

# Creating Celebrity

## Poetry in Osaka Actor *Surimono* and Prints

Andrew GERSTLE

IT IS well recognized that actor prints and illustrated actor books were essential vehicles for the promotion of the fame of kabuki actors. The questions that I would like to ask are: how did the performers themselves view this promotion, and were they conscious about how they wanted their personae to be projected in the public eye? I would like to consider these questions by examining the representations of two famous Osaka actors in the first quarter of the nineteenth century: Arashi Rikan I 嵐璃寛 (Kichisaburō II 吉三郎, Kitsusaburō I 橘三郎, 1769-1821) and his rival Nakamura Utaemon III 中村歌右衛門 (Shikan 芝翫, Baigyoku 梅玉, 1778-1838). My focus will be on both the visual images and poetry (*haikai* 俳諧, *kyōka* 狂歌) that appear in actor prints, *surimono* 摺物 (privately printed poem sheets, usually with an image), and books. I will argue that poetry was a key element in the promotion of actors as cultural heroes above and beyond their status as sexual icons.

As is well known, kabuki actors (and prostitutes [*yūjo* 遊女] in licensed quarters) were classed in a sub-group below accepted society and administered by a bureau of the government. Gunji Masakatsu has argued that both the actors themselves and society at large were conscious of the status of actors as beneath the four classes.<sup>1</sup> Restrictions on actors' lives were considerable but were rarely strictly enforced except during major reforms or after scandals, and actors were seen, at least until the late nineteenth century during the Meiji era, as being part of a distinctive guild beneath polite society. The creation, therefore, of such "riverbed beggars" as cultural heroes or literati was an affront to the Tokugawa system. The convention of individuals using *haiimyō* 俳名 or *haigō* 俳号 (poetry pen names) allowed individuals to circumvent the class system and socialize through art circles.<sup>2</sup> This was important for actors.

The aim of this essay is to demonstrate through a case study how important poetry and poetry circles were for kabuki actors, in this case performers based in the Kyoto/Osaka area. Rikan and Shikan were fierce rivals who seem to have been acutely aware of the role of poetry in presenting their image to their fans. For Rikan, I shall argue, *haikai* and *kyōka* were essential to his life as an actor, not just as a means of promoting popular celebrity, as was perhaps the case with his rival, the more flamboyant Shikan. One particular question that I shall address is: why did Rikan (or members of his troupe) not include poems on *ōban* 大判 (large format) actor prints until the first month of 1821, even though his rival Shikan and his troupe began including poems of patrons and actors on actor prints from late 1815 in Osaka (and earlier in Edo)? This contrast offers us some insight into how actors viewed their own promotion in prints.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 show that in spite of (or partially because of) their lowly status, actors were worshipped as superheroes in the popular mind and even cast (*mitate* 見立) as emperors and aristocrats in the public eye in the Kamigata region of Kyoto and Osaka. Figure 1, “Yakusha hyakunin isshu” 役者百人一首 (One hundred actors and poems), dating from around 1798-1799, is an irreverent ranking of kabuki actors as emperors and lords in an ephemeral print (*mitate-banzuke* 見立番付), and includes a poem (in the style of one of the classical “one hundred *waka* poems”) for each actor. The bold implication is that actors are the elegant ruling class of all Japan. The illustration is of “Emperor Minshi.” Arashi Hinasuke II 嵐雛助 (Minshi 眠獅, 1774-1801) was still young, but he is presented as the top actor, in the image of his famous father Hinasuke I (1741-1796). The kabuki world promotes the celebrity of a rising star – the emperor (Hinasuke I) is dead; long live his successor emperor (Hinasuke II). A possible parody of one of the hundred selected poems,<sup>3</sup> the poem celebrating the crowning of Hinasuke II is clear on this:

aku mo yoshi	A master at evil
jitsu mo kataki mo	Skilled as both hero and villain—
shōne nari	In dance and gesture,
shosa mo miburi mo	The image of his father
oya ni nishetsutsu	

Figure 2, by Ashiyuki 芦幸 (dated to 1815), is a more important and striking image within a published book, presenting Arashi Rikan I, the



Fig. 1. “One hundred actors and poems,” ca. 1798-1799. *Kyota kyakushokujō*, vol. 16: 38. Waseda University Theater Museum, Tokyo.



Fig. 2. “Our beloved Emperor Rikan,” by Ashiyuki. In *Rikanjō*, 1815. Private collection.



Fig. 3. Kunihiko *surimono*: “Rikan as an aristocrat,” first month, 1817. The British Museum. © Trustees of the British Museum.

star actor of his day, as “Our Beloved Emperor,” equal to the Lord of the Land, an outlandish proposition for a kabuki actor whose official status lay beyond the pale beneath the four classes at the opposite extreme of the social spectrum from the emperor. Figure 3 is within the privately-published sphere of *surimono*, which were usually distributed by patrons rather than sold. Rikan is again presented in 1817 as an elegant courtier, this time as Nagisa Chūnagon Shigefusa 渚中納言繁房, in a gorgeous print with metallic pigment, embossing and mother-of-pearl for the armrest. A fascinating element of this *surimono* is that all the poets appear to be otherwise unknown, a group of Osaka townsfolk who loved kabuki and Rikan in particular, and interacted with him through the vehicle of *haikai*.<sup>4</sup>

Although mature performers were fêted this way as cultural heroes, many actors began their careers as *iroko* 色子 (which included being a boy prostitute), and the image of them as icons of sexual allure was certainly essential for kabuki as a popular, urban, commercial theater, just as it is for film, rock, or pop stars today. A comic illustration from the erotic *shunga* 春画 book *Onna teikin gesho bunko* 女貞訓下所文庫 of about 1768 shows a fantasy view of Osaka theater at the time of the





Fig. 4. Erotic scene between Yamashita Yazoō I as Oishi (right) and Ichikawa Danzō IV as Yuranosuke (left), in the play *Kanadehon chūshingura* at the Kita Theater, Kyoto; third month, 1804. Attributed to the artist Nagahide. The British Museum. © Trustees of the British Museum.

eleventh month *kaomise* 顔見世 (“New Season Star Line-up”) program in which all of the actors on stage are shown with their penises erect and on show, making explicit the implicit sexual attractiveness of the actors.<sup>5</sup> Figure 4 shows Ichikawa Danzō IV 市川団蔵 (Yuranosuke) and Yamashita Yazoō I 山下八百蔵 (Oishi) in a parody of a scene from *Kanadehon chūshingura* 仮名手本忠臣蔵. The dialogue is between Yuranosuke and his wife Oishi:

Oishi: You’re out at the Ichiriki house every night enjoying yourself. How about making me a happy woman tonight.

Yuranosuke: Just as I was enjoying my tippie and feeling good, what terrible manners to ruin the mood!

Several times in his career Danzō had performed as many as seven roles in one program of this famous play of the vendetta of the forty-seven *rōnin*. His macho stage image must certainly have been much reinforced by this entirely fictitious erotic parody.

Arashi Rikan, who shouldered the dual roles of a matinee idol of the ladies and of a cultivated member of the literati, also appeared in an

erotic actor book dating from around 1805.<sup>6</sup> We see Rikan in one of his popular roles as Tsukushi Gonroku 筑紫権六, paired with Kanō Minshi I 叶みん子, his favorite *onnagata* 女形 “female-role actor” partner (as Mitaki 三滝), which they performed in 1804. The contrasting images of the actor both as sexual idol and as cultured gentleman/emperor are striking in depictions of Rikan. The visual art that was produced by Rikan’s supporters helps us to get a sense of how he interacted with literati and fans.

Poetry salons for both *haikai* and *kyōka* constituted critically important performance spaces that were both social and cultural forums.<sup>7</sup> We are only beginning to understand how these “sites” (*za* 座), temporarily created for the performance of poetry in hired rooms at shrines or temples, or in the homes of members, functioned. Perhaps it was because Japanese society was officially divided into hierarchical classes that poetry and other artistic salons flourished as egalitarian spaces where class, by convention, did not matter. This was a sophisticated system. When an individual joined a salon devoted to a particular art or performance (*yūgei* 遊芸), he or she took a pen name, art name, or performance name, depending on the context. The individual’s identity, therefore, was transported into a fictional world outside his or her workaday existence as a farmer, samurai, courtier, merchant, craftsman, woman, or actor. We can imagine that class distinctions were not completely left at the doorstep of the salon, but it is likely that the chance to mix with interesting people outside one’s immediate circle of class or neighborhood was an important attraction for participants. In this specially constituted space one was judged on performance, whether composing a poem, dashing off a calligraphy or painting, acting a scene from a *jōruri* play, doing a *noh* or *kabuki* dance, or singing a song. For many the pursuit of poetry, calligraphy, or song in these salons was a lifelong passion.

One of the earliest known color *surimono* that relates to *kabuki* is figure 5, dated precisely to the eleventh month, 1779. It was created by patrons for Rikan’s father, Arashi Kichisaburō I 嵐吉三郎 (Rikan 里環, 1737-1780), when young Rikan was still a boy of eleven years old. It marks the farewell of Kichisaburō I from Osaka to perform for a year in Kyoto. He was leaving Osaka to perform in Kyoto for the first time in three years, at the *kaomise* performance in the eleventh month, 1779, at the Minami Theater. The image is of an elegant hand-brazier (*te-aburi* 手焙り, or *hibachi* 火鉢), the brazier itself painted with chrysanthemums,

and the domed cover apparently pasted with a fan painting of Chinese boys and a collage of other, perhaps printed, texts and pictures. The actor critique from New Year 1780, in the section about Arashi Kichisaburō I, relates the following about this *surimono*:<sup>8</sup>

During his holiday, as a way to say farewell to his patrons, he circulated a *surimono* with an image of a decorative brazier, and set off with Yamashina Senka to perform in Kyoto.

The text of the *surimono* begins with an introduction by Kichisaburō I. Poems by his fellow actor Yamashina Senka 山科扇花, a patron, and the poet Nitoan 二斗庵 follow:

Although I am happy to have a contract to perform at Kyoto's Minami Theater, I am sad to say farewell to good friends.

cha no hana ya	The flower on the tea bush
mizu no yoki o mo	Thinks not
omowarezu	Of the quality of the water
	—Arashi Rikan (Kichisaburō I)

[Kichisaburō I is saddened to depart for Kyoto and leave his friends behind.]

kasa totemo	Practised though I am
kitsutsu narenan	At wearing a travelling hat—
fuyu botan	A peony [brazier] in winter
	—Yamashina Senka

[A traveller's hat is likened to the straw cover used to protect a peony bloom from the snow in winter. "Winter peony" is also a nickname for a brazier which, too, has a domed cover like a hat.]

Usually the first one to greet you on arrival, this autumn I shaved my head and retired. So now I join the others to see you off.

fūki to wa	Does the wind
kaze no kokoro ka	Reflect the season's heart?
ochiba michi	A path of fallen leaves
	—Ishiba Sōsukebō, Zōchi 石場惣介坊藏知

Finally, those left behind rather than waiting for your return, their hearts go first before you.

hito tose wa	A year away
musubarete ni	Bound to another
fuyu yanagi	Weeping winter willow
	—Nitoan



Fig. 5. Anonymous *surimono* with poems by Arashi Kichisaburō I (Rikan), Nitoan, and two others; eleventh month, 1779. Private collection.

Nitoan (Kabutsu 下物, d. 1800) was known for his interactions with actors (he also wrote actor critiques) and included actors in his *haikai* books. It is likely that Nitoan himself was the one who wrote the quotation above in the actor critique about the *surimono*. He is known to have been close to Onoe Kikugorō I 尾上菊五郎, Nakamura Tomijūrō I 中村富十郎 and Arashi Hinasuke I. It is easy to imagine that an impressionable and precocious Rikan realized from his father, mentors and teachers early on the importance of poetry and art for kabuki actors.

Rikan's talent as an actor was recognized by his father's peers, and in 1787 he was supported by them to succeed to his father's name at the age of only 18 or 19, above his elder brother Isaburō 猪三郎 (1766-1825), also an actor. Hanyū Noriko has recently shown how precocious young Rikan was in poetry as well.<sup>9</sup> She has demonstrated that he first published *kyōka* verses at the age of fifteen in 1783 in a *kyōka* anthology, and that thereafter, his verses were regularly included in book publications from the Maruha 丸派 group, which flourished in the 1780s to 1810s.



Rikan was also active in *haikai* circles. One figure who became a key link for Rikan to a range of literati in Kyoto was the courtier Tomi Doran 富士卯 (1759-1819), who became a *haikai* teacher and patron of Rikan (and many other actors). Nakano Mitsutoshi has explored the activities of Doran in some detail.<sup>10</sup> One of Rikan's key supporters within kabuki was the great *onnagata* actor Sawamura Kunitarō I 沢村国太郎 (Kitō 其答, Ebimaru 海老丸, 1739-1816), who also was a key figure in Doran's circle.

*Surimono* were used regularly to commemorate special occasions, such as *tsuizen* 追善 (memorials) and *shūmei* 襲名 (taking a new stage name), and were an important tool in the promotion of actors' fame and celebrity among cultured literati. Figure 6 is a key Rikan *surimono*, found in both the Waseda Theater Museum *Kyōta kyakushokujō* 許多脚色帖 and the Waseda Theater Museum *Nishizawa Ippō harikomi-chō* 西沢一鳳貼込帖. This is a thirty-third year memorial for Arashi Kichisaburō I. Its timing at the twelfth month, 1812, was strategic. Nakamura Utaemon III (Shikan) had returned to Osaka to perform only a month before. The picture, a thundering waterfall in a snowy landscape, is by Satō Masuyuki 佐藤益之 (active ca. 1805-1837), an Osaka pupil of the famous Kyoto artist Go Shun 呉春. There is an impressive collection of 31 poems by actors, puppet theater performers, and patrons; the last two poems are by Jōkō 浄光 (Nakayama Bunshichi I 中山文七, 1732-1813) and Tomi Doran.

This was a grand occasion, marking the anniversary of the passing of the actor Kichisaburō I, who had died on the eighth day of the twelfth month, 1780. The timing of this memorial suited Kichisaburō II (Rikan) and the Arashi stage clan Okajimaya 岡島屋. In 1812 Rikan was at the peak of his popularity, but had to face the return of Nakamura Utaemon III (Shikan) from Edo after a five-year absence. Shikan returned in the eleventh month for the opening of the season, bringing with him the famous Edo actor Bandō Hikosaburō III 坂東彦三郎 to compete against Rikan. The first group of poems are by members of the immediate family, and includes compositions by Sawamura Kunitarō I:

How delighted I am that we have been able to get all the family together to commemorate this thirty-third anniversary. Nothing could please me more.

oi-zuri ni	To the pilgrim with his load,
yuki no mashiro ya	The snow was pure white—
tamuke-gusa	I offer these flowers
—Kanshi (Isaburō) (eldest son, kabuki actor)	

sanjū mitose	Thirty-three years:
iza ya tsukuran	Time to make
yukibotoke	A “snow Buddha”
—Nakatayū (second son, jōruri chanter)	

[*Hotoke* means both the Buddha and the deceased.]

waga kage no	My reflection
utsuru ya aka no	In the holy water
mizu kōru	Frozen
—Rikan	

yuki no take	Like the faithful son who
hori-eschi gotoki	Found bamboo shoots in the snow
tamuke ka na	I make my offering
—Ebimaru (Kunitarō)	

Even at the twenty-fifth memorial there were few who came to make their offerings. Now even more so after thirty-three years have passed, only a rare few are left from that time. The floating world is like a dream, they say. But now looking back, to survive to see this day, though I say it myself, how terrifying, how overwhelming.

mata kotoshi	Again this year I mourn—
tomurau ya kamiko no	The sleeves of my paper robe
sode nururu	Are wet
—Jōkō (Bunshichi I)	

[*Kamiko* is a cheap “paper” kimono. It is associated with certain characters in kabuki who have fallen on hard times.]

With each passing month and day the Arashi family grows more famous. Today it commemorates the thirty-third anniversary of his death. His spirit must surely rejoice to see this occasion. And for those who conduct this service, doesn't this reflect their success in this life?

nigiyaka su	With all this activity
samusa wa shiranu	The memorial altar room
butsuma ka na	Never knows the cold
—Doran	

Doran turns the focus back to the living and celebrates their liveliness and success. Utaemon (Shikan) is not mentioned, of course, but the *surimono* presents an impressive theater clan firmly established and ready for any challenges that might come: the implication is that “Kichisaburō” is the mainstream of Osaka kabuki. The final poem by Doran shifts the focus to the present and congratulates the success of the Arashi clan.

One of Rikan’s signature roles was the court calligrapher Ono no Tōfū 小野道風, which he performed to great success at a time of fierce competition with his rival Shikan (Utaemon III) in 1813. The next *surimono* (Fig. 7), designed by Ashifune 芦舟, was offered in support of Rikan against Shikan. There are seven poems, one by Rikan, one by the aristocrat-literati Tomi Doran, and five by unknown individuals including two women—probably amateur poet-fans and members of Doran’s *haikai* circle. Rikan is known to have been a particular favorite with women. A fascinating letter from Doran to one of his female students, Fujie 藤江, has been recorded.<sup>11</sup> Doran discusses the performances at this time of Rikan and Shikan at the rival and neighbouring Kado and Naka Theaters. Doran had early on been a patron of Shikan as well as Rikan, and appears in several early Shikan *surimono*, but by the time of Shikan’s return in late 1812, Doran had lost interest in Shikan. He praises Rikan and says how Shikan’s performance paled in comparison. Doran also says that a group of Rikan’s Kyoto fans had sent ten large banners to celebrate Rikan’s Osaka successes, and that Doran and Rikan had prepared a *surimono* as a gift of thanks to them. He then says that he is sending a copy of the *surimono* with the letter. Doran refers to Rikan as “Teruhiro” てる寛, praises him as a magnificent actor who he is happy to have as a *haikai* student, and adds that there is no other actor who compares. In the letter Doran quotes Sawamura Kunitarō I, now retired:

“From times past many actors have performed Tōfū, such as Sakakibara Koshirō, Nakamura Tomijūrō I, Nakayama Bunshichi I, Arashi Hinasuke I, and Nakayama Bunshichi II. This time it is Teruhiro (Rikan). All six of them were great, but among them all Teruhiro was the best.” Said Sawamura Kunitarō I. He was absolutely right. Utaemon [Shikan] didn’t hold a candle in comparison. Everyone agreed on this and admitted their errors. All the Utaemon fans held their heads in shame. . . Rikan’s Kyoto fans send ten large banners to Osaka. As a thank you, this *surimono* was prepared,

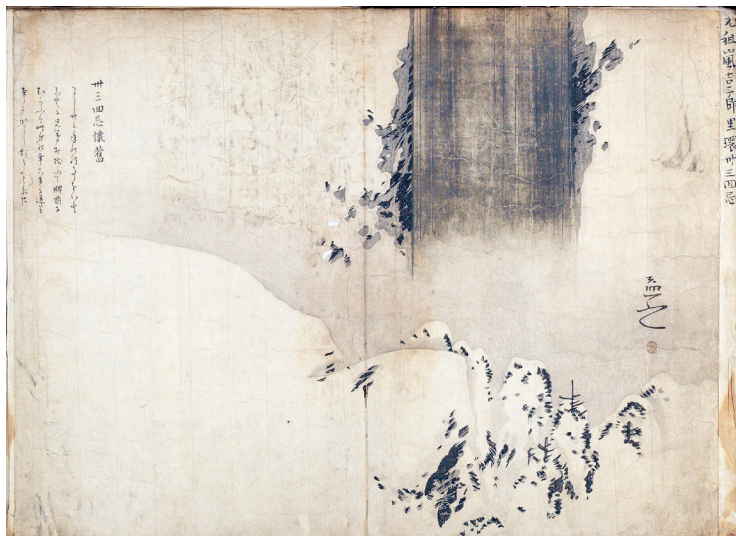


Fig. 6. Thirty-third memorial of Arashi Kichisaburō I (1737-1780); twelfth month, 1812. Artist: Satō Masuyuki. Waseda University Theater Museum (*Nishizawa Ippō harikomi-chō*, vol. 3).

and I am sending it along. There is no actor that can compare with Teruhiro. How delightful to have him as my [*haikai*] student!<sup>12</sup>

The opening text of the *surimono* and a few of the poems are below, two by women:

hototogisu	Cuckoo cry in summer
matsu ni arashi no	Like a storm [Arashi]
ataru koe	Striking the pine
	—Sakujo さく女 (woman)

[The Japanese cuckoo has a striking cry, which is here likened to a storm (*arashi*) striking a pine (*matsu*). *Arashi* refers to Arashi Rikan and *matsu* to Shikan (Shikan's crest was a crane which is associated with pine). Rikan's performance is magnificently popular (*ataru*), showing up that of Shikan.]

urigoe ni	The vendor's cry
senryō wa ari	Worth a thousand gold pieces
hatsu-gatsuo	First bonito of the year
	—Kikujo 菊女 (woman)

[Like rising auction bids to buy the first bonito of the season, the audience cries out for Rikan's performance, worth a thousand gold pieces. A top actor's annual salary was indeed said to be 1,000 gold pieces.]

sono fude ni	On his brush,
shōbu no ka ari	Fragrance of the iris—
sumi no tsuya	Lustrous ink

—Doran

[Rikan is presented as the most elegant of artists, fittingly able to perform the role of aristocrat-calligrapher Ono no Tōfū.]

The year 1813 was an extremely important one for Osaka kabuki, when the Rikan-Shikan rivalry reached its first peak, and when the *ōban* actor print became standard in Osaka, beginning a golden age of Osaka actor-print production. We can imagine that the rival camps of supporters (*hiiki*) were influential in the boom in *ōban* actor prints to promote their favorite star actor in the public sphere beyond the more private world of *surimono*.

For Rikan there seems to have been a clear distinction in the use of poetry for interaction with patrons – between the private world of *surimono* and the more literary sphere of illustrated books – and the public/popular world of commercial *hosoban* 細判 or *ōban* actor prints. It was relatively common for poems to appear in illustrated books on actors in both Edo and Osaka from *Ehon butai ōgi* 絵本舞台扇 (1770) onwards. We have many examples of *hokku* on Edo single-sheet prints (both *hosoban* and *ōban*) from the early/mid eighteenth century, and some examples of poems on Shōkōsai *hosoban* prints.<sup>13</sup> A poem in Rikan's own hand (*jihitsu* 自筆) is found along with other actors in Shōkōsai's *Shibai gakuya zue* 劇場楽屋図絵 as early as 1800. The few extant examples of Shōkōsai *hosoban* prints with poems do not include any of Rikan.

The many examples of extant books and *surimono* demonstrate the intricate links between Kamigata kabuki actors and *kyōka* and *haikai* circles. Rikan, in particular, was active throughout his career in both genres. It is therefore intriguing that we can find no poems on Kamigata large-format actor prints until late in 1815, and in the case of Rikan, not until 1821. I have not found any commercially-produced Rikan actor prints with poems on them until the time of Rikan's bold creation of the new acting name Kitsusaburō, a rare occurrence in kabuki, in the first month of 1821.





Fig. 7. Arashi Kichisaburō I (Rikan) as Ono no Tōfū in *Ono no Tōfū aoyagi suzuri* 小野道風青柳硯 at the Kado Theater; fourth month, 1813. Artist: Ashifune. Waseda University Theater Museum (*Nishizawa Ippō harikomichō*, vol. 3).

Rikan must have been self-confident and secure in his position as a leading actor, chosen at an early age to succeed to his father's name ahead of his older brother, and then chosen to succeed Sawamura Kunitarō I to become troupe leader (*za-gashira* 座頭) of one of the two top-level (*ōshibai* 大芝居) Osaka troupes in 1805, while relatively young. He never felt the need to travel to Edo to perform. He was also active in both *kyōka* and *haikai* circles from an early age, as we have seen. Why would he not have his or his patrons' poems on his actor prints, even after it had become common among Utaemon (Shikan) and his troupe from 1816?

Utaemon, as we know from the work of Kaguraoka Yōko, was a master at self-promotion.<sup>14</sup> His return from his first tour of Edo in late 1812 had a decisive impact on Osaka actor print production, which had until that time been almost exclusively in the *hosoban* format. His dramatic return and open rivalry with Rikan stimulated the creation of dynamic *ōban* actor prints. His return in late 1815, this time with the re-invented Ichikawa Ebijūrō I 市川蝦十郎 (Shinshō 新升, 1777-1827), again would lead to a change in the role of actor prints.

The first Osaka *ōban* actor print (Fig. 8) that I have found to contain a poem is an anonymous print of Ebijūrō I, dated to the eleventh month, 1815.<sup>15</sup> Ebijūrō (formerly Ichizō 市蔵 and a disciple of Ichikawa Danzō IV) returned to Osaka after more than seven years, presenting himself in the role of Fukashichi from *Imoseyama onna teikin* 妹背山婦女庭訓 as the new Danjūrō (Shinshō 新升) and inheritor of the Edo *aragoto* 荒事 (“rough” or “exaggerated”) style. Ebijūrō’s poem is delightfully straightforward:

fuyu no umi	The winter sea
aretaki mama ni	Rough it wants to be
arenikeri	Rough it always was

—Shinshō

*Aragoto* has arrived in Osaka from Edo and Ebijūrō is its star. The print also unusually has the actor face straight out toward the viewer, rare in Osaka prints, but a trademark of “Danjūrō” *aragoto*. This print, with no indication of a publisher, may have been privately issued in the manner of a *surimono*.

Ebijūrō’s mentor Utaemon (Shikan) had made dramatic use of poetry on a series of eight prints by Utagawa Toyokuni I in the third month, 1815, in Edo. Each print of him in a different dance role has a *hokku* 発句 by Shikan, presenting himself as the great showman: multi-role actor (*kaneru yakusha* 兼ねる役者), dancer, and poet. Figure 9 shows Utaemon as Fugen Bosatsu.

shirakumo to	Disguised as
itsuwari yayoi	A cloud in the night—
Fugenzō	Bodhisattva Fugen

A year later seven different Osaka artists would create a similar series, again with verses by Shikan on each print. Figure 10 shows the Osaka version done by the amateur artist Ashikiyo 芦清 with the same Shikan poem.

Shikan would take this use of poetry and art a dramatic step further a year later in the third month, 1817, when he teamed up with Ashikuni to produce a *surimono*-like series of twelve images of himself in twelve different dance roles. The only known complete set is in Waseda University Theater Museum’s album *Kyōta kyakushoku jō*.<sup>16</sup> Here Shikan plays the roles of actor, poet, and artist, drawing himself, although not his own face, and is praised in poems by fans.



Fig. 8. Ichikawa Ebijūrō I (Shinshō) as the fisherman Fukashichi in *Imoseyama onna teikin* at the Kado Theater; eleventh month, 1815. Private collection.

We know that the more conservative Rikan despised Shikan's style of showmanship and that Rikan refused to perform with Shikan. An exchange of letters of complaint between Rikan and Shikan and his producer, financial backer *ginshu* Fushimiya Zenbei 銀主伏見屋前兵衛, dating from late 1819 (just at the time Shikan had returned again triumphantly from his third tour of Edo), was recorded in *Setsuyō kikan* 摂陽奇観, vol. 45.<sup>17</sup> Rikan considers that Shikan is not a true Osaka actor, but one who developed in Edo.

Mr. Utaemon [Shikan] began his career as an actor in the lower theaters (*koshihai* 小芝居) of Zama and Inari, and then was invited to perform at the Kado Theater. Soon after, however, he left for Edo and I heard that he found success as a troupe leader there.<sup>18</sup>



Fig. 9. Nakamura Utaemon III (Shikan) as Fugen Bosatsu; third month, 1815. Artist: Toyokuni I. Waseda Theater Museum, Tokyo.

Rikan does not complain about Shikan's use of poetry on actor prints, but he complains about almost every other of Shikan's tactics to promote his own popularity, including extravagant *norikomi* 乗込み (flotillas of boats full of fans):

On returning to Osaka, he had a flotilla of boats, more than ever assembled before, greet him at Higashibori landing and then travel to Dōtonbori, alighting at the Naka Theater. The fireworks and bonfires on both sides of the river were truly like the Tenjin Festival. All the crowds gathered at the Naka Theater and there was nothing I could do about it.<sup>19</sup>

Rikan then goes on to complain about Shikan's tactics when he returned from Edo in late 1812, when his flashy dance performance of seven





Fig. 10. Nakamura Utaemon III (Shikan) as Fugen Bosatsu; third month, 1816. Artist: Ashikiyo. Hendrick Lühl Collection, Germany.

changes proved to be so popular that it ruined Rikan's own performance. He complains that Shikan is trampling on the tradition of Osaka kabuki, the tradition of Nakamura Tomijūrō I and Arashi Hinasuke I. Rikan opposes the idea of only drawing in audiences with flashy dances with quick changes, saying that it ruins the popularity of dramas.

At that time I was performing at the Kado Theater in “Ane imōto tate no ōiso” 姉妹達大磯 to great success with full houses, but in the face of the novelty of dance pieces with seven quick changes, my audience declined. The dances were praised but as art they were poor and attracted even



ignorant girls to the theater. I lost patrons because the quick-change pieces were put on time and again. This strategy trampled upon the tradition of former great actors, as well as myself. It simply is not acceptable.<sup>20</sup>

Rikan really hated Shikan's tendency to perform quick-change dance pieces for almost every program and to perform all kinds of roles. His complaint echoes modern stage actors who complain that popular musicals have taken over the London and New York stages, causing serious drama to suffer.

From my youth I have concentrated on lead roles (*tachiyaku*) and have gained fame as a star actor. I chose not to perform dances and followed in the footsteps of actors such as Nakayama Bunshichi, Fujikawa Hachizō 藤川八蔵, Mimasu Daigorō 三升大五郎 and my father Kichisaburō, who all limited themselves to lead roles. Therefore, I have not performed dances. If Utaemon [Shikan] did not perform dances, I would have no reason to complain. However, to focus on dance pieces for almost every program and capture the attention of the audience is ruining my style of acting (*geidō* 芸道). Therefore, I ask Utaemon and Zenbei to please refrain from performing dance pieces.<sup>21</sup>

Rikan also complains that Shikan is flooding the market with “Shikan” products that have reduced the popularity of his own products. Rikan was clearly a purist and a serious actor, who felt that it was his responsibility to maintain the Osaka tradition in the face of Shikan's pandering to popular tastes by performing flashy quick-change dances. We can surmise that Rikan was influenced by his Kamigata *suijin* 粹人/*bunjin* 文人 patrons and their distinctive tradition of modesty, reserve, and anti-commercialism in cultural production. An ideal of the *suijin* “amateur artist” is presented by Nishizawa Ippōken 西沢一鳳軒 in his *Denki sakusho* 伝奇作書. In his discussion of Kamigata writers like Nitoan, Teiga 定雅, and others who wrote actor critiques, he says that they were happy to write critiques and not have their names published.<sup>22</sup>

What might have caused Rikan to change his view and allow poems on *ōban* actor prints as in figure 11? Rikan's passing on the name “Kichisaburō” to his nephew, the son of his elder brother, and his creating the new stage name “Kitsusaburō” in the first month of 1821 were decisive moves. His statement on this occasion recorded on a *surimono* (*Kyōta kyakushokujō*, vol. 29: 52-55) makes it clear that he is going into a kind of semi-retirement:

In all humility: Thanks to the patronage of my fans, I have been able to perform until after the age of fifty. My debt is deeper than the sea and higher than any mountain. However, over the last year or so I have not been well, and have not been able to perform to my satisfaction. I took time off to try to recuperate and when the illness seemed better, I would again take to the stage after encouragement from others. But I am afraid that my performances of late have not been pleasing to the audience, and I apologize for this. They say even the Buddha grows impatient after three affronts. If I were to continue to displease you time and again, all your warm affection would gradually dissipate and I would only soil my family's name. Therefore, borrowing the wisdom of others and taking my patrons' advice, I have decided to withdraw from the stage and convalesce, before I defile my name, and to pass on this present name to Daisaburō 大三郎, the son of my older brother Arashi Isaburō. I now pass my name Kichisaburō to him and take the name Kitsusaburō. However, I shall not abandon my responsibilities to the troupe and become just a doddering old man who grinds miso paste at temples. Therefore, I beg your continued favor and patronage for Kitsusaburō. Although this isn't the same as feeding both the cat and the mouse, I beg the favor of all of you from the north and south, east and west; we depend on your strength to support us.

May our patrons prosper for thousands upon thousands of generations, and may we see a thousand autumns and safely conclude our performance.

Arashi Rikan<sup>23</sup>

The enthusiasm of his fans for the creation of a new stage name produced a burst of *surimono*, *surimono*-like *ōkubi-e* 大首絵, and other congratulatory prints (Fig. 11), most with poems by fans and by Rikan himself. The right half of figure 7 (above) was reissued as an anonymous *ōban* print with new text that includes a poem by Rikan with a statement that it is in his own handwriting (*jikihitsu* 直筆).<sup>24</sup> The inclusion of a poem in Rikan's own calligraphy is apt for the character he is playing, a famous classical calligrapher. Suddenly we have the sense that Rikan has relaxed after making a crucial decision to settle his family and professional matters, and no longer to feel that he alone was responsible for the Osaka kabuki tradition. He certainly seems also to have relaxed his severe view of Shikan. In the summer of 1821 Rikan agreed to perform with Shikan from the next season, only to die in the ninth month before they could perform together.

Rikan's attitude toward the use of poetry on actor prints, however, did not fundamentally change. A careful look at the Rikan *ōban* prints

that include poems, by himself or by patrons, reveals that these are all in fact special *mitate* prints issued not to represent a particular production but to celebrate his taking of the new name “Kitsusaburō.” The Ono no Tōfū reprint of the earlier *surimono* is in fact the only example I have seen that has an original poem by Rikan on an *ōban* print, other than those on his *shini-e* 死絵 (memorial prints). Rikan kept poetry within the sphere of his private life. *Kikkōjō* 橘香帖, a posthumous celebration of Rikan’s life, is a spectacular example that shows how important poetry was for Rikan, his troupe, and his patrons.<sup>25</sup> For Rikan, I believe that we can argue that *haikai* and *kyōka* were crucial mediums for both his professional and personal life. In comparison with his rival Shikan, a tactician and master of creating celebrity, however, Rikan was relatively stiff and unwilling to pander to popular currents. Poetry for him, it seems, was within the private world of the heart.

Rikan’s acting style was deeply within the Kamigata tradition of *wagoto*, which can be described as a kind of naturalism, and very different from the flamboyant *aragoto* style of Edo. Until the last year of his life he kept his poetry connections within the private world of *surimono* or the more exclusive world of books. Although an actor in a commercial theater, he chose to keep his poetry distinct from overtly commercial concerns, an attitude that brought him close to the ideal of the *suijin* so important to many writers and artists in mercantile Osaka.

Ironically, his rival Shikan did give Rikan a strong, somewhat indirect tribute several years after Rikan’s death in the miscellany *Ochiba no shitakusa* 落葉の下草 of 1827, which helps us to understand what Rikan was afraid Osaka kabuki was losing. In an interview, Utaemon (Shikan, or Baigyoku) is asked to compare the acting styles of the two superstars Ichikawa Danzō IV (1745-1808) and Arashi Hinasuke I (Koroku III 小六, 1741-1796):

[Interviewer:] Arashi Hinasuke I (later Koroku) was known for his lack of artifice (*gei*) in his performances, as well as his ability to convey the essence of the character to his audience. The late Danzō (IV) was known as skillful for the detail of his character portrayals. Both were considered masters. Which of these two do you consider the best actor?

Baigyoku (Utaemon) replied: Koroku (Hinasuke I) presented his characters with great skill by keeping artifice to a minimum and yet conveying the essence of the character to his audience. He was a master at this technique. There was no one who could be compared with him. For



Fig. 11. Arashi Kitsusaburō I (Rikan) as Sasaki Takatsuna; first month, 1821. In *Ōmi Genji senjin yakata*. Artist: Hokushū. The British Museum. © Trustees of the British Museum.

each role when he performed, he devised a technique. He would present the depths of the character's feelings, and touch the hearts of his audience. This was his genius. The late Danzō was detailed in his technique. The audience never felt distant from him. His skills were often praised and his talent rare. However, the most skilful actors today can imitate the [histrionic] skill of Danzō, but no one can imitate Koroku. Only Arashi Kichisaburō II (Rikan) was able to imitate the style of Koroku.<sup>26</sup>

[Interviewer:] From this answer it was clear that Hinasuke was considered the better actor.

Utaemon's insights give us a sense of Rikan's acting style and approach to art, known as he was for his careful portrayal of the feelings of characters. The ability to touch the hearts of the audience is a rare talent indeed. The implication is that one does not do this through flamboy-

ance or raw power, but through more realistic, understated acting (*gei o sukunaku shite*) and through exploration of human emotion (*jō o tsukushi*). This particular Kamigata style, with its roots going back to Sakata Tōjūrō I 坂田藤十郎 (1647-1709) and steeped in jōruri, is an aspect of kabuki that Rikan was afraid would be lost in the quest for popularity through reliance on extravagant dance pieces that capture the eye but not the heart. For him, it seems, poetry was essential for communing with other interesting men and women from various walks of life, and for understanding the human heart – not just as a tool to promote popular celebrity. Tōjūrō I in *Actors Analects* (*Yakusha rongō* 役者論語):

. . . [T]he great man's art resides in doing what he thinks is right, not caring whether the audience likes it or not.

If you wish to be praised, the best way to set about it is to forget the audience and to concentrate upon playing the play as if it was really happening.<sup>27</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Most of our contemporary knowledge about kabuki and kabuki practices comes from research on Edo-city kabuki, which came to dominate the world of kabuki in the twentieth century. The flamboyant style of Edo, however, was only one style of kabuki in the Edo period. The contrasting characters and styles of Arashi Rikan I and Nakamura Shikan I clearly points to a fundamentally different attitude to theater. The view of actors by themselves and by the public comes through very clearly in the poetry by and about Rikan and Shikan on the *surimono* and commercial prints. This style of Kamigata kabuki, with its tendencies for understatement and even what we might call naturalism or realism, is still yet to be fully explored. Without an understanding of this tradition, the view of kabuki history and its heritage today is incomplete. The prints and other documentary evidence that I have presented show that the actors themselves were clearly aware of how their fame was created through the publishing industry, in both text and image.

## NOTES

\*The images in this article are taken from C. Andrew Gerstle with Timothy Clark and Akiko Yano, *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage: 1780-1820* (London: The British Museum Press, 2005), in which most of the items discussed here are illustrated in color. Also see the Japanese edition, *Ōsaka kabuki-ten: kamigata yakusha-e to toshi bunka*



(Osaka: Osaka Museum of History, 2005). A version of this essay was published in Japanese as “Kamigata yakusha to haikai, kyōkaren: shodai Arashi Rikan to sono hiiki-tachi,” in *Ukiyo-e geijutsu* 150 (2005): 6-22.

1. Gunji Masakatsu, *Kabuki: yōshiki to denshō* (Tokyo: Gakugei Shorin, 1976), pp. 150-68.

2. I have examined how this system worked for actors in *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage*. Eiko Ikegami also examines artistic circles in *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

3. Although there seems to be no direct parody, the poem is perhaps allusive to the Emperor Gotoba poem, no. 99 of the original *Ogura hyakunin isshu* 小倉百人一首:

hito mo oshi	People can seem kind;
hito mo urameshi	and people can seem cruel—
ajikinaku	when quite foolishly
yo o omou yue ni	I wear myself out worrying
mono omou mi wa	over the world and its ways.

Translation by Steven Carter, *Traditional Japanese Poetry: An Anthology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 238.

4. I have analyzed these poems in Gerstle, “Kabuki ni miru stā no taikō to sedai keishō: nidaime Arashi Kichisaburō tai sandaime Nakamura Utaemon no baai,” *Kokugo kokubun* 72, no. 3 (2003): 574-95.

5. Available on the Ritsumeikan website: [www.arc.ritsumei.ac.jp/chon/](http://www.arc.ritsumei.ac.jp/chon/).

6. Illustrated in Gerstle, *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage*, p. 108, cat. no. 62.

7. Ogata Tsutomu, *Za no bungaku* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1973).

8. I am grateful to Kaguraoka Yōko for this reference.

9. Hanyū Noriko, “Arashi Rikan to maruha kyōka,” *Naruo setsurin* 11 (Dec. 2003): 1-11.

10. Nakano Mitsutoshi, “Higashiyama Rōbaikutsu shujin Doran,” in *Edo bungaku kenkyū*, ed. Jinbō Kazuya (Tokyo: Shintensha, 1993); Takasugi Shio, “Niwa Tōkei kenkyū joron,” *Ukiyo-e geijutsu* 145 (Jan. 2003): 49-55.

11. Ihara Toshiro, *Kabuki nenpyō*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1960), pp. 515-17.

12. Ihara, *Kabuki nenpyō*, vol. 5, pp. 515-17.

13. See fig. 13 and cat. 91 in Gerstle, *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage*.

14. Kaguraoka Yōko, *Kabuki bunka no kyōju to tenkai: kankyaku to gekijō* (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 2002).

15. Gerstle, *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage*, cat. 175.

16. Vol. 27: 21-22. Waseda Theater Museum, ed., *Zenki kamigata-e*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Waseda Theater Museum, 1995), no. 114; Gerstle, *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage*, cat. 185; Roger Keyes, *Theatrical World of Osaka Prints* (Boston, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1973), no. 11.

17. Funakoshi Seiichirō, ed., *Naniwa sōsho*, vol. 5 (Osaka: Naniwa sōsho kankōkai, 1928), pp. 557-65.

18. Funakoshi, *Naniwa sōsho*, vol. 5, p. 557.

19. Funakoshi, *Naniwa sōsho*, vol. 5, p. 558.

20. Funakoshi, *Naniwa sōsho*, vol. 5, p. 558.
21. Funakoshi, *Naniwa sōsho*, vol. 5, p. 559.
22. This is quoted in Nishizawa Ippōken, “Denki sakusho,” in Ichijima Kenkichi, ed., *Shingunsho ruifu*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1906), p. 94.
23. Geinōshi Kenkyūkai, ed., *Nihon shomin bunka shiryō shūsei*, vol. 15 (Tokyo: San’ichi Shobō, 1976), pp. 1134-35. Gerstle, *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage*, cat. 194.
24. Gerstle, *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage*, cat. 117; Matsudaira Susumu, *Kamigata nishiki-e zuroku* (Kobe: Kōnan Joshi Daigaku, 1997), no. 78.
25. See Gerstle, *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage*, cats. 201-14 for a range of Rikan memorial publications.
26. Mori Senzō and Kitagawa Hirokuni, eds., *Zoku Nihon zuibitsu taisei*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1980), pp. 89-90.
27. Charles Dunn and Bunzō Torigoe, *The Actors Analects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 75 and 79.