt. *catur-mahā-rājakāyikāh*) who protect the four quarters of the universe from their home on Mount Sumeru.

⁸⁹ An allusion to the legal code of Emperor Gaozu of the Han, which reduced the law to three offenses: murder, assault, and theft.

Ayase and the servants, who had fallen prostrate to the ground, now rose slowly to their feet and offered their gratitude. “You are a monk of extraordinary powers,” she said. “Were you to summon my husband’s spirit, surely you could bring him back to life. He has no heir to succeed him, and the Kuranuki line will come to an end. It is a tragedy not for me alone, but for the entire household! Please, look on us with compassion.” They pleaded with him in desperation.

The monk let out a sigh that stretched on like a rainbow. “Alas, I have reached the limit of my abilities. I have mastered the techniques for subduing and exorcising evil spirits, allowing me to vanquish unseen demons and drive off frightful apparitions. But the art of summoning souls and prolonging the spirit remains beyond my grasp.”

Lost in thought, he murmured to himself and trained his ear to the withering wind that gusted through the treetops above. Suddenly he clapped his hands together.

“Heaven has been generous to the Kuranuki clan! You have been given one learned in the ways of soul-summoning and spirit-prolongation. Quick, head down this mountain path to the road home! Along the way you will encounter a strange-looking seeker. You must ask for his help. Do not let pride or anger get in your way.

“Now I must take my leave.”

Ayase could scarcely bear the bitterness of parting. “Stay with us,” she pleaded. “Take respite from the hardships of travel!”

“There is a matter I must attend to at the Myōjin Shrine in Shiogama.⁹⁰ I will call upon you on the return trip. You have my word.

“A moment ago, beneath my staff, a vengeful spirit met its end. Koyata’s spirit has not vanished, but lingers among the clouds. If too much time is allowed to pass, he will drift about, roaming the distant reaches of the earth.”

With these words, he urged them on their way. They had gone only a few paces when they turned to look back. The monk stood atop a peak far in the distance. “You must hurry!” he called to them, and they heard his words as though he stood right there beside them.

“Truly he is no ordinary man!” they marveled, joining their hands in a show of gratitude.

“Now, go find the seeker of whom the bodhisattva told. With his help, you might find a way to restore your husband to life!”

Encouraged by his words, they pressed onward, undaunted by the difficult mountain path. As they neared the banks of a raging river, they came upon a group of villagers who had encircled a man and stood heaping abuse on him. “Filthy beggar!” they shouted. “Where did you wander in from? If you loiter about around here we’ll show you a rough time.” The boys among them hurled rocks and old sandals.

⁹⁰ A famous shrine near Matsushima which features in *The Tale of the Heike* and is visited by Bashō in *The Narrow Road to the Interior* (*Oku no hosomichi* 奥細道).

Ayase ran toward them impulsively. “This is the seeker of whom the monk spoke!”

The villagers were utterly shocked, but as she was the wife of their lord, they quickly fell to the ground. Ayase drew in for a better look, her servants close behind.

Before them was a leprous beggar in rags like tattered seaweed, his swollen body covered everywhere in blackish-purple sores. He lay sprawled on his back in the village dumping ground, an unspeakably filthy place with piss-soaked trash and rotting fish strewn all about. Clacking his overgrown fingernails against an old rice bowl, he sang a few lines from a popular ballad.

When the stench hit their noses, the servants lost what little enthusiasm remained. “This leper cannot be the one the bodhisattva revealed! Come along with us.” They tugged at their mistress’s sleeve.

Ayase was undeterred. Bowing her head before the beggar, she recounted the entire story of Koyata’s death at the hands of an evil spirit. “Please,” she begged him, “use your knowledge of spirit-summoning to bring him back!”

The leper wriggled himself up onto his feet.

“My lady, having heard how your husband abandoned you, I can only imagine how lonely your nights will be. Luckily, I have no woman to call my own! From this day forward, I will cherish you as my wife.”

Anger welled within the servants’ hearts as he took her hand and rested it on his lap. But they restrained themselves and said not a word. The villagers, who knew nothing of what had happened, looked on in utter disbelief, tongues dangling from their mouths.

The leper then ran his fingers across Ayase’s cheek and gently stroked her breast.

“Suck the sores on my thigh, my dear, and help me ease the pain.”

As he ripped away the scab that had formed rough like a conch shell, a mess of pus and blood spewed forth. He thrust the wound toward her lips. Ayase steeled herself and sucked at it, but she felt her stomach churn loudly in spite of herself.

The leper smiled, taking the rumblings as a sign of hunger.

“How about something tasty for you, then?”

From the pouch at his side he produced a bowl of rice. He scooped out a handful with his grimy ginger-root fingers and shaped it into a ball. “Let me taste it first.” He stuck out his tongue and licked it.

“Now then, here you are!”

As she took the rice in her hands, she saw that it was moist with thick, sticky phlegm. The villagers looked on with sheer revulsion.

She could not bring herself to eat it.

“Is my wife unhappy with the rice I have given her?” His face filled with anger.

In desperation, Ayase closed her eyes and swallowed a single mouthful. She felt the rock-hard lump lodge in her chest on its way down.

The leper now appeared placated, and Ayase pleaded with him once more. "Please, I beg you!" she cried, tears streaming down her face. "Summon my husband's spirit and bring him back to life!"

The leper seethed with indignation. "Having taken me as your husband, you would bring this Koyata fellow back to life and be with him? If I had the ability to summon spirits and raise the dead, surely I would first heal these wounds of my own!" Roaring with laughter, he grasped his bamboo cane and rose to his feet. Ayase cried out and tried to stop him, but he fended her off with a thrust of the cane. There was nothing more she could do.

The servants began to rant and rave. "If this is how it was to be, we should have stopped you right at the start," they cried. "We've been had by a worthless, half-dead leper abandoned even by the gods! There's nothing to be gained by staying here." They urged her onward. "Surely there will be a more respectable seeker further along the way!" She had to agree. Yet as they continued further and further on their way, they encountered not a single beggar more.

No words could describe the bitterness they felt when they reached home. The men burned with resentment and began to curse the monk angrily. "Looking back on it all now, that so-called monk must have been the demon in disguise. As if harming our master wasn't enough, he dragged us through the mountains and made us endure such horrors even we could hardly bear it. Then he transformed himself into the leper, just to humiliate us."

Ayase, for her part, was overcome with gut-wrenching sorrow. To think that such a beggar had even briefly called her his wife, and that she had partaken of his half-eaten food! The shame ran deep within her heart. Resigned to her fate, she resolved to join her husband in death once she had readied his body.

When she went to the next room, she found the women collapsed in tears around the bed where he lay. It was almost more than she could take. But she brushed the tears aside, and taking the body in her arms, she began to arrange the organs that had been strewn about.

That very moment, she sensed once more the pus and blood and the lump of filthy rice, still firmly lodged in her chest. She began to feel queasy. As the stench of blood assaulted her nostrils, the lump rose into her mouth. She raised her hand to stop it, but out it came, dropping straight into the open wound. When she looked down, there was a pool of fresh, hot blood. In the middle was the lump of rice. It had landed right in Koyata's chest cavity, where it lay jumping about vigorously. As she stared at it, there could be no doubt. It was his heart.

Ayase shouted in spite of herself. "My husband has come back to life!"

She wrapped the open wound in cloth. Then, as she ran her fingers gently across his brow, she pressed her breast to his to warm him. Soon steam began to rise from his flesh, and by midnight he had begun to breathe again. The next morning his whole body was as it had been before. Ayase removed the cloth, and all that remained was a thin scar—a crimson thread that stretched from his upper chest down to the abdomen.

When he learned of how the monk had defeated the evil spirit, and of the role the seeker had played, Koyata sought to summon them to repay their kindness. Without delay, he sent his men galloping off to find them. But there was no trace of either man. They returned home empty-handed.

Koyata reflected on his situation. “It was because I was foolish and neglected the ways of archery and horsemanship that I died at the hands of an evil spirit. Surely it grieved the souls of my ancestors to see their line come to an end, and for that reason they brought me back to life.” From that moment forth he righted his ways, and with the brush at his left hand and the sword at his right, he soon restored the luster to his clan’s name.