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A LITERATURE FOR THE PEOPLE: 
A STUDY OF JIDAI SHÔSETSU 
IN TAISHÔ AND EARLY SHÔWA JAPAN

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for 
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate 
School of The Ohio State University

By

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*****

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ABSTRACT

During the early twentieth-century, the genre of popular literature (taishū bungaku) evolved in tandem with the development of Japan’s mass print industry. One of the most popular sub-genres subsumed under the rubric of taishū bungaku was historical fiction (jidai shōsetsu), which typically incorporated conventions borrowed from the popular arts of the Edo era (1600-1868). Jidai shōsetsu serialized in newspapers and magazines during the Taishō (1912-26) and early Shōwa (1926-89) periods often incorporated the formulaic plots and stock characters found in kabuki, yomihon and the oral narratives (kōdan) of the vaudeville hall. Popular audiences, faced with the economic instability, social unrest and a rising tide of Westernism, drew comfort from the sense of tradition they discerned in the conventional morality of historical fiction. They turned to jidai shōsetsu to escape the challenges of modern life.

Japanese literary scholars including Matsumura Tomomi, Tsurumi Shunsuke and Ozaki Hotsuki suggest that the popularity of jidai shōsetsu derives in part from the popular writer’s understanding of the hardships experienced by his readers and his ability to incorporate within the formulas of jidai shōsetsu elements which address the people’s need to express repressed feelings. I argue that the jidai shōsetsu writer’s efforts to appeal to a contemporary mass audience
result in the backward projection of his consciousness of his own milieu onto the past. The popular historical novelist camouflages his treatment of contemporary themes by employing settings, people and conventions from the past. In support of this hypothesis, I offer an overview of the historical development of jidai shōsetsu, concentrating on the role of the mass readership in influencing the development of jidai shōsetsu's vernacular style and contemporary content. This overview includes an examination of two progenitors of the popular historical novel, sokki-kōdan (kōdan transcriptions) and Tachikawa bunko. Finally, I make a close reading of specific jidai shōsetsu written between 1913 and 1939, with exegesis grounded in the social context within which the novels were produced. My analysis includes translated excerpts and plot synopses of selected works by three important popular historical novelists: Nakazato Kaizan (1885-1944), Osaragi Jirō (1897-1973) and Yoshikawa Eiji (1892-1962).
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INTRODUCTION

Walter Benjamin observes that "a great storyteller will always be rooted in the people." A great storyteller is one who shares, or at least understands, the experiences of the peasant, the artisan, the laborer, the tradesman. He also observes that the storyteller always has something useful to pass along to his audience, whether it be a moral, a maxim or some practical advice. "In every case, the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers." The didactic import of a story does not, however, preclude its entertainment value. The object of storytelling is not "to convey the pure essence of a thing, like information or a report," suggests Benjamin. On the contrary, spinning a tale "sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller in order to bring it out of him again. Thus the traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of a potter cling to the clay vessel."1

Every culture has its storytelling traditions. In Japan the art of storytelling is historically associated with Buddhist preaching. In fact, Buddhist monks were relating humorous short stories as part of their sermons as early as the seventh-century. In the course of several centuries, however, storytelling evolved gradually from narrative intended to elucidate the sutras or illustrate a particular moral into a popular entertainment form. In the sixteenth-

century daimyō (feudal lords) employed storytellers to entertain at their estates. But by the seventeenth-century, professional narrators were performing for the general public in cities throughout Japan, the most successful being based in Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya or Edo. Performing in vaudeville halls (yoseba), these professional storytellers related tales which appealed to plebeian audiences—stories of farmers, merchants, and craftsmen. At the same time, storytellers would often narrate the tales which had been so popular among the daimyō, stories of the military exploits of legendary warrior heroes from Japan’s past. As the material for these martial tales was generally drawn from the sources also used by kabuki and jōruri (puppet play) playwrights, who catered to the same popular audience, it was incumbent upon the storyteller to keep his narratives fresh and appealing, to leave his own “trace” clinging to the story. Yet the didactic aspect of storytelling remained, and from the seventeenth to the late nineteenth-centuries, storytellers wove their “counsel” into carefully crafted, entertaining narratives which amused, frightened, inspired and moved popular audiences.

In the early twentieth-century, a literary form evolved which had much in common with the storytelling tradition. Like oral narrative, this new literature, known from the mid 1920s as taishū bungaku (“popular literature” or “mass literature”), was aimed primarily at a popular, less aesthetically sophisticated audience. Like oral narrative, taishū bungaku generally incorporated “something of use” for

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3 Heinz Morioka and Miyoko Sasaki, 232-41.
the reader—the emphasis was on its “life value” (seikatsuteki nedan) rather than its “artistic value” (geijutsuteki nedan). And yet, taishū bungaku writers strove to make their works entertaining and original, even while employing many of the same conventions of plot and characterization used in oral narrative, kabuki, jōruri, and in the didactic romances of the early nineteenth-century.

The term taishū bungaku may be applied to a number of subgenres, including historical fiction (jidai shōsetsu), domestic fiction (katei shōsetsu), detective fiction (tantei shōsetsu), mystery fiction (kaiki shōsetsu) and juvenile fiction (jidō shōsetsu). However, in the critical discourse of the Taishō (1912-26) and early Shōwa (1926-89) eras, the term taishū bungaku was synonymous with jidai shōsetsu. Ozaki Hotsuki suggests the reason for this lies in the fact that jidai shōsetsu is more closely linked to the popular arts (shominteki geijutsu) of Japan’s past than katei shōsetsu, tantei shōsetsu or other manifestations of popular literature. He reasons that the melodramatic domestic novels of the late Meiji (1868-1912) and Taishō periods were little more than “knockoffs” of the novels of Ken’yūsha writers, and of Naturalist fiction, both of which dealt, to some extent, with contemporary social problems and incorporated realistic


* Ozaki Hotsuki, “Rekishi shōsetsu to jidai shōsetsu no aida” (Between historical fiction and period fiction), Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō 44:3 (March 1979), 17-18; Ozaki Hotsuki, Taishū bungaku (Popular literature) (Tokyo: Kinkokuniya Shōten, 1980), 45-46; Shimura Kunihiro, Rekishi shōsetsu to taishū bungaku (The historical novel and popular literature) (Tokyo: Yugen Kaisha Miyamoto Kikaku, 1990), 261, 301.
description inspired by the realism of Naturalist authors in the West. Similarly, tantei shōsetsu and kaiki shōsetsu evolved from translations of Western detective and mystery fiction by such authors as Arthur Conan Doyle, Edgar Allan Poe, Maurice Leblanc and Gaston Leroux. Ozaki claims that only jidai shōsetsu maintains a connection with Japan’s popular arts—oral narrative, kabuki, etc.—by drawing from many of the the same legends and historiographic sources, and employing many of the same conventions.* Jidai shōsetsu thus becomes another retelling of the familiar tales related by storytellers across the centuries. And with each retelling, the heroes and events depicted take on new significance as each jidai shōsetsu writer leaves his “traces” clinging to the story.

Not all critics view the intertextuality of jidai shōsetsu as positively as Ozaki does. Writing in 1926, the liberal intellectual Hasegawa Nyozekan laments the lack of modern artistic sensibility in taishū bungaku.

While it cannot be said that modern artistic sensibility has been dealt a death blow by so-called “mass literature,” this sensibility has certainly been thwarted by the feudal romanticism which one expects in mass literature. Delving into the psychology of today’s popular novels, one can find nothing which relates to the sentiments of contemporary existence, only the specters of life in the past.’

Nyozekan posits the “capitalistic commercialism” of contemporary society and the “societal desperation” it engenders as the causes of the people’s withdrawal from modern sensibilities into the romanticism of the past. Having lost the ability to make a living due to the economic

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* Ozaki Hotsuki, “Dokusfu no hakken to dentu,” 495-98. See also Asai Kiyoshi, 310-11.
depression that followed the end of the First World War, many Japanese sought to escape their despair through popular historical fiction, "immersing themselves in the past so as to kill the present." However, this observation undermines Nyozekan's own argument that there is nothing in taishū bungaku which relates to contemporary existence, for it implies the popular author's sensitivity to the circumstances of his readership. Taishū bungaku writers recognized that many of their readers were struggling with the forces of modernization--the industrialization of the economy and the urbanization of society--and with cultural influences from the West. They understood that many Japanese confronted by the pressures of modern, capitalist society longed for a renewed sense of tradition. These authors attempted to meet that longing through the "feudal romanticism" of taishū bungaku, or more specifically, jidai shōsetsu.

Meeting the people's need for tradition is not a function unique to Japan's popular literature. Perry Link discusses an analogous "comfort function" in the fiction of popular writers in early twentieth-century Shanghai, the so-called "Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School." Like taishū bungaku, "Butterfly" fiction assured popular readers that "no matter what else happened, certain values...could still be relied on in their traditional forms." These traditional values would always be available, "as a kind of anchor for one's life in case experiments with the new style failed."

1 Hasegawa Nyozekan, 27.
2 E. Perry Link, Jr., Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Cities (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 198. "Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School" was a term used by progressive writers of the May Fourth Movement in the early 1920s to disparage writers of popular fiction. The term derives from the frequent use in popular love stories of the traditional symbols of mandarin ducks and butterflies to represent a pair of lovers. Perry Link, 7.
similar cultural anchoring is a major factor in the
tremendous appeal of jidai shôsetsu according to the critic
Kobayashi Hideo. Writing in 1933, Kobayashi observes that
while the manners and mores depicted in jidai shôsetsu seem
“distant and removed” from the lives of most people in early
Shôwa, “the psychological and emotional temperament expressed
in such works seem perfectly in harmony with the social
scenery” of Japan’s feudal past. The symmetry between social
environment and spiritual temperament bespeaks a cultural
equilibrium which fascinates modern readers living in an
increasingly complex and sometimes contradictory society.
Jidai shôsetsu thus becomes the source for the sense of
tradition which modern readers have lost.10

In addition to a sense of heritage, popular historical
fiction provides modern readers with an outlet for repressed
emotions and frustrations. For example, Perry Link notes that
“Butterfly” novels depicting the adventures of the righteous
“knight errant” who punishes evil doers and restores justice
provided oppressed urban readers in 1920s Shanghai with “the
enjoyment of vicarious victories where real-life victories
were impossible.”11 In like fashion, the jidai shôsetsu
provided “vicarious victories” for emasculated popular
readers—laborers, farmers, and urban petit bourgeoisie
(shôshimin)—coping with economic depression, landlordism and
the growing influence of commercial and industrial monopolies
during the Taishô and early Shôwa years. Even leftwing
intellectuals, depressed by the government’s suppression of

10 Kobayashi Hideo, “Kokyô o ushinatta bungaku” [Literature of the lost home], in Showa hihyô
taikei [History of Criticism in th Showa Period], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Banchô Shobô, 1968), 213-14. The
translation cited here is by Paul Anderer. See Aileen Gatten & Anthony Chambers, eds., New
11 Perry Link, 20. “Knight errant” is Link’s translation of the term 武侠.
the leftist movement from 1925 to 1935 and their own inability to bring about a socialist revolution, drew solace from the violent swordplay of *jidai shôsetsu*, as Nakatani Hiroshi points out in 1934: “*Taishû bungaku* acts heroically on behalf of [leftist] intellectuals, boldly carrying out the nihilistic violence they only dream of.” If the government prevented socialist revolution, leftwing intellectuals could at least take pleasure in *jidai shôsetsu*’s romantic depiction of insurgents during the late Edo era (1600-1868) when anti-government agitation eventually brought down the feudal Tokugawa administration.

Certainly *jidai shôsetsu* provided escapist entertainment for readers in early twentieth-century Japan. It also comforted readers with its feudal morality, thereby supplying a lost sense of tradition. Moreover, its violence and eroticism offered catharsis to repressed readers. Yet some historical fiction also introduced “modern” ideas—humanism, individualism, egalitarianism—albeit within the framework of feudalistic adventure tales. In achieving such various effects, it was necessary for popular writers to be sensitive to the needs of their audience, and to current trends in society. They then incorporated their consciousness of the contemporary social environment into narratives in order to make them fresh and appealing to modern readers. At the same time, keeping in mind that the popular writer’s audience would reject the novel if they did not perceive “harmony”

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between a character's actions and the social milieu being depicted, the *jidai shōsetsu* writer was compelled to follow certain conventions of plot and characterization received from his predecessors. These conventions reveal the "traces" left by previous generations of storytellers, "traces" which, over time, became the very "traditions" expected by popular readers. In turn, the "traces" left by a given *jidai shōsetsu* writer were picked up by his contemporaries and his successors, and the "tradition" was again transformed. This process of rewriting "tradition" continued in the *jidai shōsetsu* produced after the Greater East Asian War and continues in the popular historical novels written today.

In short, to dismiss *jidai shōsetsu* as merely "feudal romanticism" bearing no relation to the "present" (that is, the historical moment in which it is written) is to misunderstand the reflexive nature of this literary form. Although it follows received conventions in portraying characters and events in the past, *jidai shōsetsu* is also about the present, for it reflects the author's consciousness of his contemporary milieu. This is the main thesis of the present study. It is supported first by an overview of the historical development of popular historical fiction, an overview which shows that the modernity of the readership contributed to evolution of the genre. Second, the thesis is supported by a close reading of selected *jidai shōsetsu* by three major popular writers, Nakazato Kaizan (1885-1944), Osaragi Jirō (1897-1973) and Yoshikawa Eiji (1892-1962), with exegesis grounded in the social context within which the novels were produced. The novels examined in this study were written between 1913 and 1939, a period marked by turmoil:
wide swings in the economy from prosperity to depression and back; periodic social unrest (e.g., rice riots in 1918, labor unrest and tenant farmer disputes in the 1920s); the devastating Kantō earthquake (1923); the granting of universal male suffrage (1925) and the hope for representative government; the suppression of the socialist and labor movements (throughout the period, but particularly between 1925 and 1935); the invasion of Manchuria (1931); attempted coups d’etat by rightwing radicals (1932 and 1936); and the mobilization for total war in China (1937). The objective of this study is to demonstrate how the characters and themes portrayed by Nakazato, Osaragi and Yoshikawa reflect each authors’ awareness of popular reaction to the shifting social currents of these turbulent times.

The first two chapters are devoted to a definition of *jidai shōsetsu*, both in terms of critical discourse and historical development. Chapter One explores the distinction between *jidai shōsetsu* and *rekishi shōsetsu* ("serious" historical fiction) in the context of the critical debate between proponents of "pure literature" (*junbungaku*) and advocates of "popular literature" (*taishū bungaku*). Rather than view the question in terms of an opposition between "pure" versus "popular," I suggest that it is more productive to analyze historical fiction according to the paradigm proposed by John Cawelti in which all literary works fall somewhere on a continuum between "mimetic" and "formulaic." Cawelti observes that even as the most hackneyed novels make some concessions to realistic depiction, the most realistic novels incorporate some conventions of plot and characterization.
Chapter Two traces the genesis of *jidai shōsetsu* as a literary form in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. The growth of the publishing industry played a key role in the development of *jidai shōsetsu*, particularly the newspapers founded in the 1870s which targeted a popular audience and carried feature articles and serial fiction written in a vernacular style accessible to a less educated readership. As the masses gradually acquired the habit of reading daily, circulation of these newspapers rose and demand for entertaining features grew. In the 1880s, these newspapers began carrying transcriptions of the oral narratives performed in vaudeville halls. These became extremely popular, and growing demand soon resulted in the publication of books and magazines devoted exclusively to transcriptions of vaudeville narratives. Before long, publishers began commissioning professional writers to produce original narratives in the style of vaudeville raconteurs. Chapter Two presents a case study of one such publisher, Tachikawa Bunmeidō, whose Tachikawa bunko was a forerunner of *jidai shōsetsu*. In time, professional writers abandoned the phrasing of the vaudeville storyteller, while retaining the formulaic plots and historical settings. These “new” narratives formed the basis of *jidai shōsetsu*.

Chapters Three, Four and Five deal with Nakazato Kaizan, Osaraqi Jirō, and Yoshikawa Eiji, respectively. Each chapter includes an examination of the author’s background and development as a writer, exegesis of selected texts in light of the milieu in which they were written and the author’s consciousness of that milieu, and discussion of critical response to the works analyzed. And finally, the Epilogue
cites examples of *jidai shôsetsu* written after the Greater East Asian War which reflect on-going tendency among popular historical fiction writers to project their consciousness of their contemporary social environment onto the past.

All translations from the original Japanese are mine unless otherwise stated. In translating passages from *jidai shôsetsu*, I have elected to preserve the overwrought prose style of the works cited. The melodramatic quality of the passages quoted demonstrates that the appeal of popular historical fiction lies not in literary artistry, but in the author's skillful manipulation of received conventions in creating intricate, suspenseful and entertaining narratives.
CHAPTER 1

BEING FAITHFUL TO HISTORY: DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN "PURE" AND "POPULAR" HISTORICAL FICTION

One can write something which contains no falsehoods, but it is quite impossible to write absolute truth. An author can merely write his own absolute truth. To write without any regard for historical fact is irresponsible. However, it is difficult to get at the truth. When researching the data left behind in various sources, one finds that exaggerations and misstatements abound. Thus, it is best to keep in mind the general facts of the matter, add one's own interpretation, imbue the incident with spirit, and then write lies. From the standpoint of the work itself, the lies become absolute truth.

Hasegawa Shin

The above statement reflects the opposing positions of a debate which has preoccupied Japanese writers and critics of historical fiction since the Taishō era. On the one hand there are those who oppose the arbitrary alteration of historical fact for the sake of creating entertaining fiction accessible to a modern audience. On the other hand there are those who suggest that because historical sources are far from infallible, they ought to be interpreted for a modern readership, so long as the writer remains true to the spirit of the age he portrays. This latter position is somewhat ambiguous, if not self-contradictory. If, as Hasegawa Shin suggests, a writer is to "keep in mind the general facts of a matter" and then "write lies," what is the standard by which he avoids an irresponsible disregard for historical fact? At the same time, if historical sources are full of exaggeration
and misstatement, then the faithful reconstruction of
historiographic data becomes merely the perpetuation of
falsehood. Despite the ardor with which the debate has been
waged, the issues are far from clear-cut.

Nevertheless, the debate concerning the best way to
portray history accurately through the medium of the novel
raises meaningful questions. Should an author, after
exhaustively researching a subject, create a narrative which
presents the historiographic details of a remote age in all
their strangeness? Or should the author interpret and even
contemporize historical figures and events, thereby making
the distant age he depicts more accessible to his readers?
Can the writer of historical fiction portray historical
processes and universal themes which transcend the barriers
of time? Or is it the purpose of a historical novel to
illustrate the disjunction between past and present by
setting forth the exoticisms, even the barbarities of
antiquity? Those contributing their insights to this dialogue
include historians, literary scholars, writers of popular
fiction, as well as belletrists. Despite their different
opinions on method, all agree that the historical fiction
writer’s goal should be to portray the past as “faithfully”
and “meaningfully” as possible.

Those engaged in the debate in Japan tend to distinguish
between “pure” or “serious” historical fiction (rekishi
shōsetsu), which is generally regarded as faithful to
history, and “popular” historical fiction (jidai shōsetsu,
literally “period fiction”), in which past epochs and
historical events are merely the backdrop before which modern
characters in period costume perform modern dramas with
contemporary themes.\footnote{The term \textit{jidai shôsetsu} (時代小説) may derive from the kabuki term \textit{jidai mono} (時代もの), or "period piece," which describes period plays dealing with famous generals, warriors and other historical figures. In fact, in the late Meiji and early Taishô eras, before the term \textit{jidai shôsetsu} came into wide usage, popular historical fiction was often referred to as \textit{jidai mono}. While popular historical fiction writers often borrowed from the conventions of kabuki, \textit{jidai shôsetsu} is more closely tied to the oral tales (kôdan) which were popular with audiences in vaudeville halls. See chapter two for a discussion of the origins of \textit{jidai shôsetsu}.} Because of their accessibility to modern readers (and the fact that they are more entertaining than novels which give primacy to historiographic accuracy) \textit{jidai shôsetsu} have more popular appeal than the often dry and less entertaining \textit{rekishi shôsetsu}. For this reason, it is often the case that works of historical fiction written by writers of popular literature are categorized automatically as \textit{jidai shôsetsu}, much to the chagrin of some popular writers. To be sure, the distinction between \textit{rekishi shôsetsu} and \textit{jidai shôsetsu} is actually a reflection of a larger debate waged within Japan’s literary establishment starting in late Taishô between “pure literature” (junbungaku) and “popular” or “mass literature” (\textit{taishû bungaku}). In fact, an examination of historical novels suggests that the distinction is often applied out of consideration for the status of an author relative to the literary establishment rather than according to specific criteria of form and content. For example, the historical novels of Mori Ôgai, distinguished author, literary critic and translator of Western writers from Goethe to Gorky, are without exception regarded as \textit{rekishi shôsetsu}, while those of Naoki Sanjûgo, a serial novelist for whom popular literature’s Naoki Prize is named, are universally regarded as \textit{jidai shôsetsu}. This fact reflects Ôgai’s prestige and Naoki’s reputation as a humorous entertainer. Yet a feature common to both is the depiction of the barbarity of past ages whereby the remoteness of those ages,
spiritually as well as temporally, is brought into relief. Critics of *jidai shōsetsu* often point to the treatment of contemporary themes and the portrayal of historical figures with modern sensibilities as proof of popular historical fiction's lack of historicity. However, lending contemporaneity to historical events—or more precisely, lending a sense of history to contemporary events—enables *jidai shōsetsu* writers to comment on their own milieu through the guise of narratives set in the past. This practice was particularly expedient for popular historical fiction writers working between 1913 and 1937. This is the period on which the present study focuses, when government censorship was customary. Fiction (as well as poetry, criticism, scholarship and journalism) perceived as critical of the state by government censors was banned, and writers, editors and publishers to fined or imprisoned. Yet it was not only *jidai shōsetsu* writers who used historical settings and characters to conceal criticism of government and society. Writers of *rekishi shōsetsu* including Mori Ōgai, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Nakajima Atsushi also used historical fiction as a medium for social and political commentary. However, while these *rekishi shōsetsu* writers set their narratives in a wide range of historical periods, the majority of *jidai shōsetsu* writers active in the 1920s and 1930s chose the turbulent years from the end of the Edo era known as the Bakumatsu period (literally, end of the Edo era, ca. 1850-67) as the backdrop.

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2 Ōgai used source material dating from the Heian (794-1185) to the Edo periods, Akutagawa relied largely on medieval sources, especially the 12th-century *Konjaku monogatar* i, and Nakajima drew on classical Chinese texts including the *Shiji* and the *Han shu*, as well as texts from the Tang (618-907) and the Ming (1368-1664) periods.
The Bakumatsu period saw the gradual disintegration of the centralized feudal system by which Tokugawa Shōgunate had maintained order in Japan. Ineffectual economic regulation and misguided reforms in the 1830s precipitated soaring prices for rice and other commodities that impacted peasants and samurai alike. Uprisings in the provinces, opposition from warrior clans in the feudal domains of western Japan, and political infighting within the Shōgunate progressively weakened Bakufu authority. When the United states and Europe demanded trade concessions from Japan in the 1850s, samurai chiefly from the western domains formed an opposition movement to “revere the Emperor and expel the barbarians” (sonnō jōi). They began agitating to overthrow the Bakufu, restore authority to the Emperor and drive foreigners from Japan’s shores. Terrorism directed against the Bakufu and foreign diplomatic and military personnel gave way to open rebellion. Unable to forestall the collapse of their weakened Shōgunate, Tokugawa forces capitulated, thereby making way for the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

Why did so many popular historical fiction writers in the Taishō and early Shōwa years choose the Bakumatsu period as the backdrop for their novels? Observing the tendency of writers of jidai shōsetsu to set their narratives in either the Bakumatsu or the Sengoku (Warring states, ca.1467-1568) periods, Murakami Mitsuhiko, literary scholar and biographer of the popular author Osaragi Jirō speaks of the seemingly unlimited possibilities of a historical moment in which one era was coming to a close and another about to begin. “At such times, human potential was thrown wide open and people
faced the future as a great, unknown quantity. The contradictions built up during the previous age reached a critical mass. When these problems exploded, a multitude of forces were released, swirling and colliding, and became a nebular chaos which would, at length, give birth to the new age. The historian Carol Gluck echoes this observation, pointing out that the Bakumatsu and the Sengoku remained "the most favored heroic periods" for *jidai shōsetsu* writers into the late 1960s. For purveyors of popular culture, Gluck suggests, the Bakumatsu and the Sengoku "represented periods of change, when upheaval and opportunity were the rule and before order descended in the form of the Tokugawa system or the Meiji state. These were the times when it seemed to their chroniclers that men (and the occasional woman) could indeed make history, when ability counted more than class, and when the structures of society and politics were pliant to the exercise of human will."

In addition to the "upheaval and opportunity" afforded by historical periods of change, there are other factors that converged to make the Bakumatsu a favorite setting for historical novels. First is the fact that human historical memory, generally speaking, is limited to about one hundred years. The events of the Bakumatsu were not so remote as to be inaccessible to Taishō and early Shōwa readers, some of whom even lived through the Restoration. Second, *jidai shōsetsu*'s romantic depiction of Bakumatsu Loyalists tended to validate the modern state and its founders, the Meiji oligarchs, for restoring the Emperor to power. In an age when

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1 Murakami Mitsuhiko, "*Kurama Tengu* ni okeru sōzōryoku" (The power of imagination in *Kurama Tengu*), *Shisō* no. 597 (March 1974), 115.

government censors regulated the publishing activities of many authors, writers of popular historical fiction had little to fear. The themes they treated were regarded as evidence of their tacit support for the government and effectively exempted them from censorship.

We must also consider the relevance of the Bakumatsu period to the contemporary milieu. Between 1913 and 1937 doubtless many Japanese experienced anxiety and despair following the rapid industrialization and urbanization the nation had undergone since the 1870s. Moreover, it was a time of economic instability. Robust growth during the First World War was followed by an economic slowdown for which the government was not adequately prepared. Shortages of consumer goods and skyrocketing prices of rice led to "rice riots" in August 1918.

By 1920 the economy had fallen into severe depression resulting in massive unemployment that extended to white collar workers as well as laborers. Labor activists and farmers agitated for reform and were joined eventually by student demonstrators. Dissatisfied with the party politics within the Diet, extremist factions on the left and right resorted to violence. However, it was the leftists who were most systematically and brutally suppressed by the government, leaving many left-leaning intellectuals to despair ever achieving social and economic reform. The devastation of the Kantō earthquake of September 1923 added to the hopelessness felt by many. The conservatism of jidai shōsetsu notwithstanding, some critics—such as Nakatani Hiroshi and Hayashi Fusao—read the depiction of Bakumatsu heroes' anti-establishment activism as a revolution which
despairing leftist intellectuals could enjoy vicariously.

Despite the hardship experienced by many, some Japanese did enjoy prosperity during the late Taishô and early Shôwa years, particularly members of the middle-class who had endured unemployment in 1920-21. The fortunes of many white collar workers revived during the reconstruction boom that followed the Kantô earthquake. The mid 1920s brought affluence and leisure to the middle-class, giving rise to a culture of consumption replete with a multitude of consumer items, including ready-made clothing, radios, phonographs and even suburban homes. Industrialization and urbanization which took place during the preceding decades had created a large, socially amorphous consumer base which also included small entrepreneurs, artisans, and factory workers. Although the latter lacked the disposable income of the middle-class, they enjoyed a variety of leisure activities including sports, travel, cinema and reading, which were now commodified and marketed like other consumer goods.

The promotional campaigns that industry used to market consumer goods took advantage of catch phrases and buzzwords current in the mass media. Two key words were bunka (culture) and taishû (masses [大衆]). Following the Kantô earthquake, middle-class consumers were urged to buy suburban homes, promoted as bunka jûtaku (culture homes) and bunka apaato (culture apartments). The construction of private (as opposed to national or municipal) railways made Tokyo readily

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6) Nakatani Hiroshi, "Taishû bungaku honshitsu-ron" quoted in Matsumura Tomomi, "Nega toshite no 'Edo,,' 180-81; Hayashi Fusao, "Taishû bungaku no risô to genjitsu" (Ideal and Reality of the people's literature), Shinchô (Jan. 1929): 56.

accessible from the suburbs, and in event of earthquake, "culture homes" were said to be easier to flee than the buildings in tightly congested downtown neighborhoods. "Culture homes" were also brighter and more modern (i.e., more Western) in design than traditional Japanese homes, and were pitched as the epitome of a "cultured lifestyle" (bunka seikatsu) to which the white collar worker might aspire. Trappings for the "culture home" were similarly promoted, from the "culture pots" (bunka nabe) with which the middle-class wife would prepare dinner, to the "culture bucket" (bunka baketsu) in which the middle-class baby's "culture diapers" (bunka oshime) would be washed.

The first use of the term taishū in a promotional capacity is to be found in the table of contents for the October 1924 issue of the Hakubunkan magazine Kōdan zasshi (Kōdan magazine). The editor touted the publication's contributions to popular culture using the term taishū bungaku (mass literature) among others. "Popular fiction, mass literature, novels for the people, entertaining literature, all are terms coined in our publication, Kōdan zasshi." Use of taishū bungaku (mass literature) and taishū bungei (mass literary arts) soon spread through the journalism industry and the terms were applied to a variety of publications targeting the diverse urban audience, from taishū zasshi (mass magazines) to anthologies of taishū

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bungaku.' By 1932, as the critic Hasegawa Nyozekan points out, the word *taishū* was employed to market all manner of cultural commodities to the masses: *taishū supōtsu* (mass sports), *taishū eiga* (mass movies) and *taishū geki* (mass theater). The appearance of "mass magazines" was particularly significant in the development of *taishū bungaku* as a genre, because it is through these magazines that the work of young, unknown writers reached a wide readership and established their professional careers. In return for more exposure, popular writers provided publishers with a steady flow of tight, entertaining, if formulaic serial novels designed to keep readers coming back for the next installment. The symbiotic relationship between young writers and the publishers benefited both.

Take, for example, the mass magazine *King*, launched in January 1925 by the publishing house Kōdansha after a massive advertising campaign. *King* targeted a mass audience by carrying a variety of serial fiction and articles which would appeal not just to middle-class males, but also to housewives, factory workers, and children. The first issue

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*The original sentence reads: 通俗読物, 大衆文学, 民衆読本, 読物文学, それは皆この講話雑誌から生まれた言葉です。Shimura Kunihiro, *Rekishi sho setsu to taishū bungaku* (Historical fiction and mass literature) (Tokyo: Yūgen kaisha Miyamoto kikaku, 1990), 261-62; Ozaki Hotsuki, *Taishū bungaku no rekishi* (The history of mass literature), vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1989), 11-13. Ozaki notes that the author and critic Kimura KI claims that the term *taishū* was first used promotionally in a 1924 issue of *Kōdan zasshi* as part of the phrase *taishū bungai* (mass literary arts). However, in an attempt to substantiate Kimura's claim, the scholar Yagi Noboru scoured every 1924 issue of *Kōdan zasshi*. While unable to confirm Kimura's claim, Yagi did find the phrase *taishū bungaku* in the October 1924 issue, apparently the first promotional use of the term *taishū*. Regarding the term 読物, originally it referred to the script of a kōdan, the martial tales recited in vaudeville halls. Though performers did not always "read" these tales, the formal style of their recitation differed greatly from the conversational delivery of the rakugo raconteur's tales. The term 読物文学, a variant of 読物文学, is said to have been coined by Kikuchi Kan in 1924 and refers to the popular historical fiction which follows the conventions of the kōdan but is composed by a professional writer and not a vaudevillian. See Ozaki Hotsuki, *Taishū bungaku*, 24-25.

* Hasegawa Nyozekan, "Taishū bungai, taishū zasshi nado ni okeru yugamerareta 'taishū'" (The distorted 'masses' in mass literary arts, mass magazines, etc.) *Shinchō* 29:8 (August 1932), 2-3.
carried the first installment of Yoshikawa Eiji’s serial novel *Kennan jonan* (Sword trouble, woman trouble, 1925), the first work in which the young author used his famous pen name. So effective was Kōdansha’s promotional campaign, that King’s initial printing of 500,000 copies quickly sold out, prompting the company to issue a second printing of 240,000, which also sold out. By the end of 1925 the magazine’s circulation reached 1,000,000; by the end of 1926, 1,200,000. At the end of 1928 it reached its zenith of 1,400,000. As for Yoshikawa, his career took off, and he began publishing prolifically in Kōdansha publications. The appearance in 1931-33 of an eighteen volume collection of Yoshikawa’s novels as part of Gendai taishū bungaku zenshū (Anthology of contemporary mass literature) attests to his rapid rise to prominence among writers of popular literature.

In addition to mass magazines, publishers during the 1920s and 1930s produced a host of other popular magazines targeted at specific readers. There were magazines aimed at young, educated urban males (*Shinseinen*), housewives (*Fujin no tomo*), young women (*Josei*) and children (*Shônen kurabu*). Newspapers also flourished during this period. Advances in printing technology during the Taishō era facilitated...

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13 Ozaki Hotsuki, *Denki Yoshikawa Eiji*, 267-70; *Nihon bungaku no rekishi*, vol. 11, 412; Asai Kiyoshi, “Taishū bungaku no tōjō,” 315. *Gendai taishū bungaku* was Heibonsha’s entry into the so-called *enpon* wars, the competition among publishers through the publication of inexpensive book series. Each book in the series could be purchased only by subscribers for the low price of one yen (hence the name, *enpon*). Publishers issued collections of contemporary and classical Japanese literature, Western literature and philosophy and popular literature.

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increases in circulation in the 1920s and 1930s. The rapid rise is seen, for example, in the case of Osaka-based Osaka Mainichi shinbun and its sister company in Tokyo, Tokyo Nichinichi shinbun. In 1917, Osaka Mainichi had a circulation of 470,000 and Tokyo Nichinichi, 310,000. By 1921, the figures rose to 670,000 for Osaka Mainichi and 370,000 for Tokyo Nichinichi. By 1924, their circulations were 1,000,000 and 700,000. And by 1929-30, circulations were 1,500,000 and 1,000,000, respectively. The circulation of the Tokyo-based newspaper Miyako shinbun also showed a dramatic increase, rising from 400,000 to half a million at the turn of the century to one million by the 1920s."

The 1920s and 1930s was a time of tremendous opportunity for the popular fiction writers whose serials filled these newspapers and magazines. Not only was it possible for the industrious writer to earn a good living working for mass publications, if he manipulated the media skillfully and used the rhetoric of taishō culture creatively, there were also opportunities for self-promotion. Take, for example, the comments of Yoshikawa Eiji in a May 1932 interview with Yomiuri shinbun. Discussing the novel Kōkihei (Crimson riders, 1932-1933) which was being serialized in Yomiuri at the time, Yoshikawa portrays himself as an author sympathetic to the plight of the people struggling with the challenges of modern society. He speaks of "camouflaging" his observations on contemporary society as a "Bakumatsu piece" in order to avoid "all sorts of difficulties," presumably a euphemism for government censorship.

(Regarding the novel I’m currently serializing,) I call it a “Bakumatsu piece,” yet I feel that the social conditions of the Bakumatsu period closely resemble those of our own present day. I believe that the feelings of insecurity, fretfulness and helplessness which the people experience today are not the least bit different from those felt by the people back then. The fact is, I too am constantly nagged by such feelings. But if I were to portray these anxieties plainly in a contemporary piece, it would give rise to all sorts of difficulties. Therefore, I camouflage them by setting the story in the late Edo period. Thus, although I call my latest novel a “Bakumatsu piece,” in fact, it is a contemporary piece.”

In an effort to portray the social relevancy of his *jidai shôsetsu*, Yoshikawa stresses his empathy with “the people” (Yoshikawa uses the term minshû [民衆]). Moreover, his assertion that he has disguised Kôkihei as a “Bakumatsu piece” to avoid difficulty implies that the objective of the novel is criticism of the state. His vague comments about the insecurities of the people presumably refer to the public’s concern over social problems of the early 1930s: economic depression, tenant farmer disputes, assassinations carried out in February and March 1932 by the rightwing terrorist group Ketsumeine Dan (Blood Pledge Corps), and uncertainty following the Japanese military’s invasion of Manchuria in September 1931. However, aspects of Yoshikawa’s personal life undermine the pose of a socially concerned writer who shares the anxieties of the people. Although he had known poverty as a child, by 1932 he had accumulated considerable wealth through his prolific publishing. Moreover, given his active participation from February 1932 in the fascist literary group Itsuka-kai (Society of the Fifth), whose members met on the fifth day of each month to rub shoulders with officers in

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15 Yoshikawa refers to Kôkihei alternately as *Bakumatsu mono* or “Bakumatsu piece” (幕末物) and *magemono* or “top knot piece” (髻物), a term sometimes applied to *jidai shôsetsu* set in the late Edo period. Ozaki Hotsuki, *Denki Yoshikawa Eji*, 277-78.
the Army General Staff, his opposition to the invasion of Manchuria seems unlikely."

Another indication that Yoshikawa's comments are posturing is his use of the word minshū to refer to "the people." As a writer of taishū bungaku or "the literature for the people," he might well have used the term taishū to refer to the readers whose anxieties he shares. Indeed, some popular writers used the term in such a way. Shirai Kyōji, for example, claimed to have been the first to use the word taishū to signify "the people" at a time when everyone else was using the term minshū, a claim which literary historian Ozaki Hotsuki views with skepticism. However, for some intellectuals, the term taishū, because of its association with the culture of consumption, suggests the masses to whom commodified culture is marketed and by whom it is consumed. As Hasegawa Nyozekan states, taishū as used in the late Taishō and early Shōwa carries the connotation of "popular," as in taishū eiga, taishū supōtsu, and does not signify the "masses" in the sense of a diverse, vital body pulsating with political or ideological potential. Nyozekan asserts that taishū has come to represent "the oppression of feelings of solidarity with the masses, the paralysis of social emotion, the denial of meaning through meaninglessness."18

18 See Enomoto Takeshi, "Bunka no taishūka mondai to kokkashugiteki henkō" (The problem of the popularization of culture and statist tendencies), Shakai kagaku tōkyō, 40 (Waseda Daigaku, March 1969): 17-21; Jay Rubin, 251-52.
17 Ozaki Hotsuki, Taishū bungaku, 27-28. The characters 大衆 originally had the reading daishu. This is a Buddhist term referring to a gathering of three or more priests. Shirai Kyōji claimed to have begun using the term (with the reading taishū) to signify "the people" circa 1924, "when (the term) minshū was still in vogue generally speaking." However, Ozaki points out that minshū was "in vogue" from 1916 or 1917, thus casting doubt on Shirai's claim to be the first to appropriate the term to refer to "the people."

On the other hand, the term *minshū* signifies "the people" as active participants in society and culture rather than passive consumers. Debating the function of *minshū geijutsu* (popular arts) in the mid Taishō era, progressive liberals, including Honma Hisao and Yasunari Sadao agreed on the importance of cultural production by "the people," but disagreed over the role such art should play. Should popular art educate "commoners and the working class" (*ippan heimin naishi rōdō kaikyū*), or was it a tool by which "the people" might realize their political potential? As early as the 1880s, popular storytellers sympathetic to the People's Rights Movement had performed *minken kōdan* (civil rights *kōdan*), narratives intended to "educate" audiences about popular rights and democracy. In the 1900s, noting the popularity of transcriptions of the *kōdan* narratives from vaudeville, socialist publishers began carrying *heimin kōdan* (democratic *kōdan*) and *shakai kōdan* (socialist *kōdan*) in their newspapers and magazines. However, other socialists opposed the notion that the sole purpose of *minshū geijutsu* was the education of "the people." The radical leftist Ōsugi Sakae conceived of popular art as the means by which "the people" would rebel against the bourgeois system which produced and marketed mass culture (*taishū bunka*) and would create a new society, a view inspired by Romain Rolland's

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19 Honma Hisao, "Minshū geijutsu no igi oyobi kachi" (The meaning and the value of popular art), in *Kindai bungaku hyōron taikei* (An outline of modern literary criticism), vol. 5 (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1972), 18; Sukegawa Noriyoshi and Nishigaki Tsutomu, "'Minshū' no bungaku to 'koga' no bungaku" (Literature of the 'people' and literature of the 'self') in *Nihon bungaku shinshi*, vol. 5, 248-49.

popular arts manifesto, The People’s Theater (1903).  

In the context of Yoshikawa’s comments regarding the social relevancy of his novel Kōkihei, his use of the politically charged word minshū reinforces the implication that the novel is intended as more than mere escapist entertainment. He viewed taishū bungaku in much the same way Honma Hisao conceived of minshū geijutsu. For Yoshikawa, taishū bungaku must educate as well as entertain the people. He advocated an awareness of the average man’s situation in modern society and the the economic and social forces acting upon him. Armed with such an awareness, Yoshikawa portrayed characters (some historical, others fictional) who cope with life’s challenges through “traditional” values (diligence, self-discipline, stoicism). By depicting historical characters’ triumphs over adversity, Yoshikawa aimed at inculcating hope and faith, “qualities which are most lacking among those who read popular literature.”

While not all popular historical fiction writers attempt to promote optimism among their readers, many are keenly aware of the challenges that modern society holds for “the people” and they incorporate these insights in their novels. For the jidai shōsetsu writer the objective is not the portrayal of truth in historiographic but rather humanistic terms. That is, the author creates within his narrative a “history” through which his readers can discern themselves as modern human beings dealing with contemporary social

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22 Yoshikawa Eiji, “Taishū bungaku zuisō” (Miscellaneous thoughts on mass literature), Yoshikawa Eiji zenshū, vol. 52 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1983), 138. This essay was originally published in 1936.
problems. As portrayed in *jidai shōsetsu*, history becomes a construct, a conception of the past onto which the author projects his consciousness of the present.

Japanese literary scholars have remarked on popular historical fiction's emphasis of contemporaneity over historicity. Murakami Mitsuhiko suggests that the primary objective of *jidai shōsetsu* is not the precise reproduction of a historical period, but the transportation of readers back and forth between past and present. The "past" to which the author transports the reader is a construct inhabited by psychologically modern characters with whom the contemporary reader can readily empathize. The modern characters who populate the novel's historical setting function as windows through which the reader glimpses the past.” Literary historian Matsumura Tomomi suggests somewhat more dogmatically that the conception of “Edo” found in the various “Bakumatsu pieces” popular in the late 1920s and 1930s “is not a time and space that exists as a historical reality,” but is rather “the photographic negative of the writer's own consciousness of his contemporary cultural and social milieu.” Matsumura sees reflected in this “Edo construct” the diverse spirit of the masses in the early Shōwa era.”

The variety of progressive and conservative social themes treated in popular historical fiction, prompted critics left and right to embrace *taishū bungaku* as more relevant to the lives of average Japanese than the “pure literature” produced by members of the literary

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establishment. This view was eagerly embraced by popular writers and prompted assertions that taishū bungaku was the tide of the times. The popular writer Mikami Otokichi predicted in 1929, “Ultimately, today’s belles-lettres will assume a rarefied, specialized existence, like that of the haiku. The literary establishment overall will become the province of mass literature.” Meanwhile, literary purists disdained popular historical fiction for its formulaic quality and lack of psychological realism. Yet in subsequent years, when jidai shōsetsu authors attempted to give their characters more depth, critics responded that imbuing a historical figure with a modern mindset ran contrary to the guidelines for historical fiction established by Mori Ōgai back in 1915 in his essay “Rekishi sono mama to rekishibanare” (History as it is and history as a point of departure).

The disdain of the literary purists on the one hand, and the smug populism of taishū bungaku writers on the other indicate that the debate between “pure” and “popular” historical fiction was not as much a critical discourse concerning the literary representation of history as another manifestation of the tension between junbungaku and taishū bungaku, a tension which began in the late Taishō and persisted throughout the Shōwa era. Indeed, while the distinction between rekishi and jidai shōsetsu is now explored solely by literary historians, the debate between “pure” and “popular” literature still lives and continues to draw comments from authors and critics concerned with the “triviality” of the fiction of popular authors such as

See Hayashi Fusao, “Taishū bungaku no risō to genjitsu,” 46.
Murakami Haruki and Yoshimoto Banana.

But rather than situate the discourse within the larger junbungaku/taishū bungaku controversy, writers and critics on both sides of the historical fiction debate often set the parameters of their arguments in the context of Mori Ōgai’s “Rekishi sono mama to rekishibanare.” There is irony in this fact, since neither the rekishi shōsetsu/jidai shōsetsu nor the junbungaku/taishū bungaku paradigms had been articulated when Ōgai composed this essay. Rather, as I argue in the following pages, Ōgai’s essay has more to do with his opposition to Japanese Naturalism than with setting a standard for historical fiction. Writers and critics on both sides of the historical fiction debate nonetheless appropriated Ōgai’s logic, if not his rhetoric, to support their positions. Even in the 1960s and 1970s, critics discussing historical fiction continue to refer to “Rekishi sono mama to rekishibanare” when evaluating the factual accuracy of historical novels. For myself, I suggest an alternative critical perspective based on the theories of the Marxist literary critic Georg Lukács. As Lukács writes, it is not the fidelity to historical detail but the compelling presentation of the spirit of history which determines the success of a historical novel.

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1.1 "History as it is"

While Mori Ōgai’s contributions to modern Japanese literature include fiction, poetry, essays through which he introduced Western aesthetic concepts, and a large number of translations of Western drama, fiction, and poetry, some writers and literary scholars regard the "historical literature" (historical novellas and biographies of historical figures) he wrote from 1912 until his death in 1922 as among "the very finest and most subtle" literary products of his prolific career." The novelist Nagai Kafû praises the economy of Ōgai’s historical literature as masterful, works he considers unique in Japanese literature." Hasegawa Izumi declares that "one sees Ōgai at his best as a writer [in these historical works], for every phase of his development as an artist and man is reflected in them." And while the novelist and critic Ishikawa Jun criticizes Ōgai’s historical fiction for focusing on factual details at the expense of portraying the humanity of figures from the past, he praises Ōgai’s historical biographies (especially Shibue Chûsai [1916], the biography of a late-Edo doctor and scholar) for the skill and warmth with which they bring to life historical characters." Edwin McClellan echoes Ishikawa’s evaluation in his commentary on Shibue Chûsai, a work which McClellan regards as "perhaps the most elegantly written of all [of Ōgai’s] books."

27 Thomas Rimer, "The Historical Literature of Mori Ōgai: An Introduction," in David Dilworth, Thomas Rimer, eds., The Historical Fiction of Mori Ōgai (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 2. Dilworth’s essay from the same volume, entitled "The Significance of Ōgai’s Historical Literature" asserts that "Ōgai’s ‘historical literature’ as a whole remains the most praised of his total literary output," but fails to indicate which critics of Ōgai’s oeuvre regard it as such.
28 Nagai Kafû, "Inkyo no kogoto" (Grumblings in retirement), Kafû zenshû vol. 15 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1963), 191, 204.
There is much violence in some of his "historical" writings that came before Shibue Chûsai. In these the sword is ever present, made all the more frightening by Ōgai's refusal to be mystical about it or to romanticize what the more vulgar writers would call "the samurai code."...

What Ōgai wishes to do, it would seem, is to record seemingly incomprehensible or arbitrary events and actions of the past without questioning their meaning, as if the mere act of retelling them, of describing ritual without delving into its reason, would somehow allow him eventual participation.

Whether these tales of violence of the past acted as catharsis for Ōgai, I do not know; but with Shibue Chûsai, he leaves behind both the violence (though not entirely, for how could he, given the times he was writing about?) and the detachment of his stance, and enters the far gentler world of a doctor and his wife, their children, relations and friends; and as he does so, bares himself, especially through his fondness for Io [Shibue Chûsai's wife], as he never has before. He seems here at last to have found his own identity as a writer, perhaps even as a modern Japanese who has come to terms with the past and therefore himself."

In his historical biographies (shiden), as in his historical fiction (rekishi shôsetsu), Ōgai remains extremely faithful to his sources, whether they be genealogies of prominent samurai families, official domain records, diaries, scholarly histories, anecdotes passed down across generations by descendants, legends or folk tales. Ōgai's attention to historical detail, and his periodic insertion of himself in his narratives to inform readers from which sources facts were derived, lend a dryness—which is not to say pedantry—to his historical literature that makes it unapproachable for some readers, or at least, as Edward Seidensticker puts it, "a taste not easy to come by."  

Still, as McClellan observes, in at least his historical fiction, Ōgai was not interested in romanticizing the past

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for his readers. Instead he presents it with clinical detachment, letting the facts speak for themselves. Moreover, as Ōgai himself argues in his essay "Rekishi sono mama to rekishibanare," the more he became deeply involved in his historical literature project, the more he came to revere the "reality of history" (Ōgai uses the phrase rekishi no shizen)." As a result, he gives prominence to facts in much of his historical fiction, perhaps in an effort to reveal the hollowness of the warrior mystique which was so often glorified in popular representations. In the historical biographies, Ōgai's regard for his subjects is reflected in his loving presentation of the facts he has discovered. This affection for his subjects comes through both in the story proper and the narrative within his narrative about his collecting data.

Ōgai's devotion to the facts of history is evident in the faithfulness with which he adapts source materials. Yet, when his name is invoked in the debate on authenticity in historical fiction, it is generally in connection with his essay "Rekishi sono mama to rekishibanare" rather than specific works of fiction. Ōgai does indeed articulate his respect for the "reality" of history in the essay, but the language with which he does so suggests an ulterior motive, specifically, criticism of Japan's Naturalist writers (shizenshugisha). His use of the term shizen (literally "nature") to signify the "reality" of history, his juxtaposition of the concept of rekishi sono mama with the

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"Ōgai's phrase rekishi no shizen might be glossed literally as "the naturalness of history." As his conscious use of the word shizen evokes the Japanese Naturalism School's commitment to the objective portrayal of reality, I render the phrase as "reality of history," following the example of Darcy Murray. See Mori Ōgai, "History as It Is and History Ignored," trans. Darcy Murray, in The Historical Fiction of Mori Ōgai, 179-84.
Naturalists’ credo of portraying life “as it is” (seikatsu o ari no mama ni kaku), and the ironic tone of the essay imply an anti-naturalist position overlooked by those engaged in the rekishi shôsetsu/jidai shôsetsu debate.

As Jay Rubin points out, Ôgai was the first to introduce the name of Emile Zola to Japan. The purpose of the introduction, however, was to condemn European Naturalism. In an essay published in Yomiuri shinbun in 1889 entitled “Shôsetsuron” (On the novel), Ôgai denounces Naturalism—specifically Zola’s novels—as pornographic. Ôgai biographer Richard Bowring argues that “Shôsetsuron” is essentially Ôgai’s distillation of the work of Rudolph von Gottschall, a noted critic of Zola’s novels. Ôgai was influenced by Gottschall’s work during his stay in Germany (1884-88), and faithfully reproduced Gottschall’s critique of Zola’s novels, right down to Gottschall’s condemnation of the provocative, anatomically detailed depiction of the prostitute Nana.

Bowring suggests that Ôgai’s criticism of Zola’s novels derives from the Idealist principle that art must remain autonomous of the real and concern itself with representing the beautiful. According to Ôgai, pornography arises not from “excit[ing] people’s emotions with the power of the beautiful,” but rather from “deliberately prob[ing] people’s nerves and fan[ning] their desires.” He asserts, “Pornography
avoids the imaginary and tends toward the realistic."

By the time Japanese Naturalist writers began to rise to prominence within the literary establishment in 1906, Ôgai had developed an appreciation for literary realism. He had begun to turn away from Idealist aesthetics as early as 1896, and near the end of the Meiji era a number of his own works, including Hännichi (Half a day, 1909), Dokushin (A bachelor, 1910), Pushinchô (Under reconstruction, 1910) and his novella Vita Sexualis (1909), involve realistic description and varying degrees of autobiographical detail. Bowring suggests that it was not the use of naturalist techniques which Ôgai opposed but rather the Naturalists' emphasis on the candid portrayal of their own sexual urges or scandalous behavior. To illustrate his point, Bowring contrasts the "scientific, factual tone" of Ôgai's Vita Sexualis, in which the author traces his sexual development from the age of six, with the "self-indulgent exposure" of Tayama Katai's Futon (The Quilt, 1907), in which the author's alter ego lusts after a young female student boarding in his home. Moreover, Bowring

36 Richard Bowring, 71. The quote is Bowring's translation of an excerpt from Ôgai's 1889 essay, "Jôshi no genkai o ronjite waisetsu no teigi ni oyobu" (Towards a definition of pornography through a discussion of the limits of the love story).
37 Richard Bowring, 138. However, Bowring overlooks the self-parody implicit in Katai's Futon, as well as in his short story Shôjobyô (A morbid weakness for young girls, 1907), in which the Katai-like protagonist cannot prevent himself from fantasizing about young girls he sees on the train, and ultimately falls from the train to his death while ogling a young beauty. Although Katai candidly portrays sexual urges in these two works, it is primarily to establish a tension with the protagonist's conventional moral sense which prevents him from acting on his sexual impulses. As a result of these tensions, the protagonist vacillates and in the end loses the opportunity to fulfill his desire, becoming a "superfluous hero." A better example of Katai's "self-indulgent exposure" would be the jôchi shôsetsu (novels of the love-crazed) which he began writing in 1911. In these novels, he detailed his relationship with his capricious mistress, a geisha named Iida Yone. Katai's work in this sub-genre inspired Chikamatsu Shûkô, who perfected the jôchi shôsetsu. Shûkô believed that to record one's own experience candidly was to relate "the truth of human existence" and thus he "presented before the public eye the frivolous incidents in (his) life out of a respect for historical truth." Edward Fowler, The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishôsetsu in Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Fiction (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 154. The statement by Shûkô was translated by Fowler. See also Kobayashi Ichirô, "Shizenshugi no kishutachi" (The standard-bearers of Naturalism) in Nihon bungaku shinshi, vol. 5, 172-73.
suggests that Ôgai wrote *Vita Sexualis* "as a direct criticism of the Naturalists' attitude toward sex.""

While *Vita Sexualis* may be intended as a parody of the preoccupation with sex among *shizenshugisha,* Ôgai's chief concern with Naturalist writers was not their frank treatment of sexual themes. Instead, he was concerned about their lack of confidence in their own ability to go beyond the boundaries of personal experience in their fiction. William Sibley suggests that the Naturalists' focus on portraying the "unmediated reality" of their personal lives derives in part from the tension between their desire to portray reality objectively and their lack of confidence in their own ability to handle the basic techniques of fiction writing."Ôgai himself had difficulties achieving a balance between invention and realism in his fiction. For example, he incorporates in *Seinen* (Youth, 1910-11) long passages of interior monologue and discussion of contemporary social problems which do not advance the plot or develop the characters. He also had problems with emplotment in *Gan* (Wild goose, 1911-13) and *Kaijin* (Ashes 1911), and in fact left the latter work unfinished.""

Ôgai endeavored to overcome the difficulties of writing realistic fiction with his switch to historical fiction in 1912. Between 1912 and 1915 he produced several historical novels, including *Okitsu Yagoemon no isho* (Last testament of Okitsu Yagoemon, 1912), *Abe ichizoku* (The Abe family, 1913),

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34 Richard Bowring, 138.
37 Richard Bowring, 149-51.
Sakai jiken (Incident at Sakai, 1914) and Ôshio Heihachirô (1914). In these works he portrays historical figures and events in a detached manner, even including comments concerning the historical sources on which he bases his narrative. His economic style and careful documentation of facts lend his narratives a sense of authenticity essential to Naturalist fiction. At the same time, in order to breathe life into the historical record, he employs the basic techniques of fiction in order to highlight the isolation, desperation and disillusionment of his characters. Although his narratives are set in the past, he treats themes relevant to readers living in the modern society: feelings of alienation, questions about the individual's social responsibility, the clash of modern ideals and traditional values.

By January, 1915 when "Rekishi sono mama to rekishibanare" was written, Ôgai had achieved some success through his historical novels in producing socially relevant, realistic fiction. I therefore interpret the essay as his call to Naturalist writers to abandon their preference for autobiography, which he found unproductive, and focus their energies on writing realistic fiction. On the surface, it appears to be an explanation of his principles for writing historical fiction. Yet as the first few paragraphs indicate, there are several clues that he is comparing his historical literature project with the work of the Naturalists.

There has been debate, even among my friends, as to whether or not the works I have written of late, in which I treat historical characters, are fiction.... I myself recognize that in the works I have written up to now, there are considerable discrepancies in the degree to which I have regarded my source material objectively....
The kind of work I am writing at present differs from the fiction of all other writers. This is because in fiction it is customary to select and reject facts freely and to follow a coherent plotline, whereas in my works, one does not find these elements. Now when I wrote the play Nichiren shōnin tsujiseppō [Nichiren's wayside sermons, 1904], I combined Nichiren's much later proposal for saving the country with his earlier wayside sermons in Kamakura. But in the fiction I have recently written, I have completely rejected such methods.

Why have I done so? My motives are simple. First of all, taking up the investigation of historical materials, I quickly found myself possessed by the desire to revere the "reality" [shizen] I glimpsed in them. Recklessly altering that "reality" [shizen] became distasteful to me. Second, I noticed that the writer of today portrays his private life just as it is [gensen no hito ga jika no seikatsu o ari no mama ni kaku no o mite], and I reasoned that if the present may be portrayed just as it is, then it should also be possible to do so with the past [genzai ga ari no mama ni kaite ii nara, kako mo kaite ii hazu da to omotta].

The question of workmanship aside, there are surely a number of ways in which the kind of work I have done lately differs from the work of other writers, but I believe the core of that difference lies in the two above points.

There are some among my friends who say that although other writers deal with subjects from the standpoint of "feelings," I deal with subjects from the standpoint of "intellect." However, this opinion applies to all my literary endeavors and is not limited to those in which I treat historical figures. Generally speaking, my literary works are not Dionysian, but Apollonian. I have not yet made the effort to create a Dionysian work. If I have made any effort at all, it has been merely an effort to make my work objective."

Ôgai’s concious use in this passage of the term “nature" (shizen) to describe the reality of history is a clear indication that he intends for his readers to consider the authenticity of his historical literature by measuring it against the purported realism of the shizenshugisha. His claim that his high regard for the “reality” of history has made altering it distateful to him implies a determination to stick to the facts of history as faithfully as the

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22 Mori Ôgai, "Rekishi sono m ama to rekishibanare" (History as it is and history forsaken), Mori Ôgai zenshū vol. 26 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1973), 508-09.
Naturalists stick to reality in portraying their private lives." Moreover, he states ironically that, having "noticed that the writer of today portrays his private life just as it is, I reasoned that if the present may be portrayed just as it is, then it should also be possible to so portray the past." Ōgai's mocking invocation of the Naturalists' mantra of portraying reality "just as it is" (ari no mama ni kaku) suggests his disapproval of the practice of relating the unvarnished facts of one's private life in the name of art. But I also read it as his appeal to Naturalist writers to apply the techniques of realistic depiction beyond the confines of their own personal experience, to create new worlds through their fiction, or even recreate old worlds, as Ōgai himself does in his historical fiction.

Next Ōgai mentions his "Apolloonian" approach to literature, which he distinguishes from the "Dionysian" approach of most other writers and by implication, the Naturalists. Ōgai borrows these terms from Friedrich Nietzsche's 1872 essay, "The Birth of Tragedy," to suggest that his literature (including his historical works) may be characterized as a clear, rational, and orderly account that is purged of the feeling and imagination apparent in the work of his contemporaries. This reference to the Dionysian quality of the work of the Naturalists is surely a sarcastic barb, implying his recognition of the romanticism in the work of these professed realists." Yet there is also an element of self-mockery in his facetious declaration that he has

43 Japanese Naturalist fiction has been characterized as "stuck to reality" (genjitsu mitchaku). "Many of the leading figures of the Naturalist movement began their literary careers associated with the Romantic movement of the mid-Meiji era. For example, Shimazaki Tōson and Tayama Katai both had ties to the magazine Bungakkai which launched the Romantic movement, Tōson as a lyric poet and Katai primarily as an author of prose fiction.
never written a Dionysian work. His early attempts at fiction, including Maihime (Dancing girl, 1890), to say nothing of his early literary criticism, clearly display the influence of European Romanticism. In fact, despite the "Apollonian" quality of much of his historical fiction, he also produced "Dionysian" historical tales, as he relates in subsequent paragraphs of "Rekishi sono mama."

In the remaining two thirds of the essay, Ôgai discusses the consequences of his commitment to preservation of the "reality" of history in writing. "As I came to loathe changing the 'reality' of history, I found myself unwittingly fettered by history. I suffered under these constraints, and became determined to escape them." Ôgai relates in detail the methods he employed in the composition of the historical novella Sanshô dayû (Sanshô the Bailiff, 1915) and how he "altered the 'reality' of history" to make a tighter and more logical narrative. Only a reader familiar with the obscure sources Ôgai drew upon would have recognized that he had bent the "facts" of the Sanshô dayû legend to make a coherent plot. Nevertheless, Ôgai indicates he felt as though he had been unfaithful to his sources and the "reality" of history. "I wrote Sanshô dayû out of a desire to use history as a point of departure. But having written it, I came to feel that using history in this way is somehow unsatisfactory. This is my honest confession."

Ôgai subverts his own assertion that he has never written a Dionysian work via his "honest confession" to

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deliberately breaking free from the bonds of history and giving free reign to his creative impulse in the composition of Sanshō dayû. Indeed, Ōgai did not stop writing "Dionysian" historical fiction after Sanshō dayû, but composed four more novellas subsequent to the "Rekishi sono mama" essay: Gyogenki (Yu Xuanji, 1915) a tale depicting the life and loves of the famous Tang Dynasty poetess Yu Xuanji [843-68]; Saigo no ikku (The last verse, 1915) about a young girl's petition to save her father from execution; Kanzan Jittoku (Han Shan and Shi De, 1916) the tale of a pompous government official's visit to the two living bodhisattvas at the monastery in Guo qing; and Takasebune (Prison boat on the Takase River, 1916) about a man being exiled for helping his consumptive brother commit suicide. In these, imagination takes precedence over historical source materials.** Emotion is a crucial element in these "Dionysian" tales: the mutual affection of parent and child; the tragedy of a prodigious poetess condemned for a crime of passion; the pathos of a man watching the life ebb from his only brother, whose suicide he has reluctantly assisted.

By contrast, in an "Apollonian" historical work such as Abe ichizoku, Ōgai shows clearly the disjunction between past and present. He depicts a practice incomprehensible to the modern reader, junshí (following one's feudal lord in death through suicide), in clinical manner, without romanticizing or glorifying it. The historian Kikuchi Masanori observes that in Abe ichizoku Ōgai "throws before the reader psychology and behavior drawn directly from history, which the modern individual cannot hope to understand. This is the

** Bowring (pages 224-30) discusses the extent to which Ōgai strayed from his source material in these stories, which he refers to as "lyrical tales."
historicity of Ōgai’s historical fiction.”” Kikuchi illustrates his point by referring to the character Matashichirō, the neighbor and intimate friend of the Abe family. When the family barricade themselves in their estate after suffering a series of ignominies at the hand of their feudal lord, Matashichirō risks censure by having his wife secretly visit them to offer encouragement. However, the following day Matashichirō serves as a member of the punitive force the feudal lord assembles to punish the defiant Abe clan. He reasons, “Feeling is one thing. Duty is another. I have my own role.”” For his role in the blood bath that follows, Matashichirō is awarded high honors by his lord. Despite Kikuchi’s implication that Ōgai has presented the facts of history just as they are, clearly Matashichirō’s interior commentary is Ōgai’s addition. Moreover, the kindness of Matashichirō’s gesture, sending his wife to call on the Abe family at the risk of censure, is juxtaposed to his cold reasoning for ironic effect. And the irony is heightened by Ōgai’s detailed accounting of the honors bestowed on Matashichirō for his role in the siege. Even in this “objective” portrayal of historical facts we see the “subjective” emplotment of facts to produce effect.

In his “honest confession” about the way he “used history as a point of departure,” Ōgai relates how he deleted some characters, added others, changed names and adjusted the chronology. Arguably, taking such license would be shameful for a writer who professes to find distasteful any “reckless

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45 Kikuchi Masanori, Rekishi shōsetsu to wa nani ka (What is ‘historical fiction’?) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1979), 44.
altering" of the facts of history. However, compared to the "confessions" of some Naturalist writers, Ôgai's is quite tame. He "unreservedly discloses" everything (buenryo ni buchimakete), yet the relatively mild nature of his offense prompts the reader to ask why he even bothers. On the surface, the confession reinforces Ôgai's profession of reverence for the "reality" of history. At a deeper level, however, it encourages the reader to question the significance of confession as a literary device. A writer wishing to employ objectivity in his work need not forsake plot, imaginative fabrication or any of the creative elements that characterize the writing of fiction. Altering reality for the sake of maintaining structural coherence or to produce a more moving narrative does not automatically imply that an author has forsaken a scientific approach to literature. On the other hand, confessing one's sexual urges and indiscretions in the course of a narrative in the name of "portraying life as it is" does not necessarily equate with authorial detachment. Indeed, how can an author's "confession" regarding his passions be truly dispassionate?

"Rekishi sono muma to rekishibanare" can thus be read as Ôgai's assertion that despite claims of objectivity, whether in regard to the detached depiction of one's private life or the scientific portrayal of history, fiction is fictive and involves creativity, imagination and degrees of deception. Even where realism is employed, fiction is intended to evoke a response in the reader, and the author marshals the "facts" of his narrative in various ways depending on the response he hopes to elicit. This truth applies equally to Ôgai's novels which portray "history as it is," i.e., the historical
fictions in which he remains faithful to his source materials, and to the more "Dionysian" historical fictions in which he uses history as a point of departure. While "Rekishi sono mama to rekishibanare" implies Ōgai's respect for the "nature" of history, it also suggests his recognition that a literary representation of history, no matter how faithful, can never truly be "history as it is." Indeed, some sixty years after Ōgai's essay, literary scholar Hayden White suggested that the very historiographic texts which are generally regarded as true records of past events are actually emplotments of facts according to the techniques employed by writers of fiction.

There were... as many "styles" of historical representation as there are discernible literary styles in the nineteenth-century. This was not perceived by the historians of the nineteenth-century because they were captives of the illusion that one could write history without employing any fictional techniques whatsoever.... They did not realize that the facts do not speak for themselves, but that the historian speaks for them, speaks on their behalf, and fashions the fragments of the past into a whole whose integrity is—in its representation—a purely discursive one. Novelists may be dealing with imaginary events whereas historians are dealing with real ones, but the process of fusing events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality capable of serving as the object of a representation is a poetic process. Here the historians must utilize precisely the same tropological strategies, the same modalities of representing relationships in words, that the poet or novelist uses."

Ōgai's professed respect for the "nature" of history he encountered in his source materials implies that he did not conceive of historiography as Hayden White does. Nonetheless, his claim that "using history as a point of departure seemed somehow unsatisfactory," sounds ironic. Even with the historical novels in which he gave primacy to the "facts,"

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Ôgai emplotted his narrative following "tropological strategies" to achieve tragedy, irony, metaphor, etc. When read as ironic, Ôgai's declaration that he intends to portray history "as it is" may be read as his intention to apply the techniques of fiction faithfully in his historical literature project. His implicit reference to Naturalism throughout the essay suggests an appeal to the *shizenshugisha* to forsake autobiographical fiction and to apply literary realism beyond the scope of their domestic affairs and peccadillos, to enlarge their vision of reality.

It is surprising that subsequent authors and critics citing "Rekishi sono mama to rekishibanare" have continued to overlook the irony of the essay. Yet, when interpreted as Ôgai's declaration that historical fiction must remain faithful to the "facts" of history, the essay becomes a powerful rhetorical tool for those advocating historicity. To quote the opinions of a respected cultural figure in support of one's position adds weight to an argument. That Ôgai's exalted status in the literary pantheon should be so significant in the controversy over the faithful depiction of history reveals that the debate was subsumed under the *junbungaku/taishû bungaku* paradigm. With the growing popularity of *jidai shôsetsu* in the early Shôwa era, the attacks on popular historical fiction's lack of historicity became increasingly partisan.

1.2 "History as a point of departure"

In the foregoing section, it was pointed out that Mori Ôgai wrote works of historical fiction in which he "used history as a point of departure." Yet even the historical
novels in which he altered the historical record to produce a metaphor for a figure or phenomenon in contemporary society are referred to as *rekishi shōsetsu*. For example, Ôgai scholar Ogata Tsutomu suggests that the bisexual poetess Yu Xuanji of *Gyogenki* was modeled after the feminist author Hiratsuka Raichô who publicly advocated free love and engaged in a number of lesbian and heterosexual love affairs. Whether or not he took Raichô as his inspiration, Ôgai added the sexual aspect to his representation of the historical figure Yu Xuanji, whose sexual practices were not recorded in the sources he used.\(^2\) If such a “reckless altering of the ‘reality’ of history” still merits designation as a *rekishi shōsetsu*, then what is the standard for judging when a work becomes *jidai shōsetsu*?

To a certain extent, the difference between *rekishi shōsetsu* and *jidai shōsetsu* is a matter of historicity. It is possible, of course, for *rekishi shōsetsu* to take history as a “point of departure” and for *jidai shōsetsu* to display historical accuracy. Generally speaking, however, *rekishi shōsetsu* is an author’s fictionalization of a certain historical period based upon research he has done. As Yanagida Izumi points out, the *rekishi shōsetsu* of the Meiji era author Tsukahara Jūshien evolved out of the historiography of the 1880s.\(^3\) In Jūshien’s novels, as in Ôgai’s, the emphasis is on portraying history.

On the other hand, the *jidai shōsetsu* author, generally speaking, takes history as the backdrop for his narrative.

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\(^2\) See Ogata Tsutomu, “Gyogenki to ‘atarashii onna’ tachi,” *Kokugo kokubun* 32 (Dec. 1963); quoted in Richard Bowring, 228.

The purpose of *jidai shōsetsu* is to entertain and offer conventional moral instruction. The characters who perform in front of the historical backdrop are either the stock characters in kabuki or the *kōdan* narratives of the vaudeville hall, or as Murakami Mitsuhiko suggests, psychologically modern beings who provide modern readers a window onto the past. Generally speaking, the *jidai shōsetsu* author does not attempt to illustrate the spiritual rupture between past and present, as Ôgai does in *Abe ichizoku*. Instead, he romanticizes history, glorifies traditional moral values as applicable in all ages, thus arguing for a culturally unified truth. Therefore, *jidai shōsetsu* tends to be a conservative, if not reactionary, genre.

Virtually all *jidai shōsetsu* writers observe a number of received conventions in characterization and emplotment. For example, among the stock of characters populating period novels one usually finds both noble swordsman and evil villain, chaste woman and manipulative *femme fatale*, wise sage (often Buddhist) and buffoon. Generally speaking authors incorporate violence, some to a greater extent than others. The violence usually includes bitter vendettas that culminate in climactic swordfights. Predictably there is a degree of eroticism; again, some authors include more than others. Sex too is often tinged with violence. There is humor, travel (journeys between Edo and Kyoto or Osaka, or to the provinces), and moralizing. The virtues extolled in *jidai shōsetsu* include loyalty, filial piety, duty, honor and self-sacrifice--feudal morality that was perpetuated in the popular arts of the Edo period. In fact, part of the attraction of *jidai shōsetsu*’s plot formulas, character
types and moral message derives from their familiarity. These conventions were adapted from kabuki, jôruri (puppet theater) and the kôdan of vaudevillian storytellers, and provided popular audiences with a sense of tradition and cultural foundation amidst the uncertainties of life in a modern(izing) society. What Perry Link refers to as the "comfort function" of popular literature is also a factor in the enduring popularity of jidai shôsetsu during the postwar period. The stock characters and plot formulas even made the transition to new media and are readily discernible in the cinema and television jidai mono of the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

While historicity is not a concern for writers of jidai shôsetsu, generally speaking, popular historical fiction often incorporates just enough historical detail to convince the reader that the author has researched the period he portrays. In some cases, historical figures have substantial roles, but more frequently they simply make "cameo" appearances, as if to lend authenticity to the narrative. This is not to say that popular authors do not rely on historical source materials. A number of writers strive to incorporate details gleaned from historical research in their jidai shôsetsu. For example, the following critical debate

54 Masterless samurai, thieves and rogues abound in the kabuki plays of Tsuruya Namboku IV (1755-1829) and Kawatake Mokuami (1816-93) known as kizewamono (true contemporary pieces). While the themes and characters in Namboku's plays are generally decadent, Mokuami's popular shiranamimono (thief pieces) often contain pure-hearted rogues. Kabuki and jôruri plays in which a samurai must stoically sacrifice the life of a family member in the service of his lord continue to move audiences even today (often the warrior must sacrifice his only child, as in Namiki Sôsuke's [1695-1751] Ichinotan lightab gunki [Chronicle of the battle of Ichinotani, 1751] or Takeda Izumo's [1691-1756] Terakoya [Village school] scene from Sugawara denju tanarai kagami [Sugawara's secrets of calligraphy, 1746]). Stoic samurai and noble thieves also appear regularly in kôdan, which were popular with vaudeville audiences from the Edo through the Taishô period. Kôdan are discussed in chapter two of this dissertation.

55 Perry Link, 20-21.
between the popular writer Naoki Sanjûgo and the Naturalist writer Masamune Hakuchô demonstrates that writers of popular historical fiction, stung by the attacks on their novels as unrealistic, often asserted that the realism of their fiction was to be found in their faithfulness to historical sources. Ógai’s “history as it is” is implicit in such arguments.

In the October 1931 issue of the literary magazine Kaizô, Masamune Hakuchô negatively reviewed Naoki Sanjûgo’s popular historical fiction Nangoku taiheiki (Chronicle of the great peace in southern Japan, 1930–31) which had been serialized in the newspaper Mainichi shinbun. Masamune denounces the “phoniness” (sorazorashisa) of Nangoku taiheiki’s plot, the “superhuman” (chôjinteki) quality of its characters, and its general lack of historicity. Doubtless Naoki found the last point the most galling. Masamune asserts that compared to Yoakemae (Before the Dawn, 1927–35), the historical novel of his fellow Naturalist, Shimazaki Tôson, “the atmosphere of the Bakumatsu period does not come across in Nangoku taiheiki.” In particular, as evidence of Yoakemae’s “Bakumatsu atmosphere,” he cites the scene in which the commander of the Mito rebels, Takeda Kô’unsai, leads his ragtag army along the Kiso Road and into battle against the armies of clans loyal to the Tokugawa Bakufu. In this scene, Masamune suggests, Tôson captures the desperation of Kô’unsai’s army as they struggle against a superior enemy and vainly endeavor to forestall their own destruction. By contrast, the swordplay in Naoki’s novel, in which characters merely slash about wildly, lacks the scope and intensity of the fighting that Tôson depicts. Whereas Yoakemae conveys the mood of desperation at the end of an era, Naoki’s Nangoku
Nangoku taiheiki "is nothing more than a stereotypical Bakumatsu piece," that combines famous names such as Saigō Kichinosuke (a.k.a. Saigō Takamori) and Masumitsu Kyûnosuke with a host of conventional stock characters: ruthless samurai, corrupt merchants, thieves, manipulative women and vulnerable young maidens.

Naoki responded to Masamune's criticism in an article carried in Tokyo nichinichi shinbun. Their exchange is representative of the critical jousting that took place between the camps of pure and popular literature. Naoki states at the beginning that he did not intend to dignify Masamune’s criticism with a reply, because the commentary demonstrated that “Masamune has fallen into a completely mistaken interpretation in his consciousness of history,” and because he “does not draw a distinction between popular and pure fiction.” Nonetheless, he decides to write because “recently, in the debate over mass fiction that one sees in the press from time to time, there have been a good many people who hold forth on the subject without their having the slightest knowledge of the special characteristics of popular literature.” Naoki takes it upon himself to state the case for popular literature.”

Nangoku taiheiki tells the story of the mysterious deaths of the four sons of Shimazu Nariakira, heir to the Satsuma daimyō Shimazu Narioki. A Shimazu retainer, Senba Hachirōta, takes it upon himself to investigate the cause of death. At length he discovers Narioki's mistress, Oyura, has put a curse on Nariakira and his sons in the hope that her own son will succeed to the position, wealth and influence of

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a Satsuma daimyō. Oyura is abetted in her plot by another Shimazu retainer, Maki Nakatarō. When Hachirōta presents his case before Narioki, who is quite partial to Oyura and suspicious of Nariakira’s devotion to the study of Western science and growing interest in Imperial Restoration, the aging daimyō angrily dismisses Hachirōta from his service. Hachirōta feels honor bound to destroy the plot against his former master just the same. The remainder of the novel depicts the efforts of Hachirōta and the entire Senba family to destroy Oyura’s conspiracy. Along the way, there are setbacks, triumphs, love affairs (involving Hachirōta’s beautiful daughters) and unexpected help from characters representing a cross-section of society (a female instructor of tokiwazu bushi, a vaudeville storyteller, and a pickpocket). In the end, Hachirōta’s son, Kotarō, kills Maki Nakatarō, but not in time to prevent him from cursing Nariakira’s sixth son, who dies. Nariakira becomes daimyō, but exhausted by his many hardships, he falls ill. On his deathbed, he exhorts his faithful retainers Kotarō, Masumitsu and Saigō to topple the Bakufu and fulfill his dream of creating a new Japan.

Masamune’s remarks, which appeared in Kaizō’s literary review feature (Bungei jihyō), reflect his general disdain for jidai shōsetsu, or at least his failure to grasp its generic characteristics. What he finds most troubling are the introduction of the curse and the exorcism. They are the core of the novel, but Masamune asserts Naoki has added these old fashioned superstitions simply as a twist (shukō) to capture people’s interest. Taken together, the stereotypically rough samurai, cartoonish violence and old fashioned superstition

57 Tokiwazu bushi is one style of music used to accompany dance in kabuki performances.
point to the lack of realism in *Nangoku taiheiki*. Writing in rebuttal, Naoki points out that popular literature and pure literature are distinct forms and must be regarded as such.

When writing a "serial" for the evening edition of a large newspaper, and taking into consideration the tastes of my audience, it is imperative that I keep in mind that the majority of my readers are those who ask such questions as, "What will happen to Shôkichi [the pickpocket]?” or “Will [Hachirôta’s daughter] Miyuki get married?” At times there may even be readers who say, “I don’t know the author’s name, but I sure like that Masumitsu [Kyûnosuke]!”

Because I regard such readers as my audience, and moreover because I write the kind of thing they expect, it is only natural that my works are not really suitable in a literary sense and should not appeal to Mr. Masamune. The fact of the matter is, a “serial for the evening edition,” and the kind of work composed expressly to be read by a person like Mr. Masamune, are altogether different.

Thus, in places where the plot gets complicated, I make the sentences shorter. In places where there is no trouble or violence, I always change scenes two or three times. I try to manage the action of my fight sequences in a way that differs from other popular pieces. And after a tragic scene, I insert a bit of humor. In short, I anticipate preparing the narrative in ways that differ completely from [those employed in the writing of] pure fiction."

Naoki goes on to assert that popular literature is born out of the people’s demand for romance, for “phoniness” (*sorazorashisa*), for heroes, for supermen. This is true in the West, too. To criticize a *jidai shôsetsu* for its superhuman characters and unbelievable coincidences is to misunderstand the nature of the genre.

Having established that fiction written for a mass audience is by nature fundamentally different from *belles lettres*, Naoki turns to the question of historicity. While he does not refer directly to Mori Ôgai's essay, it is clear that he has the rhetoric of “history as it is” in mind. Speaking as though he were an advocate for his fellow *jidai*
shōsetsu writers, Naoki states, “While we may be of a very low class in literary terms, from the standpoint of investigating [history] our efforts are respectable.” He adds pointedly, “If you are going to criticize Nangoku taiheiki fairly, I ask that you do so after having investigated the historical facts in Oyura sōdō or some such work.” Oyura sōdō (The Oyura disturbance) is a historical account of the mysterious deaths of Shimazu Nariakira’s sons from which Naoki drew information for his narrative. Claiming to have remained faithful to the facts as they are recorded in Oyura sōdō, Naoki raises three points in order to demonstrate his fidelity to historical resources and Masamune’s ignorance of them.

The first is chronological. In reply to Masamune’s comment that Nangoku taiheiki is just another “stereotypical Bakumatsu piece” which lacks the true “atmosphere of the Bakumatsu period,” Naoki states that the events portrayed in his novel take place between 1827 and 1858. Therefore, it is not entirely correct to refer to it as a “Bakumatsu piece.” He asks sarcastically whether Masamune believes that the Bakumatsu period began in the 1820s, adding that if Masamune had done his homework, he would have recognized that Nangoku taiheiki was not intended to be a Bakumatsu piece. His point is, however, a bit of hairsplitting, for although his novel may not be set in the Bakumatsu period per se, the prominent role he assigns to the popular Bakumatsu hero Masumitsu Kyūnosuke, and the appearance of the Satsuma patriots Saigō Kichinosuke and Ōkubo Toshimichi strongly suggest Naoki’s

55 Naoki Sanjūgo, "Taishō bungaku no ben," 442. Naoki’s assertion that “we (watakushidono) make respectable efforts” at doing background research implies rather sweepingy that all jidai shōsetsu writers are as careful as he is to check historical records before embarking on a novel.
intent to invoke the spirit of the Bakumatsu at a minimum. Certainly he knew that readers seeing the names Masumitsu, Saigō and Ôkubo could not help but remember the anti-Bakufu heroes, who as real historical figures, became stock characters in much Bakumatsu fiction. Indeed, in the final scene of the novel, Nariakira’s deathbed injunction to bring down the Bakufu virtually inaugurates the Bakumatsu period by urging the young Satsuma patriots to create a new Japan.

The second point is more valid. It concerns Masamune’s criticism of the central role played by curses and exorcisms, or what he calls “old fashioned superstitions.” Naoki points out that, according to Oyura sōdō, it was the curses of Oyura and her co-conspirators that caused the death of Nariakira’s sons. Consequently, the curses and the exorcism were not Naoki’s invention but part of the “historical record.” In defending his decision to portray the incidents of the curse, Naoki echoes the rhetoric of “Rekishi sono mama.”

If I had depicted the successive deaths of the seven [sic] children in Nangoku taiheiki without using the curses, I wonder how someone like Mr Masamune would comment on the mysteriousness of such occurrences. Yet, if I had made them die as a result of an illness, or had depicted them being poisoned by an enemy, then that would have been “phony” and unnatural. But the curses are historical fact. And it is also historical fact that because of them, the Shimazu forces split into three factions all competing for hegemony. If these are the facts of the historical record, then it is proper that they be incorporated into this piece of popular fiction....

I researched these cases of death by curse as thoroughly as possible and portrayed them to the best of my ability. If they are represented with even a modicum of terror and realism, then I believe it should be sufficient to justify their being recognized as having a certain degree of literary merit. Despite my portrayal of “phoniness,” or my depiction of “supermen,” the worth of my novel should be determined based upon this one point.”

Naoki's claim to historical authenticity relies heavily on the presumed historicity of a dubious document, Oyura sōdō. Although he claims to have researched the deaths of Nariakira's sons "as thoroughly as possible," he does not mention consulting any other historical record to corroborate Oyura sōdō. If "the worth of the novel" should be determined solely based solely on its historicity as he asserts, then he would do well to follow Ôgai's example and list all the sources he consulted. Naoki's application of the rhetoric of "history as it is," and his conscious use of the term "unnatural" (fushizen) to describe departing from the historical record, echo Ôgai's "Rekishi sono mama." However, despite his posturing, the prefunctory nature of Naoki's research implied in his reliance on one document of questionable authenticity indicates that his dedication to the "reality" of history was not nearly as extensive as Ôgai's.

The final point is Masamune's criticism that the characters of Nangoku taiheiki are simply stereotypes of coarse, simple-minded warriors dedicated to avenging their lord and thereby restoring their honor. Masamune felt such characters could not be living human beings with whom a modern reader could sympathize. Naoki counters that the "coarse, simple-minded warrior" is the historical reality and not the sophisticated, refined samurai portrayed in some historical fiction.

Mr. Masamune refers to [my depiction of] "coarse, simple-minded warriors" and their "stereotypical loyalty." The warriors of old were, in fact, coarse and unconditionally loyal, and I believe that I for one would rather portray "coarse" warriors, relics of the Warring states period, than the modern literary interpretations of Ôishi Kuranosuke....

Besides, even a first year literature student knows that the merit of a literary work lies not in the matter of
whether or not one writes according to "types." "Types" or "no types," what matters is how well the work is written. Even though I portray samurai as possessing "stereotypical notions" or "coarse sensibilities," that should not be a problem. A writer may also interpret samurai according to contemporary literary values, as clever men with delicate, genteel sensibilities, but the critic ought not to praise such interpretations as a portrayal of reality "as it is," as Mr. Masamune has done.

Rather, in popular fiction, "types" are preferable. "Types" are merely fixed, traditional conceptions, but the general populace regards "types" as the essential forms for a story's characters, and it is sufficiently satisfied with them. The absolute necessity for "heroes" in popular fiction derives from this fact. One might even say that the reason why proletarian writers experience difficulty in popularizing their fiction lies in the contradiction between their "scientific method" and the people's desire for "heroes."

In his defense of popular literature and of the historicity of his own work, Naoki is careful to differentiate between fidelity to historical fact and the psychological realism which Masamune noted was missing from Nangoku taiheiki. Insofar as Naoki asserts that he--no, all popular fiction writers--carefully research and remain faithful to the truth in their historical sources, he invokes the rhetoric of Mori Ōgai's "history as it is." He declares that realism in popular historical fiction is to be judged in terms of the blending of historical data and traditional mythology or conventional archetypes. By admonishing critics to comment on the worth of jidai shōsetsu only after checking historical records for themselves, Naoki implies that popular writers have donned Ōgai's mantle and assumed the responsibility of faithfully representing history through

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81 Naoki Sanjūgo, "Taishō bungaku no ben, 444. Naoki's reference to a "literary interpretation of Ōishi Kuranosuke" is apparently a reference to Osaragi Jirō's treatment of the hero of the Chūshingura legend in his serial novel Akō rōshi (The masterless samurai of Akō, 1927-28), which was critically acclaimed as well as well received by popular readers. Naoki had once commented that he considered the samurai whom Osaragi portrayed to be too refined.
literature, despite the conventionalities of popular literature. Such a position tends to legitimize popular historical fiction. It also resonates with the smugness of popular writers as demonstrated in Mikami Otokichi’s assertion of 1929 that *taishū bungaku* would assume an ascendant position in the literary establishment.

Naoki’s argument notwithstanding, subsequent criticism of *jidai shōsetsu* offered by critics or authors associated with “pure” literature reiterated the lack of psychological realism in popular historical fiction. A 1939 review of Yoshikawa Eiji’s immensely popular *Miyamoto Musashi* (1935-39) by none other than Masamune Hakuchō illustrates the lingering dissatisfaction of *junbungaku* writers with the predictability and shallowness of mass fiction. Inasmuch as Masamune does not refer to “phoniness” per se, his remarks show restraint. But it is clear that he feels Yoshikawa’s characters and plot lack depth. Even Musashi’s spiritual journey, which is the heart of the narrative, fails to move him. The restraint of his criticism suggests his recognition that popular fiction is not written for readers like himself, and that, like Naoki, Yoshikawa knows what his readers want. Nevertheless, he makes it clear through his deft use of sarcasm and irony that *Miyamoto Musashi* is neither a portrayal of “history as it is,” nor a particularly engaging novel.

I have read a wide variety of novels in my day, and *Miyamoto Musashi* seems to be a decent piece of fiction. The ideas at the core of the narrative, the assortment of characters, and the pacing are all handled capably. In this respect the author’s efforts are evident. Not only is this a long novel, the author even ceased writing for some time; yet for all that, it is honestly and clearly written.

If one were to look into the matter, I imagine there are probably a fair number of historical resources available concerning Musashi, but that is not important. That is
because I doubt even the author attached much importance to historical source materials right from the start. The fact is, I am not looking for the facts of the legendary Miyamoto Musashi’s life in this novel. However, if the author had clearly portrayed the social circumstances of that time, the conditions of daily life for a masterless samurai at the dawn of the Tokugawa period, when an era of peace and national unification had only just begun, I suppose that would whet my appetite.... If he had depicted the various rules of conduct for warriors and others living in such changing times, then I would probably read the novel with enthusiasm. But such was not the author’s intent.

It seems Yoshikawa seeks to portray the path to Musashi’s spiritual training. Now it occurs to me that such a theme should add dignity and weight to a work. However, Musashi’s self-evident spiritual discipline and commonsensical morality do not really add a characteristic flavor to the work in the same way as, for example, the old morality of “encourage virtue and chastise vice” defines the writings of [Takizawa] Bakin. I doubt Yoshikawa actually worked that hard on this aspect of his novel....

Although Musashi encounters a variety of difficulties and is exposed to continual threats on his life, there is no need for the reader’s palms to sweat or for his heart to race. Recall that with the eight dog warriors [of Bakin’s popular romance Nanbō Satomi hakkenden], no matter what dangers they fell into, invariably they were saved either by the power of mysterious jewels or through the protection of the dog princess. Thus, the reader could rest easy from the start. In the same way, Musashi, too, will always be safe. Knowing that the author will always come to the rescue, the reader nevertheless feels anxious about the hero’s predicament and then, upon seeing the hero saved according to the established pattern, heaves a sigh of relief. Such a reader is a person with a shallow psychology. But this psychology is the foundation of a profound sense of human community, and it has been used effectively by novelists in every age.”

In the first paragraph, Masamune damns the novel with faint praise: it “seems to be a decent work,” is “capably and clearly written.” The criticism becomes more trenchant after that. Masamune’s flippant attitude toward the consulting

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22 Masamune Hakuchô, “Miyamoto Musashi dokugokan” (Impressions after reading Miyamoto Musashi), in Shôwa hihyô taisetsu, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Banchô Shobô, 1968), 452–53. The hiatus in serialization of Miyamoto Musashi came in 1937, when Yoshikawa traveled briefly to regions visited by Musashi to gather information and impressions. Also, in July of that year, Japan invaded China and Yoshikawa traveled to Tianjin and Beijing as a special correspondent for Asahi shinbun. Serialization of Miyamoto Musashi resumed in January 1938.

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historical sources (perhaps a barb at Naoki) reflects his conviction that Yoshikawa did not bother to research Musashi’s life. He does not regard Yoshikawa’s novel as an authentic representation of history or biography. Instead, he recognizes it as inspirational literature. He asserts, however, that the novel fails in that capacity as well. The underlying morality does not even add as much dignity to the work as the Neo-Confucian ethic of kanzen chôaku (encourage virtue, chastise vice) adds to the work of Takizawa Bakin (1767-1848). The association with Bakin is also damning, because the late-Edo writer was scorned by the Meiji literary establishment, despite his popularity with Edo and Meiji period readers.

In fact, in paralleling Yoshikawa’s use of plot devices with Bakin’s in Hakkenden, Masamune implies that there is nothing particularly original about Miyamoto Musashi. And therein lies the problem with the work. What Masamune hopes for in Miyamoto Musashi is the same thing he sought in Nangoku taiheiki: a sense of history expressed not by the “faithful” reproduction of facts, but by the sensitive representation of the vicissitudes of a particular moment in time. However, it is not there. Miyamoto Musashi is merely a shallow piece of fiction, promoting a shallow morality, aimed at readers with a “shallow psychology.” Masamune adds sarcastically that the techniques Yoshikawa employs have been “used effectively by novelists in every age.”

The novel Miyamoto Musashi is set at the end of the Warring states period which, like the Bakumatsu, was a time of upheaval. The feudal lords allied with the Tokugawa clan defeated their opponents in the Battle of Sekigahara, and the
Tokugawa began setting up the centralized feudal government which will rule Japan for the next 250 years. For those, like Musashi, who aligned themselves with the losing side at Sekigahara, the future is uncertain. Masterless samurai whose lords were stripped of rank and land roam the country in large numbers. Some joined rebellions against the Tokugawa hegemony, some turned to crime, while others devote themselves to training in the martial arts, wandering about Japan gaining spiritual discipline through their hardships. Musashi is one of these wanderers, and *Miyamoto Musashi* is the story of his spiritual journey, a type of *bildungsroman*. While Masamune recognizes this element, he goes on to say that Yoshikawa does not present the protagonist’s spiritual growth in depth, but instead portrays a series of incidents which merely serve as a pretext for Musashi to demonstrate his superhuman strength and superior martial skills as he maims and kills his opponents. Moreover, predictable touchstones is what readers want. Again drawing an unfavorable comparison with Bakin, Masamune observes that the violence in Yoshikawa’s novel does not reinforce the overriding morality, in the way that the fantastic mayhem in *Hakkenden* supports the *kanzen chôaku* theme.

Masamune’s reviews of *Nangoku taiheiki* and *Miyamoto Musashi* touch on the issue of portraying history realistically. How does an author reproduce the past authentically? To what extent does he present the facts he has uncovered in source materials? To what extent does he offer his interpretation of those facts? When does an author’s mediation affect the historicity of a historical novel? How does he imbue historical figures with human
emotion without "recklessly altering the reality of history"?
The Marxist literary critic Georg Lukács suggests that an
authentic portrayal of history must reflect the social and
political forces that impact the people of the past. If the
historical novel makes clear the social forces which motivate
the actions of characters living in a particular historical
moment, then the modern reader perceives the humanity of
those characters no matter how remote the period depicted.
For Lukács, historicity is not a matter of faithfully
reproducing the facts of the historical record. Instead, the
author of historical novel should interpret historical data
in order to reconstruct by "artistic means" (I read this as
synonymous with Hayden White's "tropological strategies") the
social conflicts of the past.

It is clear that the more remote an historical period
and the conditions of life of its actors, the more the
action must concern itself with bringing these conditions
plastically before us, so that we should not regard the
particular psychology and ethics which arise from them as
an historical curiosity, but should re-experience them as a
phase of mankind's development which concerns and moves us.

What matters therefore in the historical novel is not
the re-telling of great historical events, but the poetic
awakening of the people who figured in those events. What
matters is that we should re-experience the social and human
motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they
did in historical reality....

The historical novel therefore has to demonstrate by
artistic means that historical circumstances and characters
existed in precisely such and such a way."

Lukács also suggests that the modern reader sympathizes
with the historical novel's characters when he recognizes
that the social forces impinging upon them are similar to the
class conflicts of the present. Such a critical perspective
implies a conception of history that is at variance with the

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disjunctive notion of history Ōgai puts forth in a number of his historical novels, including *Abe ichizoku*. His portrayal of the motivations of historical characters such as Matashichirō demonstrates that the psychology of people in the past is incomprehensible to the average modern reader. However, there is also some parallelism between Ōgai’s ironic position in “Rekishi sono mama” and Lukács critical viewpoint. Both men recognize that historical fiction, no matter how factual, must awaken the past for its audience through artistic means: through utilization of tropes, emplotment, characterization, and other literary strategies.

If historical authenticity is tied to “artistic” recreation of the past, is popular historical fiction with its emphasis on formulas of plot and characterization to be regarded as ahistorical? Naoki Sanjūgo claims he researches his novels thoroughly and remains faithful to his sources as he writes. Yet if *jidai shōsetsu* is dismissed as lacking artistry because its generic markers are “popular,” how then is its historical accuracy to be judged? Following the literary critic John Cawelti, I propose the following solution: dispense with the value-laden terms “pure” and “popular” and replace them with the concepts of “mimetic” and “formulaic.” Cawelti suggests that all cultural products contain a mixture of convention and invention and that most literature exists on a continuum between the two poles. A “mimetic” text may depict fear, uncertainty, confusion and have loose ends—all aspects of real life—but at the same time have a protagonist who embodies certain culturally defined, heroic qualities. And a “formulaic” text, with its stock characters and conventional morality, may plumb the
depths of human anguish and despair. “Few novels, however dedicated to the representation of reality, do not have some element of the ideal. And most formulaic works have at least the surface texture of the real world.”

Cawelti observes that cultural products incorporate a mixture of two kinds of elements: convention and invention. Conventions are known to the creator and his audience ahead of time. They include familiar plots, stereotyped characters, accepted morality, widely known metaphors and other linguistic devices. Inventions, on the other hand, spring from the imagination of the creator and are completely unique. Examples of invention might include new types of characters, undefined plot structures, unique linguistic forms, or unorthodox ideas or values. Cawelti explains that convention and invention have very different cultural functions.

Conventions represent familiar shared images and meanings and they assert an ongoing continuity of values; inventions confront us with a new perception or meaning which we have not realized before. Both these functions are important to culture. Conventions help maintain a culture’s stability while inventions help it respond to changing circumstances and provide new information about the world. The same thing is true on the individual level. If the individual does not encounter a large number of conventionalized experiences and situations, the strain on his sense of continuity and identity will lead to great tensions and even to neurotic breakdowns. On the other hand, without new information about his world, the individual will be increasingly unable to cope with it and will withdraw behind a barrier of conventions as some people withdraw from life into compulsive reading of detective stories.”

As societies modernize, industrialize and urbanize, increasingly citizens are confronted with new and

heterogeneous ideas and practices. Mass communication, though it conveys a steady stream of information and new ideas to the populace, must be highly conventional in order to be understood by a large and widely varied audience. Mass literature, which reaches a large and diverse readership through the mass media (newspapers and magazines), is similarly conventionalized and serves to reinforce “shared images and meanings” and to synthesize and reaffirm values through formulas of plot and characterization and common metaphors. On the other hand, invention in literature is highly esteemed not only by intellectuals and critics who regard artistic innovation as a vital response to the perpetual cultural changes of modern society, but also by a mass readership that grows bored with genres that have exhausted themselves.

Cawelti’s paradigm certainly applies to Japan’s mass literature. As discussed above, the characters and plots of jidai shôsetsu generally follow conventional formulas. The stock characters include the noble hero, often a masterless samurai; the evil villain, affiliated with the ruling hegemony; the chaste woman in danger; the manipulative virago who seeks to ensnare the noble hero; the sage who mentors the noble hero; and the buffoon who serves as a foil for the noble hero. There are also assorted plebeian characters whose humble station belies their noble hearts: merchants, artisans, performers, even thieves. Plot structures also follow established patterns, with the vendetta (kataki-uchi mono) ending with the hero’s triumph over his rival, and stories of intrigue within a feudal house (oie sôdô) concluding with the exposure of the plot and the destruction
of the conspirators, often in a violent melee. As Naoki Sanjûgo states in “Taishû bungaku no ben,” the masses demand these conventions of plot and characterization and their attendant moral values. However, as he implies in his remark about how to handle fight scenes differently from other popular authors, the masses also demanded a certain amount of invention in jidai shôsetsu. The popular artist must be alert to the fluctuating tastes of his audience. Yoshikawa Eiji asserts that a popular writer must possess an “intuition” or “sixth sense” (kan [勘]) as to what his readers want.

The history of popular historical fiction in Japan is filled with examples of invention within convention. Two classic examples to be discussed are Nakazato Kaizan’s nihilistic anti-hero Tsukue Ryûnosuke in his long-running serial novel Daibosatsu tôge (The Daibosatsu Pass, 1913-42) and Osaragi Jirô’s “liberal” hero Kurama Tengu in his Kurama Tengu series (1926-65). When first introduced, neither hero generated critical attention, but both were well received by the general public. But as Nakazato and Osaragi developed their protagonists over many years of serialization, critics began to note how they differed from the stock heroes of other jidai shôsetsu: Tsukue Ryûnosuke by virtue of his egoistic brutality and Kurama Tengu by virtue of his egalitarian humanity. While one hero felt the insatiable need to kill, the other abhorred bloodshed and drew his sword only when it was absolutely necessary. Critics have praised these two characters as embodying the contemporary realities of the times during which they were conceived: Ryûnosuke the early Taishô years when progressives despaired of realizing social

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\(^{65}\) Yoshikawa Eiji, “Boku no rekishi shôsetsu kan” (My perspective on historical fiction) Yoshikawa Eiji zenshû (Yoshikawa Eiji anthology), vol. 52 (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1983), 143.
reform, and Kurama Tengu of the late Taishō and early Shōwa when liberal politics and representative government seemed within reach. The third hero examined in the present study, Yoshikawa Eiji’s Miyamoto Musashi, was not an innovative character but a reaffirmation of “traditional” values. As such, Miyamoto Musashi also symbolized the milieu in which he was created, 1935 to 1939 when Japan was swept by ultranationalism and invaded China. Musashi was the embodiment of the qualities the government urged Japanese citizens to foster during this time of total mobilization, self-sacrifice, stoicism and discipline.

Cawelti notes the tendency of formulaic literature to act as a surrogate for people to vicariously express repressed feelings. “[F]ormula stories seem to be one way in which the individuals in a culture act out certain unconscious or repressed needs, or express in an overt and symbolic fashion certain latent motives which they must give expression to, but cannot face openly.” Perhaps the better question to ask is not whether popular historical fiction is historically accurate, but whether it helps individuals in specific historical moments to express latent or repressed motives, desires and needs. In terms of the three jidai shōsetsu mentioned in the preceding paragraph, Japanese critics and literary scholars, including Nakatani Hiroshi, Tsurumi Shunsuke and Kuwabara Takeo, have observed that a part of their popular appeal lies in their capacity, as Cawelti suggests, to give expression to feelings that readers have difficulty in articulating. The jidai shōsetsu brings the past to life for the popular reader no less than the

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"pure" historical fiction animates history for the intellectual elite.
CHAPTER 2

THE BEGINNINGS OF JIDAI SHÔSETSU

When tracing the origins of twentieth-century *jidai shôsetsu*, where does one begin? Since *jidai shôsetsu* is a popular art form, it is best to look for its progenitors within the bourgeois culture of the Edo period (1600-1867), when a variety of art forms arose which catered to plebeian tastes. Kabuki, *jôruri* (puppet plays), and *kôdan* (oral narratives) developed several of the formulas that are commonly employed in *jidai shôsetsu*. For example, tales of chivalrous warriors (*kyôkaku mono*), virtuous thieves (*shiranami mono*) and power struggles within the houses of feudal lords (*oie sôdô*) are part of the *jidai shôsetsu* repertoire and all have their origins in kabuki, *jôruri* and *kôdan*. *Jidai shôsetsu* has precursors in not only popular performance arts, but also the popular literary arts of the Edo era, specifically *gunki monogatari* (martial tales) and *yomihon* (literally, books for reading). While *gunkimono* were based on actual historical events and figures, *yomihon* generally contained more fantastic plots and often depicted ghosts and supernatural beings.¹ Both forms included didactic

¹If *yomihon* are more fanciful and less factual than *gunkimono*, that does not mean *yomihon* authors relied solely on the power of imagination. They also drew on a variety of sources. Leon Zolbrod points out that Kyoto and Osaka based writers of *yomihon* turned to Heian court romances, *Manyôshû* poetry and Chinese vernacular fiction for inspiration. Edo based writers also drew on these sources, but relied more heavily on martial tales, both in terms of content and style. Zolbrod suggests the masculine, sinic prose style of Edo *yomihon* differs from the more elegant style of its Kamigata counterpart. See Leon Zolbrod, “Yomihon: The Appearance of the Historical Novel in Late Eighteenth Century and Early Nineteenth Century Japan,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3 (May 1966): 485-98.
themes and clear moral instruction, as do the *jidai shōsetsu* of some Taishō and early Shōwa popular writers, including Yoshikawa Eiji and Kikuchi Kan. And like *jidai shōsetsu*, *gunkimono* and *yomihon* were published serially. For example, Takizawa Bakin’s *Nansō Satomi Hakkenden* was published in installments from 1814 to 1841, with each new installment distributed to the general readership by itinerant book lenders (*kashi-honya*).  

While *jidai shōsetsu* shares a number of features in common with Edo era popular arts, there are also aspects which distinguish it as a twentieth-century phenomenon. First, the themes treated in popular historical fiction are quite modern. For example, there is an egalitarianism in Taishō and early Shōwa *jidai shōsetsu* which one does not find in kabuki, *kōdan* or *yomihon*. Generally speaking, the heroes of *jidai shōsetsu* have achieved their heroic status by dint of their diligent efforts and self-discipline, not on account of their noble birth. In addition to presenting such a bourgeois, “bootstraps” theme, popular historical novels generally treat Christianity favorably, and often introduce socialist-inspired subplots in which heroes help society’s downtrodden rise up against their oppressors. By contrast, Christianity and rebellion are not among the subtexts of Edo era popular arts. Authors of *jidai shōsetsu* skillfully weave

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2 Zolbrod suggests that while the term *yomihon* connotes “reading to entertain rather than to teach,” the didactic function of *yomihon* has always been widely acknowledged. Leon Zolbrod, 486.


4 This is because the foreign religion had been effectively eradicated from Japan as a result of the Shogunate’s persecution of its adherents in the 1620s. Moreover, Shogunal censors strictly regulated the content popular art in order to maintain social and political order. Plays or novels which portray rebellion or subvert the established social hierarchy were thus forbidden.
modern subtexts into the romantic, formulaic tales of revenge and honor that are the staple of the genre. Thus, while the jidai mono appears to be a portrayal of the past, much of popular historical novel’s content is modern.

Another aspect distinguishing jidai shôsetsu as a twentieth-century phenomenon is the authors of jidai shôsetsu maintained a symbiotic relationship with the mass print industry. During the 1920s, popular writers providing publishers with a steady stream of serial novels for their newspapers and magazines while at the same time benefiting from the exposure afforded by the mass media. Skillfully written historical fiction had the potential to increase circulation, and newspaper and magazine editors constantly looked for jidai shôsetsu that would sell. While publishers turned to established professionals, they were often just as willing to give unknown writers a chance. Some publishing houses looking for new talent even sponsored fiction writing contests. From the perspective of the aspiring jidai shôsetsu writer, the bourgeoisie publishing industry provided multiple venues to publish his work. It was not uncommon for an aspiring writer to submit multiple manuscripts to several publishers using a variety of pen names. Often a professional writer would not slacken his pace even when became established, but would take advantage of the mass media’s

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5 Yoshikawa Eiji got his start as a professional writer after winning a fiction writing contest. See Ozaki Hotsuki, Denki Yoshikawa Eiji, 179-84, 219-20.
6 For example, Yoshikawa Eiji used nineteen different pen names during his early years as a writer. Osaragi Jirô used seventeen, Nakazato Kaizan six, Shirai Kyôji four and Hayashi Fubô three. Naoki Sanjûgo began his career using Sanjûichi (thirty one), but then began changing his pen name yearly following a numerical sequence (Sanjûni, Sanjûsan, etc.). He finally stopped at Sanjûgo. Denki Yoshikawa Eiji, 215-18; Fukushima Kôichi, “Hyôden Osaragi Jirô” (A critical biography of Osaragi Jirô), in Shinchô Nihon bungaku arubamu: Osaragi Jirô (Shinchô’s Japanese literature album: Osaragi Jirô) (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1995), 30; Manabe Motoyûki, Taishû bungaku jiten, 636,642.
avenues for publishing. An ambitious professional writer might serialize four novels or more at the same time.'

Although *jidai* shōsetsu inherited a number of features from Edo era popular arts, the genre's symbiotic relationship with the mass media is the characteristic most relevant to an examination of its origins. This is because the *jidai* shōsetsu is tailored to be read by a modern, mass readership, an audience which formed in conjunction with the development of mass journalism in Japan. While the publication of news "broadsheets" (*kawaraban*) was strictly regulated during the Edo period, during the early Meiji years the government encouraged the founding of private newspapers. And with the introduction during the Meiji period of movable type and offset printing presses, which were far more efficient than the woodblock printing method of the Edo period, the publishing industry gained the capacity to reach hundreds of thousands of readers on a daily basis. Publishers were able to meet the demands of a growing urban readership for printed matter.

The large urban readership was the result of massive migration to Japan's cities during the Meiji and Taishō and into the 1930s. With the introduction of new manufacturing

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7 For example, during the ten year period from 1926 to 1936 Osaragi Jirō serialized some 74 long novels, an average of over seven per year. He also wrote a multitude of short stories and essays over the same period. See "Sakuhin mokuroku" (List of works), *Osaragi Jiro jidai shōsetsu zenshū* (Anthology of Osaragi Jirō's historical fiction), vol. 24 (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1977), 360-65.

8 Gregory J. Kasza, *The State and the Mass Media in Japan, 1918-1945*, 4-6. James Huffman points out that despite regulation by the Shogunate, some 3,000 broadsheets were issued during the 250 years of Tokugawa rule. He adds, however, that each was issued "on a one-time-only basis." James Huffman, *Politics of the Meiji Press: The Life of Fukuchi Gen'ichirō* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1990), 48.

9 *Yokohama shinbun*, founded in December 1870, was Japan's first newspaper to be published daily and printed using movable type and offset printing presses. *Shinbun hanbai hyakunen-shi* (The one hundred year history of newspaper sales) (Tokyo: Nihon Shinbun Hanbai Kyōkai, 1969), 131.
technologies and the rapid industrialization of the economy, large numbers of people migrated to urban centers. For example, the population of Osaka, Japan’s second largest urban center, grew almost fourfold between the beginning of the Meiji era and the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. In 1868 there were 280,000 people living in Osaka. By 1896 the population had nearly doubled to 500,000. By 1904 Osaka had swelled to one million residents, only half of whom were registered permanent residents.\(^{10}\) The publishing industry contributed to increasing literacy rates among the new urban dwellers, many of whom had not received much formal education in the countryside, through the publication of newspapers with entertaining articles written in clear, vernacular language. Urban readers soon developed a taste for the entertaining features in these newspapers, particularly the serial fiction and crime stories, and began to demand more entertaining reading material. It was in response to such demand that *jidai shōsetsu* was came into being.

2.1 Newspapers and the education of the modern reader

In his study of the Tokugawa educational system and its legacy for Meiji Japan, Ronald Dore notes that “the literacy rate in Japan in 1870 was considerably higher than in most underdeveloped countries today.”\(^{11}\) Dore estimates the rate of literacy at the beginning of the Meiji period at 40 to 50 percent for males and about 15 percent for females, figures which agree with those cited by Herbert Passin and Edwin


However, Richard Rubinger suggests that because Dore’s estimates are based solely on the registration figures of terakoya (popular schools for children during the Edo era), they are not necessarily an accurate indicator of literacy rates. “Registration lists,” writes Rubinger, “do not distinguish between guests who dropped by to pay respects and actual students.” Moreover, even if registration figures did present an accurate guide to enrollment, they do not provide “sufficient data on how long students stayed, what levels of instruction they received, or what skills they took away with them.” A more accurate method to determining literacy rates, Rubinger suggests, is, first to define what skills constitute literacy and then determine the extent to which they are found within the population. He asserts that while such data is rare, it does exist for certain communities.

Rubinger cites the results of a literacy test given in 1881 to 882 males in the village of Tokiwa in Nagano Prefecture. The test defines different levels of literacy. Those with the ability to write their own name and address possessed “minimal literacy.” Rubinger estimates that by the 1850s 65 percent of males in Tokiwa village had achieved “minimal literacy.” By the 1870s, the level of minimal literacy had climbed to 76 percent. Surveys taken in regional areas by the Meiji Ministry of Education in the

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14 Richard Rubinger, 18.
1870s and 1880s also define literacy as the ability to write one's name. While the results vary greatly by region, generally speaking, they suggest high levels of minimal literacy in the provinces. On the other hand, if literacy is defined in terms of "functionality," that is, "the ability to read ordinary materials and fill out simple financial forms such as deeds and bonds," then levels are considerably lower. The survey of males in Tokiwa village shows that only 7 percent had achieved functional literacy by the 1850s, and only 8 percent by the 1870s. These figures should not be extended to suggest a national average, Rubinger asserts, nor are they reflective of literacy rates among urban populations, which would probably be considerably higher. Rubinger's data thus calls into question the accuracy of Dore's estimate of national literacy rates in 1870. The data suggests that at the beginning of the Meiji era the percentage of the Japanese population that was functionally literate was smaller than has been assumed by previous generations of Japan scholars.

Judging from the diaries of the Meiji era writers Higuchi Ichiyō and Ishikawa Takuboku, for many city dwellers in the early Meiji, literacy meant the ability to read and write only the hiragana and katakana syllabaries and, at most, a very limited number of Chinese characters. This may

15Maeda Ai (Kindo, dokusha no seiritsu, 125) cites an 1888 survey taken in Ishikawa Prefecture which places the rate of literacy among adult males at 41 percent. Ronald Dore (Education in Tokugawa Japan, 322) cites the results of a Ministry of Education surveys in the provinces which measured "the portion of the population who could not write their names." According to these surveys, in Shiga Prefecture in 1877 some 64 percent of the population was minimally literate. But in Kagoshima in 1884, the figure was only 19 percent.
16Richard Rubinger, 16-18.
17Richard Rubinger, 18-19.
be discerned in diary entries in which Ichiyō and Takuboku mention the limited literacy of older family members educated in the Edo era terakoya. The mothers of both writers were among the few women who received an education during the late Edo period, yet neither woman could write more than hiragana, and only with difficulty. Ichiyō's diary also reveals, for example, that as the mother busied herself with domestic chores in the evening, she would have her daughter read aloud. While such diary entries illustrate the reality that life in Meiji Japan did not afford many homemakers the leisure to read for pleasure, they also make clear the fact that in the early Meiji years, literacy was limited to reading and writing skills basic to daily living for many terakoya educated people.

Only society's elite, who had been trained from youth in the Chinese classics, were able to comprehend the sinified prose used in the proclamations and ordinances issued by the Meiji government. Similarly, very few could read the "large newspapers" (ôshinbun) of the early Meiji period, among them the Tokyo nichinichi shinbun (founded February 1872), the Yûbin hôchi shinbun (June 1872), and the Chôya shinbun (November 1872). These carried articles about the Meiji government's new policies and the Movement for Liberty and People's Rights (Jiyû Minken Undô), which, because of the high-flown style, the abundance of Chinese compounds and the lack of furigana to indicate readings, were virtually incomprehensible to all but an educated minority, i.e., bureaucrats, scholars, professional writers and university

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"Maeda Ai, Kindai dokusha no seiritsu, 125.
"Maeda Ai, Kindai dokusha no seiritsu, 123-24.
Some progressively minded intellectuals attempted to make the large newspapers' political discussions comprehensible to the general public by organizing newspaper discussion groups. These were particularly active in the provinces. But with the appearance of the "small newspapers" (koshinbun) beginning in 1874 the literacy of the less-educated masses received an even greater impetus.

Small newspapers, such as the Yomiuri shinbun (November 1874), the Kanayomi shinbun (November 1875) and the Hiragane-e-iri shinbun (April 1875), were written in a simple, vernacular style with liberal use of hiragana and glossing Chinese characters with furigana. Moreover, the content of the small newspapers was geared toward the less-educated reader. There were columns devoted to reporting gossip from the entertainment district, discussions of developments in the theater, as well as news from around Tokyo. Of course, the more scandalous, the better. News of political developments was presented in a prefatory manner, and in simple prose, quite unlike the high-flown editorializing of the large newspapers. The small newspapers also carried fiction written by professional writers or gesakusha including Kanagaki Robun, Takabatake Ransen and Somezaki Nobufusa, who had written the kusazōshi and sharebon peddled

21 Maeda Ai, Kindai dokusha no seiritsu, 110; Tsurumi Shunsuke, Taishū bungakuron (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1985), 41.
22 Jay Rubin, 37; Nihon shinbun hattatsushi, 108-14; Shinbun hanbai hyakunen-shi, 208-12; Shinbun to minshū, 34-39.
by the traveling book lenders." These entertaining pieces often included illustrations, making the overall appearance of the small newspapers quite different from that of the staid large newspapers.

The appeal of small newspapers to the average urban reader lay in part in the perception that through reading on a regular basis, the common citizen was participating in the Meiji government's policy of "civilization and enlightenment" (bunka kaika). Maeda Ai cites the following squib from the April 23, 1877 edition of the Yomiuri shinbun to illustrate the extent of the small newspapers' appeal to the popular readership.

Morita Otora, the daughter of Morita Shôhachi of 4-chôme, Honmachi, Osaka, at the age of sixteen years...was rather accomplished at the arts of refinement....She also went diligently to performances at the theater and the vaudeville hall. A fellow just across the way from her house named Murakami Shinsai loved newspapers and often read stories from them to the girls in the neighborhood. Occasionally, Otora would come and listen, too....Gradually, her interest turned toward newspapers and so she quit both her shamisen lessons and her dancing and started picking up three different furigana newspapers. At first, her parents were quite proud that their daughter was reading the newspaper, but then, when they admonished her to give it up, Otora wouldn't listen....But, her parents were won over in the end. Now, because she's taking the Osaka nippō nōmin shinshi and other newspapers, she even knows the current state of world affairs. "It's all thanks to Mr. Murakami," she says happily."

While this passage smacks of self-promotion, nonetheless, it clearly indicates the appeal of reading newspapers among the average urban resident. The fact that a

25 Maeda Ai, Kindai dokusha no seiritsu, 111; Tsurumi Shunsuke, 64-65. The large newspapers, by contrast, attracted writers such as Narushima Ryôhoku (editor of Chôya) and Kurimoto Joun (Yûbin hôchi) who opposed government policy in editorials and political commentary, and Fukuchi Ôchi (a.k.a. Gen'ichirô, Tokyo nichinichi), who wrote in support of the government. Shinbun to minshû, 7-16; Shinbun hanbai hyakunen-shi, 191-92.

24 Shinbun to minshû, 8-9.

25 Maeda Ai, Kindai dokusha no seiritsu, 111. Osaka nippō kōmin shinshi was founded in December 1875. Shinbun hanbai hyakunen-shi, 92, 142.
young girl would give up the theater and vaudeville hall, and that her parents would boast of her despite her neglect of the arts of refinement indicates the degree to which literacy was the new measure of civilization among a mass readership. This new conception of literacy paved the way for a new development in newspaper publishing which would ultimately promote greater literacy among the masses.

Initially the irregularly published small newspapers were hawked on street corners, a practice followed since the Genroku period (1688-1704) with the hawking of kawaraban (broadsheets). However, in 1877 the government prohibited this practice and small papers were forced to find new means of distribution. The demise of the yomiurisha or newspaper hawker, who had been a popular fixture of city life, led to a drop in sales. For example, circulation of the Yomiuri shinbun fell by almost 3,000, a significant decline given that circulation at that time was around 20,000.” It was at this time that the small newspapers began reinventing themselves. Those that had been issued irregularly began daily publication, circulated largely by means of subscription. Yomiuri shinbun began carrying advertisements. And several small newspapers began carrying serialized pieces or tsuzukimono.  

The term yomiuru or “sell by reading aloud” from which the Yomiuri shinbun derives its title, indicates that the hawkers attracted customers by calling out headlines or choice bits of lead articles. The practice of yomiuri was allowed to continue in Osaka until 1882. Shinbun hanbai hyakunen-shi, 19, 148, 209; Maeda Ai, Kindai dokusha no seiritsu, 112; Jay Rubin, 37.

Shinbun hanbai hyakunen-shi, 148; Shinbun to minshū, 43. As a point of reference, other circulation figures were as follows: small newspapers Tokyo e-iri and Kanayomi had circulations between 5,000 and 10,000; large newspapers Tokyo nichinichi, Yūbin hôchi and Chôya had circulations between 10,000 and 15,000. Also, after the prohibition of the hawker, Yomiuri shinbun introduced newspaper deliverers who carried the papers over the shoulder in a peddler’s box. A small bell attached to the box announced the approach of the delivery man, prompting people to refer to him as chirin chirin hako (the man with the jingling box).  

Shinbun hanbai hyakunen-shi, 146-47; Maeda Ai, Kindai dokusha no seiritsu, 112.
Among the first *tsuzuki mono* were fictionalizations of actual criminal cases surrounding notorious women or *dokufu* (literally, "poison women") involved in sexual scandals and murder. These were written by professional writers, who spiced up the already lurid details of the *dokufu*’s adventures, crafting narratives that would hold their readers’ interest and make them eager for the next installment. Like other articles carried in the small newspapers, these serials were written using mainly *kana* and included *furigana* for any Chinese characters used. They also included illustrations, some of which showed the *dokufu* in various states of undress. Serialized fiction—whether stories about murderous *dokufu* or the political novels of the large newspapers—helped promote the growth of the journalism industry by fostering a daily reading habit among the public. As literacy rates edged upward with the spread of public education, the demand came for new and more varied serial fiction. Newspapers began to look for new material for serialization. In the mid 1880s, one new source publishers mined was the vaudeville hall.

2.2 From *sokki kodan* to *shinkodan*

The popular entertainments performed in Japan’s vaudeville halls or *yoseba* during the Edo and early Meiji periods were many: *rakugo, rōkyoku* or *naniwa-bushi, kōdan, manzai, kyōgen*, as well as "light variety acts" such as juggling (*tejina*), popular songs (*shōka*), shadow plays.

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*Among the most popular was Kanagaki Robun’s 1879 "Takahashi Oden yajin no dan" (The tale of Takahashi Oden and her stiletto) which related the murder case of the *dokufu* Takahashi Oden. Tsurumi Shunsuke, 64.*

*Jay Rubin, 37-38.*

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*Jay Rubin, 37; Tsurumi Shunsuke, 64-65.*
The yoseba was a place where people could take their families for an inexpensive evening of entertainment. Most districts in Tokyo had their own vaudeville halls, as did most major cities throughout the country. During the “golden age” of the yoseba in the 1880s, the number of variety halls in Tokyo went from 163 in 1880 to 230 in 1886. And in Osaka there were close to 80 yoseba in the early 1880s. Adachi Ken’ichi suggests the reason for the large number of yoseba in Osaka at this time was the lax regulation by the authorities. To open a vaudeville hall, one needed only enough room (and zabuton) to seat 100 spectators, a few small braziers (hibachi) and a place to post the names of performers. However, several factors—including the cholera epidemic of 1885 and increasingly rigorous regulation by the authorities—led to the gradual decline of Osaka’s vaudeville halls. By the end of the century the number of Osaka’s yoseba had decreased from near 80 to only 30. More striking is the decline in the number of yoseba in Tokyo, which fell from a peak of 230 in 1886 to 80 in 1901.

Of the yoseba entertainments, rakugo and kōdan are strictly narrative arts and are performed without musical accompaniment, thus distinguishing them from naniwa-bushi (“songs in the Osaka style”), in which the narrator is

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32 Heinz Morioka and Miyoko Sasaki, Rakugo, the Popular Narrative Art of Japan, 2.
33 Morioka and Sasaki, 252.
34 Adachi Ken’ichi, 28-29.
35 Morioka and Sasaki, 252. The number of yoseba continued to fall with the introduction of cinema, radio and television. In 1990 there were only eight regular yoseba in Tokyo. In the Kansai region there are no regular yoseba, but manzai and rakugo are sometimes performed in the Yoshimoto Company’s theaters. Throughout the rest of Japan, yoseba entertainments are performed in rented halls. See Morioka and Sasaki, 2-3.
accompanied by a single shamisen. "Kôdan (literally, "lecture") were originally performed by Buddhist preachers to explain the sutras to believers. During the Muromachi (1333-1573) period, daimyô and provincial warlords employed narrators (otogishû, usually Buddhist monks or experienced warriors) to read martial tales or secular stories at their estates. The otogishû would narrate either kôdan or short humorous anecdotes—karukuchi banashi (witty stories), the precursor to otoshibanashi or rakugo (stories with an "ochi" or punchline)—thus inspiring their warrior patrons with tales of past heroes or amusing the warriors between battles."

During the early Edo period, masterless samurai began reading/narrating martial tales to audiences of commoners to earn a living. They are considered to be the first kôdan performers in the modern, secular sense. Most of the tales that they narrated were based on episodes from the fourteenth-century Taiheiki (Chronicle of the great peace). However, in the latter half of the eighteenth-century, kôdan performers or kôdanshi added to their repertory tales which appealed specifically to townspeople audiences, including stories of chivalrous heroes protecting the common folk (kyôkaku mono), poignant tales of the complications in the

56 Naniwa-bushi originated with the performances of Osaka street musicians during the mid-Edo period. Originally, naniwa-bushi derived from explanation of Buddhist sutras for popular audiences (sekkyô sakon), much like kôdan. Modern naniwa-bushi, which developed in Tokyo rather than Osaka, involve dramatic recitations of the adventures of popular heroes. The first recorded performance of modern naniwa-bushi took place in Yotsuya at the Yamamoto-tei yoseba on April 16, 1873. See Morioka and Sasaki, 4.

57 Morioka and Sasaki, 232. The term otoshibanashi (stories with a punch line) was used to describe these humorous narratives beginning in the late seventeenth century. In the late eighteenth century, otoshibanashi came to be written with the Chinese characters which have the Sino-Japanese reading rakugo (落語). During the Meiji era, the characters were pronounced with their Sino-Japanese reading in all government ordinances regulating the yoseba, thus since about 1900 rakugo has been the standard term used to describe this genre of narration. See Morioka and Sasaki, 8 and 250.
lives of common people (*sewa mono* or *ninjō banashi*) and the adventures of virtuous thieves (*shiranami mono*).\(^3\) Ghost stories (*kaidan mono*) were also a part of the *kôdanshi*’s repertoire.

*Kôdan* and *rakugo* have both evolved as popular narrative entertainments, but there are several characteristics which differentiate them. For example, *kôdan* generally do not include humor or witticisms, a regular staple of *rakugo* narratives. *Kôdan* are also characterized by a lecture-like tone and by the rhythm of the *kôdanshi*’s voice, both of which differ from the conversational style of the *rakugo* raconteur’s delivery. And while a *kôdanshi*’s narrative may relate the details of a bloody vendetta or a terrifying apparition, there is always a “happy ending” and most importantly, a clear moral.\(^4\) Last of all, *rakugo* are generally short, self-contained narratives which end in a pun or witticism, while *kôdan* are relatively long and often serialized stories.\(^5\)

During the 1880s, *kôdan* outstripped *rakugo* in popularity, to the extent that some *rakugo* performers took to performing *kôdan* out of economic necessity.\(^6\) One performer who moved effortlessly between *kôdan* and *rakugo* performances was Sanyūtei Enchō (1839–1900). Enchō was himself the son of a *yoseba* entertainer and made his *yoseba* debut at the tender age of seven. By the time he reached seventeen, he was receiving top billing at the venues where he performed. He is

\(^3\) Morioka and Sasaki, 5 and 232.  
\(^4\) Morioka and Sasaki, 5-6.  
\(^5\) There are numerous examples, however, of long, serial *rakugo* narratives (known as *nagabanashi*) which do not necessarily end with a pun. *Rakugo* ghost stories (*kaidan banashi*) fall under this category. Morioka and Sasaki, 246.  
\(^6\) Adachi Ken’ichi, 28-31, 38; Morioka and Sasaki, 5.
famous for performing **rakugo** on a bare stage without the stage properties favored by some of his contemporaries and for his skillful use of vernacular language to give his narratives a vividness and a clarity which made them especially moving to his audience. In the 1880s, Enchô responded to the rising popularity of **kôdan** by writing and performing the serial ghost story "Botan dôrô." This tale is told in twelve installments and relates the story of a beautiful young noble woman who falls in love with a handsome samurai, but who dies before she can consummate her love. She returns to haunt the samurai during the festival of the dead (obon), seeking to fulfill her unrequited desire, but also to exact her revenge on him for letting her languish away. "Botan dôrô" was an immediate success and was adapted for the kabuki stage in 1887. It is considered Enchô's best **kaidan banashi**. It continues to be performed yearly during the obon season.

In 1884, "Botan dôrô" became the first **kôdan** to appear in print, opening the floodgates for what would be a torrent of publications based on yoseba performance arts, the majority of which were transcriptions of **kôdan**. Wakabayashi Kanzô and Sakai Shôzô, two students of the Takusari Kôki, who developed the process of Japanese stenography in 1882, approached Enchô regarding the stenographic transcription and publication of Botan dôrô as a means of advertising the

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* "Tsurumi Shunsuke discusses Enchô's ability to use "language as gesture," that is, to imbue words with a distinctive symbolic power, uniquely and movingly linking them to the moment they describe. One example Tsurumi cites is from the **kôdan** "Botan dôrô," in which the ghost of a young woman haunts the lover she left behind. Although Japanese ghosts have no feet according to the convention followed in the visual arts, Enchô makes the approach of the ghost terrifyingly ominous by merely describing the sound of her wooden **geta clogs**—karakon, karakon--gradually growing louder as she draws near her lover's house. See Tsurumi Shunsuke, 39-45.

* Morioka and Sasaki, 254-256.
usefulness of stenography to society at large." Published by Haiji Shuppansha in early 1884, the transcription of "Botan dōrō" was so well received that Enchō soon collaborated with Wakabayashi and Sakai on the transcription of three more kōdan. His "Shiobara Tasuke ichidai-ki" (Chronicle of Shiobara Tasuke I) was published in 1884, while "Yasunaka Sōzō" and "Narihira Bunji hyōryū kidan" (Strange tale of the castaway Narihira Bunji) appeared in 1885. All three were well received by the public, with "Shiobara Tasuke" quickly selling 120,000 copies." The popularity of Enchō’s kōdan transcriptions attracted the attention of small newspaper publishers who were searching for new material to serialize. In October 1886 the Yamato shinbun began serialization of a transcription of Enchō’s kōdan “Matsu no misao bijin ikiume” (A chaste and beautiful girl buried alive)." It did not take long for other small newspapers to seek out kōdan transcriptions (sokki-kōdan) and soon the majority of small papers were serializing them." For their part, the kōdanshi soon recognized that kōdan transcriptions were a ready source of income and at the same time an effective means of

** Adachi Ken’ichi, 18-19; Morioka and Sasaki, 307; Shinbun hanbai hyakunen-shi, 228.

** By the end of the Meiji period, all "small" newspapers were serializing sokki-kōdan. Kōdansha no ayunda gojūnen: Meiji, Taishō hen (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1959), 168; Ozaki Hotsuki, "Teihen no bungakushi nōto" (Notes on a basic history of literature), Bungaku vol. 28, no. 7 (July 1960): 24; Jay Rubin, 39. I have translated the term sokki-kōdan as "kōdan transcription." Generally speaking, however, sokki-kōdan were not word-for-word transcriptions of live kōdan performances, but transliterations of the basic content of kōdan. Rather than transcribing a live performance, the stenographer conferred privately with the kōdanshi after viewing a performance and took down the general outline of the kōdan. Later, he fleshed out the "transcription" based on his recollections of the performance, further consultation with the kōdanshi and his own artistic judgement. Although the stenographer did not "transcribe" a live performance, the orality of the sokki-kōdan and sokki-rakugo remain their most distinctive feature. See Adachi Ken’ichi, 24, 62.
increasing name recognition with the public. However, those who benefited most from the sokki-kôdan boom were the fortunate few trained in the art of stenography. Suddenly, they found themselves in great demand.

Through the serialization of sokki-kôdan and the publication of kôdan books, the reading public developed a seemingly insatiable appetite for kôdan transcriptions. In 1889, the Tokyo based publisher Kinransha published the first magazine dedicated exclusively to sokki-kôdan, Hyakka’en. The first kôdan magazine published by an Osaka based publisher, Momochidori, appeared later in 1889 and was modeled on Hyakka’en, with the exception that it also carried an occasional travelogue, rakugo transcription or piece of melodramatic fiction. Other publishers in both Tokyo and Osaka followed the example of these magazines, and the demand for sokki-kôdan continued to grow.

With the proliferation of publications carrying sokki-kôdan, some kôdan performers began to concentrate their efforts on reworking the material for publication, or composing completely new kôdan specifically for transcription. The gradual shift in emphasis away from live performance coincided with the gradual decline of the yoseba theater in the mid to late 1890s. It also made economic sense for the kôdanshi, who often had a kôdan published several times by the same publisher: first as a newspaper serial, then in a kôdan magazine, and again as a kôdan book. The kôdanshi also might have a single kôdan published by multiple publishers. With each new edition, the kôdanshi received a

*Adachi Ken'ichi, 19-21. The first edition of Momochidori included a travelogue by Ozaki Kôyô entitled "Ukare to ri." The process of "transcribing" rakugo was the same as "transcribing" kôdan. The sokki-rakugo was based on the stenographer’s consultation with the performer and was not a word-for-word transcription of a live performance.
fee from the publisher. Both the kôdanshi and the stenographer might add new twists or stylistic flourishes to freshen old material, thus giving new life to familiar tales.

While yoseba performers with the greatest name recognition had an easier time getting their kôdan published—sokki-kôdan by performers such as Sanyûtei Enchô, Okinaya Sanba, Shôrin Hakuen and Ishikawa Ichiko appeared regularly in kôdan magazines—the narratives of less well-established raconteurs also appeared in print. Because of the great demand for kôdan transcriptions and the relatively large number of kôdanshi trying to get their work published, the few stenographers willing to transcribe kôdan came to exercise a great deal of power in the publication process. In Osaka, Maruyama Heijirô (1865-1920) transcribed the majority of sokki-kôdan that were published. By the end of the Meiji period he had transcribed 474 kôdan books plus countless kôdan for newspapers and magazines. He served as editor of Momochidori (1890-91) and Shin momochidori (1895-97), and thus had considerable control when it came to deciding which kôdanshi got into print. In Tokyo, Imamura Jirô (1868-1937), a writer for the Yamato shinbun skilled in stenography, came to possess tremendous control in the kôdan publication process. Eventually he established a syndicate (in practice, if not in name) through which almost all sokki-

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49 Adachi Ken’ichi, 30 and 37-38.
50 Adachi Ken’ichi relates the history of two Osaka stenographers active in the publication of sokki-kôdan, Maruyama Heijirô and Yamada Toichirô. When both men took positions as official stenographers for the Osaka government bodies in 1911, they quit transcribing yoseba narratives completely, ending all affiliation with publishers and performers. This suggests that stenographers working in an official capacity found kôdan transcription to be an unworthy pursuit. Adachi Ken’ichi, 24 and 55.
51 Adachi Ken’ichi, 23-26. Shin momochidori was a revamped version of Momochidori which aimed at incorporating a greater diversity of material. But, as with its predecessor, the majority of Shin momochidori’s content was sokki-kôdan. Both magazines were published by Shinshindô.
Kōdan manuscripts were supplied by him to publishers in the Kantō region.®

Imamura also had experience editing kōdan magazines. Kimura Ki reports that Imamura edited a short-lived magazine entitled Kōdan kurabu in 1897, and another called Kōdan zasshi around the same time. While Kōdan zasshi was in publication somewhat longer than Kōdan kurabu, neither magazine was successful.® If Imamura did not have a gift for editing, he certainly excelled at stenographic transcription. Not only did he produce a large number of kōdan and rakugo transcriptions, he trained several gifted students, who in turn became productive transcribers of yoseba narratives.®

By the end of the Meiji period, Imamura and his disciples were transcribing the majority of kōdan manuscripts published in Tokyo. Publishers would place orders for manuscripts with Imamura’s team and, based on the content requested, Imamura would then contact a kōdanshi and arrange for a transcription to be made.® The syndicate-like nature of Imamura’s operation gave him a considerable amount of influence with both the kōdan performers and the publishers.

Imamura and his disciples also supplied many of the sokki-kōdan published in Kōdansha’s magazine Kōdan kurabu (launched in January 1911) and virtually all of the material carried in Bunkōsha’s Kōdan sekai (launched in October 1912). Then, in 1913, a disagreement between Imamura and Kōdansha founder Noma Seiji (1878-1938) over Imamura’s “exclusive

® Adachi Ken’ichi, 62; Kōdansha no ayunda gojūnen, 164-65.
® Kōdansha no ayunda gojūnen, 192. Kimura suggests that Imamura’s Kōdan kurabu folded after just one issue. Noma Seiji’s publishing company Kōdansha began publication of a magazine entitled Kōdan kurabu in January 1911. Aside from the identical title, there was no connection between the two magazines.
® Adachi Ken’ichi, 62.
® Adachi Ken’ichi, 62.
rights" to supply manuscripts to Kôdan kurabu set in motion a series of events that would irrevocably alter the process of kôdan publication and lead to the creation of a new genre, popular literature (taishû bungaku).

Kôdan kurabu published by Kôdansha was considerably more successful than the magazine of the same name edited by Imamura in 1897. This was perhaps due to the editorial skill of Noma Seiji and his staff, who enjoyed modest success with their first magazine Yûben, launched in 1910. Noma envisioned Kôdan kurabu as a magazine for a popular audience. It would be both entertaining and instructional, bolstering the literacy of the public through narratives which would be appealing yet simultaneously reinforce their sense of morality as imperial subjects. Noma looked mainly to the vaudeville hall for material, but rather than limiting the magazine’s content to transcriptions of kôdan and the occasional rakugo, he also included transcriptions of naniwa-bushi. In fact, in June 1913, a special supplemental issue of Kôdan kurabu was devoted exclusively to naniwa-bushi transcriptions. To promote this special issue, Kôdansha sponsored a two-day gathering of naniwa-bushi performers in Akasaka, with performances open to the public.

Using these events as a pretext, Imamura approached Noma privately and demanded that he stop publishing naniwa-bushi in Kôdan kurabu. Acting as a representative of the kôdan performers, Imamura informed Noma that the kôdanshi did not want to share space in a kôdan magazine (or be reduced to

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56 Yûben, which had a circulation of about 14,000, contained transcriptions of famous speeches. Kôdansha no ayunda gojûnen, 65.
57 Kôdansha no ayunda gojûnen, 91-94.
58 Adachi Ken’ichi, 63. Kôdansha had sponsored a similar gathering of kôdan performers in April 1912.
equal billing) with naniwa-bushi performers. After all, there were no naniwa-bushi transcriptions in Kôdan sekai. According to Imamura, the kôdan performers threatened to cut off all submissions of kôdan and rakugo to Kôdan kurabu if Noma did not stop carrying naniwa-bushi transcriptions in his magazine. The boycott could be avoided, Imamura suggested, if Noma granted him the same kind of exclusive rights to supply manuscripts that he enjoyed with Kôdan sekai. Not only would Noma have a ready supply of kôdan manuscripts, he would also benefit from Imamura's editorial input, given Imamura's intimate knowledge of the world of yoseba performers and its trends."

Noma recalls that while he replied to Imamura "in an extremely humble manner, using very polite language," nonetheless, he made it clear that "unlike Kôdan sekai, we gather material of every kind—including material other than kôdan and rakugo—from every possible source, and we feel that this way is best, so...." Despite the "politeness" of Noma's rebuff, Imamura was upset. In the following weeks the two men tried several times to negotiate a compromise, but neither was willing to make significant concessions. Finally, Imamura and the kôdanshi carried out their threat. The September issue of Kôdan sekai carried a written pledge--

September issue of Kôdan sekai carried a written pledge--

99 Kôdansha no ayunda gojûnen, 164-65; Adachi Ken'ichi, 63-64; Ozaki Hotsuki, Taishô bungaku, 53-55; Kata Kôji, Kunisada Chûji, Sarutobi Sasuke, Kurama Tengu (Tokyo: San'ichi Shôbo, 1964), 174-77. There were other points of contention as well, one of which, significantly, is absent from Noma's recollection of the affair. Kôdan transcriptions were being printed in Kôdan kurabu without credit or remuneration going to the original composer or the original stenographer. The editorial staff at Kôdansha claimed that these manuscripts were purchased from Tôyô Bungeisha or other "brokers" of printed material, and that they knew nothing of the manuscripts' origin. Imamura cited these incidents as further evidence of Noma's bad faith in his dealings with kôdanshi, and he used them to support the claim that he should be granted the exclusive rights to supply manuscripts to Kôdan kurabu. See Kôdansha no ayunda gojûnen, 178-87.

penned by Imamura—bearing the names of 48 kódan performers who swore they would not submit work to Kódan kurabu."

However, the boycott did not have the desired affect. Rather than giving into the demands of Imamura and the kódanshi, Noma and his editorial staff sought out professional writers to produce narratives that followed the conventions of sokki-kódan but would be fresher and more interesting." He referred to these as "new kódan" (shinkódan). In his memoir Watakushi no hansei, Noma recollects the conception of shinkódan this way.

Just what was it that we were anticipating would make a suitable substitute for those all important kódan and rakugo transcriptions? It was a device that Fuchida (Tadao) and I came up with after racking our brains a great deal: "new kódan" and "new rakugo." If one were to ask what is it about the sokki-kódan published in those magazines that attracts the interest of readers, I think more than anything it would be the fact that, despite a certain amount of verbosity and hyperbole, they are written in simple, vernacular language and thus they are easier for every reader to read and understand than anything else available. Moreover, they have a particularly traditional flavor.

It occurred to us that there was no reason to expect that a novelist or a biographer gifted in the art of letters, skillfully adopting the style and the subject matter of the kódan, should not be able to write an interesting narrative with the same appeal as a kódan,

91 Adachi Ken'ichi, 64. Kimura Kô has suggested that Imamura's involvement in this affair may have stemmed from his envy of Noma's success. Noma and his staff began publication of Kódan kurabu with little knowledge of and few connections in the society of yose performers. And while the magazine struggled initially due to financial difficulties, by 1913 its cash flow had stabilized and Kódan kurabu was enjoying a growing readership. Viewed against his own long years of networking with yose performers and publishers, and his past failures as an editor, Noma's relatively quick success with Kódan kurabu must have been particularly galling for Imamura.

92 Some of the professional writers Noma called on to write shinkódan were from the staff of Miyako shinbun, including Nakazato Kaizan, Chizuka Reisui, Hirayama Rokô and Hasegawa Shin. Other contributors included such established professional writers as Takeda Gyōtenshi, Nakarai Tōsui, Maeda Shōzan, Murakami Namiroku, Inoue Kenkabô, Nagata Mikihiko, Satô Kôroku and Hasegawa Shigure. See Hamada Yûsuke, "Taishû bungaku no kindai" (The modern age of popular literature), in Iwanami kôza Nihon bungaku (Iwanami lectures series: the history of Japanese literature), vol. 13 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996), 166; Higakata Masami, Miyako shinbunshi, 218-19; Ishikawa Hiroyoshi, et. al., eds., Taishû bungaku jiten (Dictionary of popular culture) (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1991), 225; Ozaki Hotsuki, Taishû bungaku, 55.
which then might be used in place of the conventional kōdan transcription. Whether a knowledgeable historian or a belletrist, there must be a great many people capable of writing the type of tale which could be narrated by a kōdanshi, and writing it in a far more entertaining way. If these people can produce new kōdan and new rakugo which are more interesting, more elegant than the conventional ones and which have a certain freshness, then the new narratives will definitely be warmly welcomed across the nation. And in the future, they will assuredly become a significant new literature. This was the result of all our brainstorming. This was what we conceived of as a replacement for kōdan and rakugo transcriptions."

The editorial staff of Kōdan kurabu found a number of writers eager to take up the challenge of writing fiction that borrowed the rhythmic tone and subject matter employed by the kōdanshi, and to participate in the creation of “a significant new literature.” The September and October issues carried letters from the editors explaining their position in the controversy with Imamura and the kōdanshi. It stated that sokki-kōdan and sokki-rakugo would no longer appear in the pages Kōdan kurabu. Instead, the magazine would carry shinkōdan, naniwa-bushi and whatever the editorial staff felt would prove entertaining for their readers.

Thus the brainchild of Noma and his assistant, Fuchida Tadao, was conceived. As they predicted, readers across Japan warmly welcomed the shinkōdan and shinrakugo. Circulation of Kōdan kurabu began to increase; within a few months it had surpassed that of its rival Kōdan sekai. Noma attributed the increased circulation to the broad appeal of Kōdan kurabu’s

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53 Watakushi no hansei cited in Kōdansha no ayunda gojūnen, 171-72.
54 Nakazato Kaizan, Hirayama Rokō and Hasegawa Shin, who contributed shinkōdan to Kōdan kurabu, each went on to establish careers as authors of taishū bungaku.
55 Kōdansha no ayunda gojūnen, 175-78.
56 Noma states that during the period when Kōdan sekai’s circulation fluctuated between 9,000 and 11,000 copies, Kōdan kurabu’s circulation was between 17,000 and 19,000 copies. Kōdan sekai’s readership continued to dwindle as shinkōdan type narratives began appearing in other publications. The age of sokki kōdan and the influence of stenographers like Imamura was coming to an end. Kōdansha no ayunda gojūnen, 174.
content. Although the magazine targeted the less educated reader with the clear, vernacular style of its narratives, sophisticated readers also found it appealing. Noma writes of receiving letters from readers and other reports, indicating that Kōdan kurabu’s growing readership included university students (male and female), military generals and even cabinet ministers.

The fact that a broad spectrum of people were drawn to Kōdan kurabu’s narratives lends credence to the theory among scholars (for example, Asai Kiyoshi, Ozaki Hotsuki) shinkōdan is the seed from which taishū bungaku germinated. However, it is also undeniable that the appearance of Noma’s shinkōdan coincided with other developments in the realm of popular literature. These factors suggest that taishū bungaku did not originate from one source, but was the result of the confluence of several currents around the same time. For example, in 1906 Nakazato Kaizan, the writer regarded by many scholars and critics (for example, Asai Kiyoshi, Kimura Ki, Matsumura Tomomi, Nakatani Hiroshi, Kimura Ki and Ozaki Hotsuki) as one of the pioneers of popular literature, joined the staff of Miyako shinbun as its front page editor. Beginning in 1909, he serialized his first historical fiction in that publication. He began serialization of his masterpiece Daibosatsu tōge in 1913, which is the same year as Noma introduced the shinkōdan. In 1912, at a time when the majority of newspapers were serializing sokki kōdan, Yamato shinbun was carrying a serial kōdan that was neither transcribed nor composed by kōdanshi. Instead, it was written by an obscure professional writer, Ōtsubo Mokuza’emon. Readers found Ōtsubo’s narratives more engaging than those of Kōdansha no ayunda gojūnen, 174.
kōdan performers, a response similar to that of Kōdan kurabu’s readers to the shinkōdan." Meanwhile, in Osaka, a series of pocket-sized books called Tachikawa bunko began publication in 1911. Tachikawa bunko would have a tremendous impact on a generation of readers. These historical novels, aimed at readers between the ages of seven and fourteen, would influence popular historical fiction—in both its print and film manifestations—for decades.

2.3 Tamada Kyokujūsai, the Yamadas and Tachikawa bunko

Paralleling the development of Kōdansha’s shinkōdan was the “written kōdan” (kaki-kōdan). The kaki-kōdan was a story conceived of and produced by a professional writer, rather than a transcription of a kōdanshi’s narrative. The first steps toward the development of kakikōdan were taken by the Osaka-based kōdanshi Tamada Kyokujūsai II (1856-1919). Working with a team of writers made up primarily of his second wife’s sons and daughter, Kyokujūsai began producing written kōdan as early as 1902. Initially this “family of writers” simply transcribed Kyokujūsai’s slowly articulated narration. But as they gained experience and confidence, they began writing manuscripts on their own and simply had Kyokujūsai proofread them before dispatching them to publishers. Kyokujūsai and his writing team had kaki-kōdan published by several of Osaka’s major publishers. But they also worked with one relative newcomer, the publishing house Tachikawa Bunmeidō. In 1910, Kyokujūsai’s writing team and

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**Kōdansha no ayunda gojūnen, 168. Aside from the passing reference in Kōdansha no ayunda gojūnen, there seems to be little evidence of the career of Ōtsubo Mokuza’emon (大塚左衛門). There is no mention made of him in Taishō bunka jiten, Nihon shinbun hattatsushi, Taishō bungaku jiten, Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten, nor in Adachi Ken’ichi’s thorough discussion of the development of shinkōdan and kakikōdan in Tachikawa bunko no eiyūtachi.**

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Tachikawa Bunmeidō began to collaborate in the production of the Tachikawa bunko series, a tremendously popular series of historical fictions aimed at a juvenile readership.

Tamada Kyokujūsai was born Katō Manjirō, the second son of a Shinto priest in Kyoto." As a young man he moved to Osaka and became a tinsmith, but his love of yoseba entertainments—especially kōdan—led him to become a disciple of Tamada Kyokujūsai I. The Tamada school of kōdanshi was known for its dignified performances of "Shinto kōdan," that is, kōdan based on Shinto mythology and the kokugaku (national learning) tradition. Manjirō seems to have been well suited to this tradition, for he was a serious young man who did not smoke or drink, gamble or carouse in the pleasure quarter. Contemporary critiques of his stiff performance style suggest that he may have been a tad too earnest.

He met his first wife through his kōdan master and was soon blessed with a child. However, both wife and child died in the cholera epidemic which swept through Osaka in 1884-85. Then around 1892, when his master died, Manjirō left Osaka to study briefly with a kōdanshi in Tokyo. He returned to Osaka around 1895 and began performing in yoseba under the stage name Tamada Kyokurin. But Osaka audiences, accustomed to the rich, garrulous style of Osaka kōdan, found Kyokurin's performances too refined and he was unable to attract customers. In 1896, Kyokurin made a tour of the vaudeville halls in western Japan and ended up in Shikoku. Here that he met his second wife, Yamada Kei. It was she who would change the course of his life.

Unless otherwise indicated, Tamada Kyokujūsai's biographical information comes from Adachi Ken'ichi's Tachikawa bunko no aiyōtachi, pages 48-52.
Yamada Kei (1855-1921) was born in the port city of Imabari in Ehime Prefecture as the only child of a merchant who owned a local shipping agency. Her father was a successful business man and he had become influential in the community after the Meiji Restoration because of his support of samurai loyal to the Imperial cause. Kei enjoyed all the comforts of growing up the only child of a successful merchant family, but her parents also fostered her spirit of independence and strong will.

She was married in 1871 to a local fellow of good birth and learning who became the adopted heir of the Yamada family. He became quite caught up in the “civilization and enlightenment” of the first half of the Meiji era, reading western books, converting to Christianity and entering into a string of unsuccessful business ventures, including importing unicycles and running a pig farm. By the early 1890s, he had exhausted the Yamada family fortune. In 1896, Kei went to the vaudeville hall and encountered Tamada Kyokurin. The circumstances surrounding their meeting are unclear, but this independently minded woman (by this time she was 41 years old) decided to leave her husband and her five children and flee to Osaka with Kyokurin.

Kei’s actions had a devastating impact on the Yamada family. Her daughter, Yasu, who was the eldest of five children, was married to a fellow in Imabari, and she had already produced a daughter. But her husband was so scandalized by his mother-in-law’s adultery that he divorced Yasu and sent her packing to her father’s home. The father, disillusioned and impoverished by his many failed

70 Unless otherwise indicated, Yamada Kei’s biographical information comes from Adachi Ken’ichi’s Tachikawa bunko no eiyottachi, pages 52-58.
enterprises, had been forced to move into tenement housing. Further demoralized by his wife’s infidelity, he died, leaving Yasu to look after four brothers and her own daughter.

Meanwhile, Kei’s actions also brought the weight of social censure upon her and Kyokurin back in Osaka. The adulterous nature of their relationship stigmatized them in the relatively conservative society of kōdanshi. For a while Kyokurin could not get a booking anywhere. When he did begin performing again, he was content to give matinee performances, when attendance at the yoseba was light. But Kei felt her Kyokurin should be performing in the evenings and receiving star billing. She cast about for a way to promote Kyokurin’s career. Noticing the current popularity of kōdan transcriptions, this strong willed woman urged her husband to link up with a stenographer and have some of his kōdan published. But Kyokurin was loath to have his narratives appear in print, and continued reciting them at matinee performances.

Undaunted, Kei sought out Yamada Toichirō (1872-1932), a stenographer well known among Osaka publishers. Without Kyokurin’s consent, Kei made a contract with Yamada Toichirō, cementing the arrangement by promising Toichirō the hand of her daughter, Yasu. Despite their staunch opposition to the arrangement, both Kyokurin and Yasu eventually succumbed to Kei. The collaboration between Kyokurin and Toichirō, as well as the union between Yasu and Toichirō, commenced in late 1900. Sometime in 1901, after transcriptions of three of

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71 At the end of the Meiji period, Yamada Toichirō (no relation to Yamada Kei) took a position as stenographer for the Osaka Prefectural government and ceased to do kōdan transcription. Up to that time, however, he had transcribed 150 kōdan books, as well as many manuscripts for newspapers and magazines. Adachi Ken’ichi, 55.
Kyokurin's *kōdan* had been published, he took the stage name of his deceased master, Tamada Kyokujūsai. This suggests that publication of his *kōdan* had expanded his reputation, just as Kei had calculated.

However, in 1902, the marriage between Yasu and Toichirō fell apart, and Toichirō dissolved the partnership with Kyokujūsai. A replacement was quickly found, but the quality of his work proved unsatisfactory. Stenographers possessing a gift for literary expression were hard to come by, but Kyokujūsai could not afford to stop publishing transcriptions. At this critical juncture, Kei's eldest son, Otetsu, stepped forward and urged his father to let him transcribe his *kōdan*.

Otetsu had come to Osaka to pursue a career in dentistry and was not trained in shorthand notation. However, he possessed a vivid imagination, a facility with words and a keen awareness of what appealed to a popular audience. He was an avid fan of the vaudeville hall, and he had read widely: novels and literary works; histories and handbooks on martial arts; and of course, *sokki kōdan*. At the beginning, Otetsu transcribed the *kōdan* as Kyokujūsai slowly narrated it. But soon he was receiving only a synopsis from Kyokujūsai and fleshing out details on the basis of his own imagination. Subsequently, Otetsu began offering suggestions for plots and themes for entirely new *kōdan*. The *kaki-kōdan* produced by Kyokujūsai and Otetsu were well received, since Otetsu's imaginative plots and breezy style made Kyokujūsai's *kōdan* transcriptions more interesting and easier to read than those

72 Unless otherwise indicated, details of Yamada Otetsu's early involvement in the transcription of Kyokujūsai's *kōdan* come from Adachi Ken'ichi's *Tachikawa bunko no eiyūtachi*, pages 58-61. Note that because his first name (阿鉄) was actually a woman's name, he usually went by Tetsuo (鉄夫) instead.

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that had been produced in collaboration with Toichirō.

The demand for *kaki-kōdan* written by Kyokujūsai and Otetsu soon came to exceed their ability to meet it. Other members of Yamada Kei’s family began helping out with the transcriptions. Second son Tadao, third son Akira, and even daughter Yasu and Kei herself joined in. At first, Otetsu would provide the details of a plot and theme, then a family member would transcribe the story as Kyokujūsai slowly narrated it. In time, however, members of the writing team became familiar with recurring themes and the formulas employed and wrote stories independently, that is, without Kyokujūsai’s narration. Once a story was finished, Kyokujūsai proofread it, and signed his name, and sent it off to the publishers.⁵³ At the height of their productivity in 1915, the Yamada family writers, working from 7:00 in the morning until 9:00 at night, producing from 50 to 70 manuscript pages per day. Eventually, even Yasu’s daughter, Ikeda Ranko, participated in the mass production of fiction by adding the *furigana* to the manuscripts.⁵⁴

Among the publishers Kyokujūsai and the Yamada family writers supplied with *kaki-kōdan* was Tachikawa Bunmeidō, a relatively small operation which opened its doors in 1904. Principally a publisher of school texts, law books, guides to composition and verse, Tachikawa Bunmeidō also published a

⁵³The Yamada family writing team has parallels in American popular literature. From 1910 to 1935, Howard Garis and his family wrote a number of stories for the Stratemeyer Syndicate. Garis, his wife and his two children produced titles in all of the popular juvenile series published through the Stratemeyer Syndicate, including *Uncle Wiggily, Tom Swift, The Motor Boys* and *Baseball Joe*. It is estimated that they wrote some 1,000 books during that period. Ronald Weber, *Hired Pens: Professional Writers in America’s Golden Age of Print* (Athens, OH.: Ohio University Press, 1997), 74-78.

⁵⁴With each title running to about 300 pages, at that pace members of the writing team could produce a new title every week. In 1915, 39 new titles in the *Tachikawa bunko* series were published, as well as other titles in other series issued by other publishers. Adachi Ken’ichi, 110 and 131-32.
number of kôdan books, including 53 titles produced by Kyokujûsai and his writing team." In 1911, Kyokujûsai and Otetsu approached Tachikawa Bunmeidô with plans for a series on historical fiction aimed at juvenile readers. This series would prove to be their biggest success.

Otetsu sensed that the Osaka market was becoming saturated with kôdan books. Although the kaki-kôdan which Kyokujûsai and the Yamada family writing team produced were still selling, in general, demand for kôdan transcriptions had peaked and publishers were less willing to accept new kôdan manuscripts. Therefore, Otetsu and Kyokujûsai conceived of a new format for their narratives specifically targeted at an audience aged eight to fourteen. Their plan was to produce a pocket-size book series and market it to the shop boys and apprentices working in Osaka. As these shop boys made their daily rounds in Osaka’s commercial district, they often had to wait on suppliers and customers, leaving them with free time which might be spent sneaking in a little reading." The conventional kôdan book was too cumbersome to carry (8.7 inches x 6 inches), but a pocket-size book (5 inches x 3.5 inches) could easily be tucked into a happi coat without attracting attention." Otetsu and Kyokujûsai promoted their plan among a number publishers in Osaka, but no one was interested. At length, when they presented the idea at Tachikawa Bunmeidô, the owner, Tatsukawa Kumajirô (1879-1935), was so impressed by Kyokujûsai’s enthusiasm that he agreed to publish the series on the condition that it be

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75 Adachi Ken’ichi, 14, 32-33 and 38.
76 Adachi Ken’ichi, 103.
77 Adachi Ken’ichi, 10, 73 and 104.
entitled *Tachikawa bunko* instead of *Tamada bunko.*" The first title was published in May 1911. By the time the series ended publication in 1927, 196 titles had been published, each having gone through dozens of reprintings."

In addition to its smaller size, *Tachikawa bunko* had a number of features designed to make it attractive to a juvenile audience. Each title included a vividly illustrated frontispiece, gold lettering on the spine and gilding on the upper quarter of the cloth cover.**" Every title included *furigana* indicating the readings of Chinese characters and occasionally these diacritics reflected the local Osaka pronunciation.**" *Tachikawa bunko* were priced reasonably at 25 to 30 sen per copy, but were made even more appealing by the "trade-in" policy which Tachikawa Bunmeido introduced. A reader could purchase a new title by trading in an old title in fairly good condition and paying only three sen.**" But the most important feature which made *Tachikawa bunko* attractive to juvenile readers was the content.

The first ten titles in the *Tachikawa bunko* series depicted the adventures of heroes such as the Zen priest Ikkyū, Araki Mataemon, Mito Kōmon, Sanada Kōson and Miyamoto

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78 Adachi Ken'ichi, 67-68. In the preface to *Tachikawa bunko no eiyutterstock*, Adachi Ken'ichi explains that while the publisher's name is read "Tatsukawa," the general public read the Chinese characters (田川) used in the name of his company and the series of books as "Tachikawa." Adachi cites one instance in which *furigana* were used in a *Tachikawa bunko* to show the preferred reading, but the general public, including literary historians, has continued to read the characters as "Tachikawa." I also follow this convention.

79 For example, the first title "Ikkyū zenshi," was published in 1911 and had gone through 31 reprintings by 1916. And the last *Tachikawa bunko* issued in 1927 was the 80th reprint of "Sanada Daisuke" which was published in 1915. Adachi Ken'ichi, 86, 120-21, 134, 140 and 152.

80 Adachi Ken'ichi, 10 and 72.

81 Tsurumi Shunsuke, 30.

82 Adachi Ken'ichi, 10 and 104. In the late Meiji period, the standard price of a *kôdan* book was 25 to 30 sen. The fee to borrow one of these books from a book lending shop for five days was from 3 to 5 sen. So the "trade-in" price of 3 sen made it as affordable to own a *Tachikawa bunko* as it was to borrow a *kôdan* book. Adachi Ken'ichi, 44-45.
Musashi. As historical figures, they were also the protagonists of many of the *kōdan* manuscripts produced by Kyokujūsai and the Yamada family writing team, leading to speculation that the first ten titles in the *Tachikawa bunko* series were drawn in large part from *kaki-kōdan* produced earlier." However, Otetsu and Kyokujūsai seem to have made a conscious effort to distinguish *Tachikawa bunko* narratives stylistically. Adachi Ken’ichi points out several ways in which *Tachikawa bunko* narratives differ from *kōdan.* For example, a number of conventions and plot devices used in *kōdan* are not employed. *Tachikawa bunko* narratives, Adachi asserts, contain no chivalrous heroes (*kyōkaku*) who defend the oppressed lower classes, no noble thieves and no women bandits. Also, they contain no eroticism; the narratives were aimed at a juvenile readership, after all. Adachi observes, moreover, that many *Tachikawa bunko* narratives are framed by a journey (*manyū*). While not a common device in *kōdan*, the journey is certainly a familiar motif in Edo-era popular fiction, from the Chinese novel *Xi youji* (The Journey to the West, translated into Japanese in the early 1800s) to Jippensha Ikku’s (1765-1831) *Tōkaidō-chū hizakurige* (Shanks’ mare along the Tōkaidō, 1802-22) to Takizawa Bakin’s *Nansō Satomi hakkenden.* The *manyū* feature may be discerned in popular historical fiction even today.

Adachi also notes that the heroes of *Tachikawa bunko* narratives oppose authority. They stand alone before a superior opponent, usually an enemy affiliated with the Tokugawa Bakufu. Invariably, the heroes are triumphant,
eliminating or at least humiliating the enemy. While one might be tempted to read an anti-establishment subtext into such a plot device, it must be remembered that Tachikawa bunko narratives are aimed at juvenile readers. An anti-establishment message would likely be lost on the target audience. On the contrary, based on Adachi’s observation that it is generally the Tokugawa Bakufu that Tachikawa bunko heroes oppose, one would assume that the narratives legitimize the ruling hegemony as the modern and progressive antithesis of feudal and corrupt Bakufu. However, given the way in which Kyokujûsai and Otetsu aggressively promoted their scheme, it seems likely that their creation of Tachikawa bunko was motivated by economic rather than by political considerations.

Another feature which characterized Tachikawa bunko narratives after 1913 was the contest of magical “ninja” powers (ninjutsu kurabe). From the early Edo period, ninja (those trained in espionage and concealment) had been portrayed as malevolent workers of evil in kôdan, kabuki, novels and other popular arts. According to the conventional plot, the ninja’s knowledge of magic enabled him to become invisible, to fly, and to transform himself. But the magic invariably corrupted him. When the ninja began to use his magical powers for evil, the righteous hero appeared to vanquish him. The Tachikawa bunko ninja were different, however. They were good and faithfully served the righteous heroes. There were also exceptions, but majority were good.”

Whenever two ninja met, a ninjutsu kurabe ensued. Both ninja might make themselves invisible or transform themselves into animals or might fly into the sky and start hurling...
small daggers (*shuriken*) at each other. If both ninja were righteous, the contest ended amicably and the two became allies with the “loser” becoming the disciple of the winner. If one of the ninja was evil, he invariably lost the *ninjutsu kurabe* and was killed or at least endured the ridicule of the victor. Several of the most successful *Tachikawa bunko* titles involved both the *ninjutsu kurabe* theme and the journey theme, thus harking back to a formula successfully employed by the sixteenth-century Chinese writer Wu Cheng-en in his popular novel *The Journey to the West*. In this novel, the Tang monk Xuan-zang and his three supernatural disciples—the stone monkey Sun Wu-kong, the pig monster Zhu Wu-neng, and the river monster Sha Wu-jing—journey from China to India to bring back the Mahayana Buddhist scriptures. The four characters have many adventures during the journey to the west, including contests of magical prowess with the various monsters and dragons they encounter. *The Journey to the West* was popular with Japanese readers during the late Edo period and was still widely read in the Taishō era. It was reportedly one of Yamada Otetsu’s favorite novels.\(^6\)

The first ninja to appear in the *Tachikawa bunko* series was Sarutobi Sasuke, who was introduced in the 40th title, *Sarutobi Sasuke*, some time in 1913. He was perhaps the most popular character to emerge from *Tachikawa bunko*. In fact, the popularity of the first *Sarutobi Sasuke* title led to several sequels, as well as cinematic versions of his exploits.\(^7\) It may be said that Sarutobi Sasuke helped launch

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\(^6\) Adachi Ken'ichi, 101.

\(^7\) Sarutobi Sasuke was either the protagonist or a major character in seven titles (#40, 55, 93, 103, 108, 119 and 125). Between 1914 and 1922, filmmaker Makino Shōzō made 31 ninja films, 8 of which dealt either with Sarutobi Sasuke or his cohort Kirigakure Saizō or their exploits together. Makino also made other films based on *Tachikawa bunko* heroes, including 5 in 1912 alone. Adachi Ken'ichi, 109 and 128-29.
the "ninja boom" which swept Japan from 1913 to about 1920.

Although Sarutobi Sasuke was a completely fictional character, his adventures were peopled with historical figures. For example, the real life Osaka samurai Sanada Kōson first "discovers" Sasuke in the mountains of the province of Shinano (present day Nagano Prefecture). Sasuke spends his time leaping in the trees and playing with monkeys. Seeing this, Kōson dubs him "Sarutobi" Sasuke, or "Leaps-Like-A-Monkey" Sasuke. As the narrative unfolds, the reader learns that Sasuke learned ninjutsu from a mountain ascetic. When the two first meet, Sasuke uses his special powers to make fun of Kōson, who does not know the art of the ninja, but possesses great physical and spiritual strength. When Kōson causes a monkey friend of Sasuke's to fall from a tree merely by glaring at it, Sasuke is deeply impressed and swears his undying allegiance." Although not a ninjutsu kurabe in the strictest sense, we see in this story the pattern typifying the ninjutsu kurabe between two heroic figures: the more righteous of the two heroes wins the contest, and then the loser becoming disciple (or in this case, retainer) of the victor.

Sarutobi Sasuke also included two full-fledged ninjutsu kurabe. The first pits Sasuke against the evil Ishikawa Goemon, a powerful ninja from Iga (present-day Mie Prefecture), who actually appears in setsuwa, kabuki and puppet plays beginning in the early Edo period." The second is a contest with another righteous ninja, Kirigakure Saizō. True to form, after losing the contest, Saizō, a fictional character, joins Sasuke as a retainer to Sanada Kōson. The

**Adachi Ken'ichi, 91, 102 and 182.**

**Adachi Ken'ichi, 92-93.**
three of them then travel through the provinces finding
adventure and excitement."

The popularity of Tachikawa bunko among children throughout Japan during the Taishō period shows that the scheme of Yamada Otetsu and Tamada Kyokujūsai was well conceived and well executed. Not only Osaka shop boys, but primary school and middle school students nationwide bought Tachikawa bunko. At the height of the series’ popularity (from about 1913 to 1916), orders for old and new titles came pouring into Tachikawa Bunmeidō, and there were never any cancellations or returns. One merchant who operated a stall at an Osaka “night market” recalled that around this time Tachikawa bunko was a best seller for him. As students and shop boys milled around his stall, the books seemed to fly off the shelf. He would easily sell 100 copies in one evening, clearing a profit of 8 yen—this at a time when the average person’s daily living expenses amounted to 15 sen."

Many adults who grew up during the Taishō period have fond memories of reading Tachikawa bunko. Of the twenty writers whom Nakano Yoshio interviewed for his 1955 book, Gendai no sakka, seven said they read Tachikawa bunko voraciously during their childhood. The seven included such luminary literary figures as Kawabata Yasunari, Ōoka Shohei, Nakano Shigeharu, Takami Jun and Niwa Fumio. “Generally, for people of our generation, Tachikawa bunko was the first literature we had which actually seemed like literature,” recalls Niwa Fumio. He goes on to confess that as an

**Kingakure Saizō** was another of the more popular characters to emerge from Tachikawa bunko. Adachi Ken’ichi, 95 and 101.

Adachi Ken’ichi, 104-05 and 115.

Adachi Ken’ichi, 10.
elementary school student, he would read Tachikawa bunko between class periods. Moreover, on the day of the middle school entrance examination he became so absorbed in reading a Tachikawa bunko that he had trouble concentrating and nearly failed the exam."

Although aimed primarily at young boys, Tachikawa bunko also appealed to young girls, as evidenced by Kôda Aya's comments in an essays from her 1956 collection Chigiregumo (Scattered clouds). She recalls how she read Tachikawa bunko furtively for fear that her father, Kôda Rohan, would disapprove.

One day, around the time I was in the upper form of elementary school, my father saw me reading something called Tachikawa bunko. Heaving a great sigh he said "You enjoy reading such rot!" Then he forbade me from reading it. After that, I read the books in secret.

The well side is quite an important place for a child. For no matter which direction her father approaches from, she can easily see him and can readily make her escape. Thus, completely confident in what I thought was a position of strategic advantage, I relaxed by the well, and my eyes began to devour my copy of Sarutobi Sasuke. Suddenly, a hand appeared and plucked it away from me. Startled, I looked up to see father's back as he headed with great purpose toward the entryway of our house. All was quiet.

As it came time for supper, during which I would have to face father, no matter how disagreeable that was, I went with trepidation to his study to spy on his mood. To my surprise, there he sat reading Sarutobi Sasuke.

"This stuff is complete nonsense, but it sure is fun!" was his evaluation. Then, assuming the singular tone of a storyteller, he added "That which we call the Art of Concealment begins with walking...." In the next moment he said, "Come on, you try it," and he had me walk along the border of the tatami mats. Presently, urged on by his shouts of "Faster! Faster!" I was scurrying about the tatami like a mouse until I was completely worn out. I didn't know what to make of this chaotic commotion, but in listening to father's explanation afterwards, I understood that this had been my initial training in the Arts of Concealment. I had been taught how to walk a straight line, how to turn at right angles, how to cut corners and how to leap diagonally. I don't know whether father observed in me a lack of aptitude

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Adachi Ken'ichi, 10-11.
for these Arts, but this was the only practical training I ever received."

As the recollections of Niwa Fumio and Kôda Aya suggest, children found *Tachikawa bunko* extremely engrossing, particularly those devoted to the adventures of ninja. Although the stories were "complete nonsense," children around the country loved reading about Sarutobi Sasuke and Kirigakure Saizô making themselves invisible, flying over walls and turning into animals by reciting special incantations. And the *ninjutsu* fervor only intensified with the introduction of cinematic versions of *Tachikawa bunko* heroes. Seeing the exploits of the righteous ninja on the screen, many children tried to imitate them. In fact, not a few children were injured when they tried to fly from high places after reciting the incantations used by the on-screen ninja."

Like all fads, the *ninjutsu* boom eventually began to subside. Around 1918, having run out of fresh ideas and lacking the enthusiasm to rehash old plots, Kyokujûsai and the Yamada family of writers stopped writing for *Tachikawa bunko.* The publisher, Tatsukawa Kumajirô, had lost interest in the series as early as 1917. Then in 1919, Kyokujûsai died of cholera, and the Yamada family writing team disbanded. Reprints of *Tachikawa bunko* continued to be issued until 1927. The offices of *Tachikawa Bunmeidô* were completely destroyed in a bombing raid on Osaka in the spring of 1945.


**Makino Shôzô, feeling some responsibility for these incidents, publically announced in 1916 that he would stop making *ninjutsu* movies. However, cinema house owners joined together and pressured Makino to reconsider. He continued making *ninjutsu* movies until 1922 by which time the boom had ended. Adachi Ken'ichi, 128-29.

**Adachi Ken'ichi, 134-35.
All the plates for the reprinting of *Tachikawa bunko* were lost in the conflagration.

2.4 Conclusion

The burgeoning of the publishing industry during the Meiji period was stimulated by the government’s emphasis on “civilization and enlightenment,” and the perception that one manifestation of civilization was literacy. As literacy rates and newspaper and magazine circulation grew, publishers looked for ways to satisfy the appetite for print among newly acquired (i.e., newly literate) popular readers. Looking for content that would simultaneously entertain new readers and reinforce the ethics that would make them productive subjects of the Emperor, publishers turned to the vaudeville halls, particularly to the *kôdan* which were rich in morality and in entertainment value. *Kôdan* transcriptions were soon being serialized in newspapers, magazines and issued as books. While the vernacular style of *yoseba* narratives is credited with contributing significantly to the “unification of spoken and written Japanese” (*genbun-itchi*),” by the late Meiji period, readers began to long for fresher approaches to familiar subject matter.

Around this time a number of developments occurred which indicate that some writers and publishers were attuned to the desires of their readership. Writers who discerned the public’s changing tastes introduced new themes and fresh perspectives to old material, while continuing to rely on proven formulas in their writing. Two examples of this approach to literary production are *Kôdansha’s shinkôdan* and

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See Maeda Ai, *Kindai dokusha no seiritsu*, 141; Tsurumi Shunsuke, 65; Adachi Ken’ichi, 30; Morioka and Sasaki, 255.

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Tachikawa Bunmeidô’s Tachikawa bunko. The latter inspired a ninjutsu boom which swept the country during the Taishô period and even exerted an influence on an emerging media still in its infancy: cinema.

We see in these two literary manifestations characteristics which clearly identify them as the progenitors of jidai shôsetsu. First there is the combination of formula and innovation. Jidai shôsetsu rely on the conventions developed in the popular arts during the Edo era, but at the same time incorporate themes and character types which are distinctly original. Thus, Nakazato Kaizan introduces the nihilistic anti-hero Tsukue Ryûnosuke in a tale of vengeance that follows established formulas. Within the confines of jidai shôsetsu’s feudal morality, Osaragi Jirô introduces Kurama Tengu, a hero who embodies democratic values. Like the Yamada family writers, the jidai shôsetsu writer is not afraid to reinvent and update historically based characters or, if need be, to create fantastic (and often anachronistic) new heroes. Thus, Yoshikawa Eiji creates an image of the historical figure Miyamoto Musashi which bears little resemblance to the received image, but which embodies traits essential to life in contemporary (that is, early Shôwa) society: perseverance, self-sacrifice, and Emperor worship.

The issues surrounding the incorporation of contemporary import in jidai shôsetsu requires special consideration. Does the writer of popular historical fiction reflect current trends in his narrative merely to entertain a contemporary audience? Or is his goal to make history accessible to modern readers in order to educate them about their cultural (and
moral) heritage? Does a lone hero opposed to authority (a thematic innovation of the Tachikawa bunko which was subsequently adopted by a number of jidai shōsetsu writers) function simply as a device to elicit sympathy from harassed workers or students among the readership, or is pointed criticism of the hegemonic order also implied? These are questions to be addressed in subsequent chapters. Next we will examine the jidai shōsetsu of three major writers in the genre.
CHAPTER 3

THE UNIVERSALITY OF DAIBOSATSU TÔGE: OF NIHILISM AND HUMANITARIANISM

Though I err in my pursuit of literature, yet my intent is for the good of the public.

Nakazato Kaizan

Critical examinations of taishû bungaku and its beginnings in the Taishô period invariably include a discussion of Nakazato Kaizan’s long serial novel Daibosatsu tôge (The Great Bodhisattva Pass, 1913-41). Indeed, this early work of popular historical fiction drew favorable comment from Kaizan’s contemporaries because of its originality, and it has continued to influence jidai shôsetsu writers to the present. Generally speaking, critics and literary historians accord Kaizan the status of “the pioneer writer of mass literature” (taishû bungaku no senkuteki sakusha).¹

Ironically enough, Kaizan disliked having Daibosatsu tôge referred to as taishû bungaku. He was of the opinion that the appeal to a wide readership was one of the principal requisites of good literature. Kaizan was certainly confident that Daibosatsu tôge was “good literature.” In fact, he was so confident that he declared in 1934 that, like Ozaki Kôyô and Natsume Sôseki, he would still be widely read one hundred

¹Ozaki Hôtsuki, Nakazato Kaizan: kokô no shisakusha (Nakazato Kaizan: proud and lonely thinker) (Tokyo: Keisô Shôbô, 1980), 2. Similarly, Matsumura Tomomi declares that Daibosatsu tôge is the progenitor of all mass literature, the source from which taishû bungaku has sprung. Matsumura Tomomi, “Nega toshite no ‘Edo,” 178-79.
years after his death. Kaizan’s distaste for the term taishū bungaku derived from its connotation of a literature which, its entertainment value notwithstanding, was considered to be virtually devoid of literary merit. At the same time, Kaizan believed that the junbungaku/taishū bungaku paradigm had been created by the publishing industry. Furthermore, he felt that intellectuals and members of the literary establishment had naively adopted and propogated the paradigm without anyone being able to clearly articulate the difference between pure and mass literature. In Kaizan’s view, a work of literature should be judged by its ability to attract readers. He makes this clear in the preface to the 1928 edition of the seventh volume of Daibosatsu tôge.

If Daibosatsu tôge is not what is commonly called “pure literature,” neither is it “mass literature.” Now naturally, fiction is neither science, nor philosophy. Thus, if a novel does not have the power to capture a large majority [of readers], then it lacks the first qualification for its own existence.

The multiplicity of themes Kaizan explores in the novel, as well as the variety of characters and their relative complexity, imbue Daibosatsu tôge with the diversity which Matsumura Tomomi suggests is “mass literature’s reflection of the spirit of the masses.” Despite Kaizan’s discomfort with the label taishū bungaku, and his sporadic attempts to transcend the conventions of jidai shôsetsu by investing characters with conflicting and sometimes heterodox moral

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2 Nakazato Kaizan, “Sôsaku oyobi chosakkon to wa nani zo ya” (What are ‘original writing’ and an ‘author’s rights?’) in Nakazato Kaizan zenshû (Collected works of Nakazato Kaizan, hereafter listed as NKZ), vol. 20 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobô, 1970), 335-36.
3 Nakazato Kaizan, “Yo wa taishû sakka ni arazu” (I am not a ‘popular’ writer), NKZ, vol. 20, 166. This essay was originally published in 1934.
5 Matsumura Tomomi, 186.
values, the fact is that more often than not he relied on the formulas of popular literature. In fact, it was his familiarity with the conventions of popular historical fiction, coupled with an astute awareness of the experiences of the average reader, which enabled Kaizan to occasionally go beyond the boundaries of formulaic representation. His most significant contribution to taishū bungaku, the introduction and definition of the nihilistic anti-hero, is one clear example. His protagonist Tsukue Ryūnosuke is regarded by literary historians as both a reflection of an atmosphere of despair that enveloped many during the Taishō period and the prototype for the nihilistic swordsman which writers of jidai shōsetsu continue to follow to this day. However, it was his masterful application of the formulas of popular literature—the violent swordplay, the improbable coincidences, the eroticism—that enabled him to “capture a large majority of readers” with Daibosatsu tōge.

Nevertheless, Kaizan did not consider himself a popular writer. Rather than using the term taishū bungaku, which he regarded as meaningless in a literary sense, he preferred to call Daibosatsu tōge “greater vehicle fiction” (daijō shōsetsu) or “synthesis fiction” (sōgō shōsetsu) for the way in which the narrative synthesizes all aspects of human existence. The term “greater vehicle fiction” was derived from Kaizan’s interest in the Mahayana school of Buddhism.

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7 Ozaki Hotsuki, Taishū bungaku no rakishi, vol. 1, 54.
(daijô bukkyô), which is mass, evangelical and institutional Buddhism. The term also implies the religious themes which Kaizan wove into Daibosatsu tôge. As he had stated earlier in the brief preface to the first volume, penned at the time of the novel’s first commercial reprinting in 1921, his objective in writing Daibosatsu tôge was to “reproduce the image of a mandala of karma permeating all aspects of human society.” Moreover, in the first of a series of lectures he gave in 1927, Kaizan reiterated his desire to depict the forces of destiny which shape all events.

If we look at each individual character or each separate event depicted within this novel as independent entities, then they mean nothing. But my ideal lies in their synthesis, at which point they come to possess a definite design. What exactly do I mean? For example, suppose certain events involving a certain character, let’s say Ryûnosuke, proceed in a certain way. If we regard them to mean that in the end Ryûnosuke will kill himself, or be killed, then the novel is over. But that is not to be the case. Or again, I may bring a love affair into play. But that does not mean that it will end in a marriage or a disappointment in love.

Thus, what I am trying to depict is the destiny (gosô [業相]) which flows behind every event and every character. Now the Hindu word for this force of destiny is karma. It is this karma which I’m attempting to portray.... I bring forward people whose every word, every phrase, every act and every movement is governed by karma. I depict the karma that lurks behind their outward humanity, focusing on the ordinary human characteristics visible on the surface.

This overarching theme of karmic cause and effect is apparent in the recurring coincidences, chance meetings and

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6 Nakazato Kaizan, Daibosatsu tôge 1: kôgen ittô ryû (Tokyo: Fujimi Shobô, 1981), 6. Although the preface was not included in the volumes which Kaizan printed privately in 1918, it has been included in every reprint since 1921. See Hashimoto Mineo, “Daibosatsu tôge ron” (On Daibosatsu tôge) in Kuwabara Takeo, ed., Bungaku riron no kenkyû (Research on literary theory) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1969), 249. The phrase “mandala of karma” is an allusion to the elaborate paintings of the cosmos (mandalas) used in the worship of esoteric Buddhism. Kaizan conceives of Daibosatsu tôge as a “mandala” depicting the pervasiveness of karma in human affairs. See Terada Hiroshi, 156.

6 Nakazato Kaizan, “Shôsetsu Daibosatsu tôge ni tsuite” (Regarding the novel Daibosatsu tôge), a lecture delivered November 26, 1927 at the Aoyama Assembly Hall in Tokyo as the first of the Daibosatsu tôge lectures sponsored by the Tokyo nichinichi shinbun. Ozaki Hotsuki, Taishû bungaku rekishi vol. 1, 52.
episodes of inevitable retribution which drive the plot of Daibosatsu tôge. The good deeds committed by the virtuous characters are recompensed in kind, while the evil deeds committed by others inevitably result in severe retribution. A number of characters express their resignation toward inescapable karma, most notably the young woman Omatsu, who patiently endures repeated misfortune. Kaizan’s “greater vehicle fiction” also incorporates other Buddhist themes: the impermanence of all things (mujōkan); the certainty of death and suffering in this world; and the possibility of escape from the cycle of death and suffering through the intervention of a bodhisattva or Buddha. There is evidence, however, that Kaizan did not conceive of Daibosatsu tôge in terms of these overtly religious themes until 1921, after he had already completed nearly half of the novel’s forty-one volumes. In fact, textual evidence in volumes one and three of the novel suggests that he may not have intended originally for Daibosatsu tôge to run any longer than four or five volumes, and that he had no grand religious design.

In a passage from the first volume, “Kōgen Ittō Fencing Style” (Kōgen ittō ryū), Kaizan indicates in advance that one of the main characters, the chivalrous thief, Shichibei, will be apprehended by the authorities. When Shichibei’s arrest does not occur in volume 1, the reader assumes it will be depicted in a subsequent volume. Once again in volume 3, or Mibu and Shimabara (Mibu to Shimabara), Kaizan states specifically that Shichibei will be killed as the narrative

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10. *Daibosatsu tôge 1: Kōgen ittō ryū*, 78. As originally published by Shunjūsha, Daibosatsu tôge ran to 41 volumes. However, I have used the 1961 Fujimi Shobō edition which condenses the novel into 20 volumes. For purposes of clarity, I include page and volume numbers of the Fujimi Shobō edition, as well as the original titles from the Shunjūsha edition.
progresses. Still, this does not happen in *Mibu to Shimabara*, and the reader naturally anticipates that Shichibei’s death will occur in a subsequent volume. One might interpret these false scents as a mere device employed by Kaizan to maintain readers’ interest in his serial novel and perhaps to encourage them to subscribe to the newspaper carrying *Daibosatsu tōge* at the time, the *Miyako shinbun*. However, in comments appended to the final installment of volume 3 (carried in the December 5, 1914 issue of *Miyako shinbun*), Kaizan gives his readers a preview of what they can expect in volume 4. This preview outlines several important plot developments, including the death of the protagonist, Tsukue Ryūnosuke, thus implying that he will wrap up his story and bring the novel to a conclusion.

Our tale has not yet reached an adequate conclusion, nor am I going to set aside the pen just yet. At this point in the narrative, Ryūnosuke joins the (imperialist) revolt at Totsukawa and fights against government troops. Due to smoke and ash from an explosion, he loses sight in both eyes. Leaning on a stick, he staggers eastward and with great difficulty returns to his home in Musashi. There he cradles in his arms his infant son, Ikutarō, whose face he cannot see, and reminisces about his own father, Danjō, who had passed away during Ryūnosuke’s absence. But then Byoma appears to settle his vendetta. Together Byoma and Ryūnosuke climb Mount Mitake, and there they face each other with swords drawn.... In the end Ryūnosuke dies by Byoma’s hand. Meanwhile, the longstanding emotional void existing between Shichibei and Yohachi is be filled. Much more remains to be told concerning developments with Omatsu, Ikutarō and others. Both friend and enemy return to the Great Bodhisattva Pass and if we were to go on writing with the momentum of these events, hundreds or perhaps even thousands of additional installments may be necessary."

In the installments published after this preview, Tsukue

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11 *Daibosatsu tōge 1: Mibu to Shimabara*, 265.
12 Hashimoto Mineo, 248. This same preview is cited in Hijikata Masami, *Miyako shinbunshi*, 223. The *Mibu to Shimabara* volume as it exists today was originally part of the second volume, "Mt. Suzuki" (*Suzukayama*), when *Daibosatsu tōge* was serialized in *Miyako shinbun*. When Kaizan revised the novel for publication in 1921, *Mibu to Shimabara* became a separate volume.
Ryūnosuke does indeed join forces with the Imperial Loyalist rebels, fights at Totsukawa and loses his eyesight in an explosion. But he does not return to his hometown. Nor is he reunited with his infant son. He does not fight a duel with Hyoma, and he is not killed. In fact, Ryūnosuke is still very much alive at the conclusion of the final volume of the novel published in 1941. Moreover, he and Hyoma never meet to settle their dispute. And although the character Shichibei does eventually discover that the infant son he abandoned eighteen years earlier is now the grown man Yohachi, the tearful reunion between these two characters does not occur until volume 27, published in 1928. Hence, contrary to statements in volumes 1 and 3 that foreshadow Shichibei’s capture and death, Shichibei is still alive at the close of the final installment of the serial.

What is the significance of all these false leads? Do they serve to prove that Kaizan’s conception of Daibosatsu tôge continued to evolve even as he was writing? His vision of the narrative as “fiction of the greater vehicle” seems to have crystalized with the serial novel’s first publication as a book in 1921. In preparation for publication, Kaizan made revisions to the early installments and attached to volume 1 the brief preface mentioned above. This preface was the first time Kaizan had stated his intention to depict “a mandala of karma permeating all aspects of human society” despite the fact that the novel had been in serialization since 1913. Certainly the theme of karmic retribution is apparent in the early installments. Why does Kaizan wait until 1921 to articulate it as the central symbol of the work? Why does he want critics to regard Daibosatsu tôge as daijō shōsetsu
rather than taishû bungaku?

Let us step back and reconsider Kaizan’s conception of Daibosatsu tôge before 1921. The later daijô shôsetsu rhetoric obscures the fact that a tone of gloomy fatalism and despair pervaded this tale of revenge and betrayal from its first installment, and it was precisely this “darkness” which had appealed to so many readers. It is as though Kaizan belatedly discovers the attraction of his own work when he returns to revise it in 1921. The fatalistic tone supports the religious themes of retribution and impermanence which Kaizan emphasized in his revision of the novel’s early installments. But more importantly for the present discussion, this darkness mirrors the despair which Kaizan and other progressive Christian socialist thinkers felt in the early Taishô.

Kaizan began serializing Daibosatsu tôge in September 1913, two years after the execution of Kôtoku Shûsui and eleven other socialists in the High Treason Incident. Kaizan was well acquainted with Kôtoku, he had regularly contributed articles and poems to his newspaper, Heimin shinbun, and he had participated in a coterie sponsored by Kôtoku’s publishing company, Heiminsha. Although Kaizan’s tendencies toward Christian socialism and humanitarianism eventually led him to dissociate himself from Kôtoku and his anarcho-syndicalism, he continued to admire Kôtoku, and he was deeply saddened by news of his arrest. Like many Japanese socialists, he began to despair of ever seeing social reform after the government made a moral lesson out of Kôtoku and executed him. It may be supposed that the outlet for his despair was the serial fiction he wrote for the Miyako
Three of the historical novels Kaizan serialized in Miyako shinbun prior to Daibosatsu tōge—Kōri no hana (Flowers from ice, 1909), Kōya no gijin (The martyr of Mt Koya, 1910), and Shimabara-jō (Shimabara castle, 1911)—are "socialist" in sympathy and have plot lines in which oppressed people rise in rebellion against the forces subjugating them. Unlike these novels, Daibosatsu tōge does not adopt the popular struggle against abusive authoritarian power as its main theme. Rather, it captures the spirit of rebellion in the violence and nihilism of its characters, particularly the protagonist, Tsukue Ryūnosuke, who operates independently of the prevailing social and moral codes. In the course of Daibosatsu tōge’s forty-one volumes, Kaizan incorporates a number of other subtexts as well, but for purposes of discussion here, I will concentrate on recurring theme of nihilistic behavior, especially in the volumes written between 1913 and 1921.

3.1 Nakazato Kaizan’s background

Nakazato Kaizan was born April 4, 1885 in rural Hamura, a mountain village on the Tama River (Tamagawa) in Kanagawa Prefecture, the third of eight children born to Nakazato Yajūro and his wife Hana.13 Kaizan’s given name was Yanosuke. At the time of his birth, Kaizan’s family derived income from the produce grown in their fields and from a rice mill which his father operated. However, falling prices of agricultural products and increased taxes on land owners resulting from the Matsukata deflationary fiscal policy of the Meiji

13 The area is now known as Hamura-chō and is part of metropolitan Tokyo’s Nishitama county region.
government badly strained the family’s finances. These difficulties were compounded by the eventual collapse of the rice mill venture and his father’s drinking and gambling. When Kaizen was still quite young, his father lost the family’s agricultural land through his wagering on shōgi matches.

The Nakazato family’s deteriorating economic situation took a heavy toll on Kaizen’s father. Frustrated over his inability to improve his fortunes he became nervous and irritable to the point where he began venting his frustrations on his wife. Kaizen came to hate his father for abusing his mother, though the relations between father and son were never warm. When Kaizen was eight, the entire family moved in with Kaizen’s mother’s parents in Yokosuka, where they eked out a living operating a general store. But this venture also failed within two years, and the family returned to Hamura. Shortly thereafter Kaizen’s father suffered a stroke, leaving Hana to raise the children and provide for their needs singlehandedly, while nursing her fragile but irascible husband. The grinding poverty of his home life and the disfunctional relations of his parents fostered a pessimistic outlook in the young Kaizen. However, he found some relief from the oppressive melancholy of home life through his education.

Kaizen attended Nishitama Elementary School in Hamura, whose headmaster, Sassa Shigeru, was a former samurai from the Kaga domain. Young Kaizen was an eager, diligent student. Upon finishing the regular four year course of “practical studies” (jitsugaku), he entered the advanced course and
studied for an additional three years. During this period, he boarded with the Sassa family and in return for helping with household chores, was granted access to the headmaster's private library. It was during this time that Kaizan began his study of literature. He read the Chinese classics, as well as those of Japanese literature. In addition, he avidly read youth magazines such as Shōkokumin (Young citizen), Shōnen‘en (A children's garden) and Shōnen sekai (Boy's world), as well as Taiyō (Sun), a popular magazines aimed at adults. He began contributing "new style verse" (shintaishi) to the youth magazines, and in 1897 published his first poem in Shōkokumin at the age of twelve.\(^4\)

Having completed his primary education in 1898, Kaizan turned to helping with the family's finances. In July 1899, he began training in Tokyo for a position as a switchboard operator. During his training he boarded in Hamamatsu-chō, an area that was home to impoverished day laborers and recent migrants, and he worked in the district of Shinbashi, famous for its restaurants and houses of assignation. The disparity between prosperous city dwellers and the misery of the urban poor awakened the fifteen-year-old to the contradictions inherent in Japan's emerging capitalist society. This awareness, together with his own experience of economic hardship in rural Hamura, led Kaizan to explore Christianity and its missionary concern with the plight of society's disadvantaged. Having completed his switchboard training,

\(^4\)Two of his four years of jitsugaku were spent attending the elementary school near his mother's parents home in Yokosuka. However, it was his schooling in Hamura and his great respect for the dignified ex-samurai headmaster that had a lasting impact on Kaizan. See Nakazato Kaizan: kokō no shisakusha, 9-10.

\(^5\)Ozaki Hotsuki, ed., Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō, bessatsu: Daibosatsu tōge (special issue of Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō devoted exclusively to Daibosatsu tōge) (Jan. 1994), 300.
Kaizan began work as an operator in November 1899. During this period he also found time to study English in Kanda and to read the newspapers posted outside various publishing companies. In particular, he enjoyed Kuroiwa Ruikô's translations of Western detective novels which were serialized in the *Yorozu chôhô.*

After early 1900, however, only women were allowed to serve as telephone operators, and Kaizan and his male colleagues were dismissed from their positions. Kaizan returned to Hamura and took up a position as a substitute teacher at his alma mater, Nishitama Elementary School. Soon he began preparing to become a full time teacher. In 1902, he passed the accreditation exam in six subjects, an accomplishment in which he took some pride. Having earned his teaching credential, he began working as a full time instructor and took up residence in the teacher’s dormitory. Also living in the dormitory at the time was Kubokawa Kiseko, a woman of eight years his senior and a devout Christian. Kaizan was drawn to Kiseko (they shared a “platonic love” according to the critic Itô Kazuya) and as their friendship grew, so did Kaizan’s interest in Christianity. He regularly attended the church in the neighboring town of Aoume, and he

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8 Kuroiwa Ruikô (a.k.a. Shûroku, 1862-1920) was an extremely prolific translator and writer of detective fiction (*tantei shôsetsu*), who worked at a number of newspapers, including *Miyako shinbun* where Kaizan began his literary career. Ruikô founded his own paper, *Yorozu chôhô*, in 1892. In addition to sensational reportage and serialized detective fiction, the newspaper included regular contributions by the Christian thinker Uchimura Kanzô and editorials by socialists Kôtoku Shôsui and Sakai Toshihiko.

17 *Nakazato Kaizan: kokô no shisakusha*, 236. In his personal chronology of the major events of his life (entitled *Jika nenpyô* [My chronology] and reprinted in Ozaki Hotsuki’s book referenced here), Kaizan notes the amazement of his colleagues upon learning of his “extraordinary feat.” He had passed his exam in the fields of moral science, national language, Japanese history, geography, arithmetic and science, and was thus accredited to teach all these subjects in less than six months. His accreditation to teach gym classes came the following year.

18 Itô Kazuya, “Nakazato Kaizan to josei” (Nakazato Kaizan and women), in *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshô, bessatsu: Daibosatsu tûge*, 120.
associated with other Christians in the region. He also participated in the planning of a church for Hamura. However, Kaizan was not especially interested in worship. It was Christianity’s emphasis on helping society’s poor and downtrodden that appealed to Kaizan. Like many Japanese intellectuals and writers of the time (Ôsugi Sakae, Arahata Kanson, Kitamura Tôhoku, Shimazaki Tôson, Tayama Katai), Kaizan was drawn first to Christianity then to socialism. His associations with Hamura and Aoume Christians prompted him to begin investigating socialism in November 1902.

In early May 1903, Kaizan was reassigned to the elementary school in the town of Itsukaichi in Nishitama County. He did not like the new posting, however, and resigned before the month was out. In July he returned to Tokyo and took up a position as an elementary school substitute teacher. This move appears to have been motivated by his desire to associate with progressive thinkers in the capital and to learn more about and even participate in the socialist movement. Like many of his peers, Kaizan launched himself into the publishing world by contributing translations, essays and poetry to magazines and newspapers. In Kaizan’s case, the majority of his contributions went to the weekly socialist newspaper Heimin shinbun, founded by the prominent socialists Kôtoku Shûsui and Sakai Toshihiko.

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19 Isogai Katsutarô, “Nakazato Kaizan to kirisutokyô—Uchimura Kanzô” (Nakazato Kaizan and Christianity/Uchimura Kanzô), in Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshô, bessatsu: Daibosatsu tôge, 59-60. Isogai points out that Kaizan once expressed his displeasure with having to “sit next to housewives and sing strange songs” at church services. He much preferred listening to the speakers, including the socialist Nishikawa Kôichirô, who came from Tokyo to address the Aoume congregation.


21 Isogai Katsutarô suggests that Kaizan was transferred because Nishitama County Board of Education officials disapproved of his role in inviting socialists to address the Hamura Christians. See Isogai Katsutarô, “Nakazato Kaizan to kirisutokyô—Uchimura Kanzô,” 59.

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Kaizan had been a devoted fan of Kôtoku and Sakai from the
time they worked at Kuroiwa Ruikō's Yorozu chōhō. However,
when Ruikō abruptly reversed his opposition to a war with
Russia in early October 1903, he fired Kôtoku and Sakai. They
founded The People's Society (Heiminsha), whose members
included noted Christian socialists such as Abe Isoo,
Kinoshita Naoe and Ishikawa Sanshirō, and began publishing
the Heimin shinbun in November 1903.

Kaizan began
contribute shortly after the paper began publication.

His earliest contribution was a translation of the first
chapter of Victor Hugo's romantic novel Les Miserables which
he entered in a fiction contest the newspaper sponsored in
December 1903. Kaizan also submitted letters to the editor
and short essays, including a piece submitted in February
1904 in response to a Heimin shinbun questionnaire soliciting
readers' reasons for advocating socialism. In the short
essay, entitled Yo wa ika ni shite shakai shugiya to narishi
ya (“How did I become a socialist?”) the nineteen-year-old
Kaizan lists four main factors that motivated him to embrace
socialism.

1. I realized from an early age that I possessed a
type of genius. Yet because of economic hardships, am I to
remain forever unable to study as I have hoped to? I have

Fred Nottehoffer, Kôtoku Shûsui: Portrait of a Japanese Radical (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge
University Press, 1971), 94-95; Shumpei Okamoto, The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-

Kiyohara Yasumasa, "Nakazato Kaizan to shakai shugi,“ (Nakazato Kaizan and socialism) in
Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshô, bessatsu: Daibosatsu tôge, 73.

As Kaizan did not know French, his translation of this segment from Les Miserables was
probably based on an English translation. In his "Jika nenpyô" Kaizan recorded reading Charles
Wiltzur's English translation of Les Miserables in its entirety between 1906 and 1907. Kaizan had
begun studying English upon moving to Tokyo in 1899, and it is likely that his early exposure to
Western literature and ideas came in large part through English translations. Yanagi Tomiko points
out that several of the reference books in Kaizan's library on Tolstoy, another of Kaizan's favorite
Western authors, were in English. See Nakazato Kaizan: kokô no shisakusha, 239; Yanagi
Tomiko, "Nakazato Kaizan no futatsu no Torustoi-ron” (Nakazato Kaizan's two Tolstoy's), Hikaku
bungaku nenshi, no. 29 (1993), 3-4.
been forced to do work in which I take no pleasure. At the age fifteen, I came to the capital and have been unable to quit this dreary existence of toil and loneliness ever since.

(2) Because I was born in the Tama region where enthusiasm for the Liberal Party (Jiyûtô) runs high, from my early teens I greatly enjoyed listening to the speeches given by famous liberals and did not even mind traveling far to hear them speak. After I came to the capital, at the time when I was living in Shiba, I would go on Sundays—even though it was my one day off—to the Unitarian Lecture Hall and listen intently to the lectures of Murai Tomoyoshi and Abe Isoo.

(3) Because of economic hardships, my home and family have been utterly broken apart. This is why I vehemently curse contemporary society.

(4) Through my reading I have come to know socialism quite well. Moreover, I have come to be able to believe in it more and more firmly."

Kaizan also contributed poetry to *Heimin shinbun*, most notably a rather strident anti-war poem entitled “A Heretical Verse” (Ranchô gekiin) which appeared in the August 7, 1904 issue, at the height of the Russo-Japanese War. The poem reflects the political consciousness developing in the young Kaizan through his exposure to the humanitarianism of Christian socialism, the liberalism of Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, and the anti-war rhetoric of the *Heimin shinbun*’s editorials. “Ranchô gekiin” relates the anguish of a young farmer conscripted into the Imperial Army who leaves behind his family and his fields to face death in a foreign land. The poem’s final stanza reveals that the farmer grieves not only for himself but also his fellow man.

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23 *NKZ*, vol. 20, 6. Abe Isoo and Murai Tomoyoshi were founding members of the Society for the Study of Socialism (Shakaishugi Kenkyûkai) formed in 1898 to ‘investigate the principles of socialism’ to determine whether they were ‘applicable to Japan.’ The Society, made up largely of Japanese Christians, held monthly meetings at Unity Hall, the headquarters for the Japan Unitarian Association in Mita. Meetings included lectures on the ideas of Western socialist thinkers and on the history of the socialist movement in Europe and America. See Fred Noteheifer, 62-63; Peter Duus and Irwin Scheiner, “Socialism, Liberalism, and Marxism, 1901-31,” in Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, ed., *Modern Japanese Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 152-53.
The setting sun aslant on the desolate twilight plain, look! the fallen strung out as far as the eye can see. Bathed in the setting sun, their coloration depresses. Look! Blood shed by those butchered young men stitches gloom over summer grasses.

Whether friend or foe, he and I are human beings. What authority forces one man to kill another? What obligation dictates that one man murder another? Ah, don't tell me! It is all for country, and for Emperor."

The pacifism and humanitarianism in the poem are clear, but there is also a strong anti-Imperial tone, particularly in the refrain “it is all for country, and for Emperor” (kuni no tame nari, kimi no tame nari) which repeats at the end of each of the poem’s four stanzas. Considering the critical reception of Yosano Akiko’s poem “Kimi shinitamou koto nakare,” (Please don’t die) which appeared in the September 1904 issue of the literary journal Myôjô, it is surprising that Kaizan’s “Ranchô gekiin” did not draw more attention. Yosano’s poem, addressed to her younger brother serving at the battlefront in Ryojun, was denounced by the critic Ômachi Keigetsu in the October 1904 issue of Taiyô as “an expression of dangerous thoughts which disparage the concept of the national family.” As poet Ataka Natsuo points out, Kaizan’s refrain was similarly “dangerous” in its implication that if the Emperor and the nation did not exist, the carnage at the battlefront would not take place. Thus Kaizan’s ironic use of “all for country, all for Emperor” is harshly critical not only of the institution of war, but also the state and the Imperial system. The fact that “Ranchô gekiin” appears to have attracted little attention may be due

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26 NKZ, vol. 13, 193-94. See appendix A for a complete translation of this poem.
28 Ataka Natsuo, 78.
to the relative obscurity of its author, to the small circulation of the *Heimin shinbun* (approximately 4,000) and to the fact that, despite its critical tone, Kaizan's poem did not stand out from the pointedly anti-war rhetoric that filled the pages of the small socialist newspaper.

In addition to his contributions to *Heimin shinbun*, Kaizan also published in other socialist periodicals. His essay "War and the religionist" (Sensô to shûkyôka) was carried in the December 1904 issue of the journal *Socialism*. In this essay he argues that the Russo-Japanese War is not a conflict between the people (kokumin) of Russia and Japan; rather it is a war waged on behalf of imperialists within the Russian and the Japanese governments who had precipitated the conflict to "further their oppressive capitalist systems." Abusing their authority, they "kill innocent people and cause the needless expenditure of resources." In response to this tyranny, Kaizan advocated a cooperative friendship by means of which the average citizens (heimin) of Russia and Japan "join hands to bring down the imperialists."

After the *Heimin shinbun* was forced by government pressure to cease publication on January 29, 1905, another socialist newspaper, *Chokugen* (Plain Speaking), soon began publication using the *Heimin shinbun*’s facilities. In July 1905, Kaizan became an editor of *Chokugen*. Moreover, in September, Kaizan and other young socialist writers, including Shirayanagi Shûko, Kodama Kagai, Yamaguchi Koken, *Nakazato Kaizan zenshû*, vol. 20, 16. It is possible that Kaizan submitted this piece to the journal *Socialism* (Shakai shugi) because the *Heimin shinbun* had been temporarily shut down by the government in November 1904 in response to their publication of the first translation of the *Communist Manifesto*. See Ataka Natsuo, 80.

*Sumiya Mikô*, "*Heimin shinbun* to sono kôzokushi," (*Heimin shinbun* and its successors) in *Shisô* no. 461 (Nov. 1962), 139.
and Yasunari Sadao, formed a literary group called Kabenkai (The “Whips of Fire” Society) with the support of the Heiminsha. The Kabenkai published a coterie magazine, titled Kaben, and Kaizan contributed a short work of fiction to the first issue and some critical essays to subsequent issues. However, Kaizan’s involvement with the Kabenkai was short lived. By the end of 1905, Kaizan withdrew from the Kabenkai and ceased all practical involvement in the socialist movement.

Kaizan’s dissociation from Heiminsha and Kabenkai was motivated by his discomfort with the movement towards anarchism and violent revolution on the part of his fellow socialists. A foreshadowing of this change in attitude is to be found in his writings as early as June 1905, or three months before he joined Kabenkai. In an essay titled “Yo ga zange” (My confession) for the journal Shinkibô (New hope, 1905-06) published by Uchimura Kanzô, the founder of the “no-church” Christian movement in Japan, Kaizan reflected on his own motivations for joining the socialist movement; it also revealed an internal struggle between his frustration in the face of social injustice and the humanitarianism he cultivated through association with Christians and through his reading of Tolstoy. “I became a socialist. And I believe in the truth of socialism. However, my motivation for becoming a socialist was fundamentally flawed. I did not become a socialist out of a desire to help, support or love my fellow man. It was because of my will to rage, hate and

The short story, Usuigawa (The Usui River, 1905), is a tragic love story involving a pair of young lovers and a jealous Shinto priest who serves the shrine by the Usui River. In later years, Kaizan dismissed it as amateurish. Shinchô Nihon bungaku arubamu: Nakazato Kaizan, 105; Ozaki Hotsuki, "Kaisetsu," NKZ, vol. 13, 510.

Although Kaizan had largely withdrawn from the Kabenkai by the end of December 1905, he did contribute essays to the February and May 1906 issues of Kaben. See NKZ, vol. 20, 411-12.
curse that I was driven to socialism."" He also relates in "Yo ga zange" that he sought guidance from Uchimura Kanzô in resolving his spiritual dilemma. Uchimura admonished him to strive to "record joy and gratitude" in his writings and to rejoice if he succeeded in "bringing spiritual solace to even one person." Inspired by Uchimura's counsel, Kaizan resolved, "In future...if I take up my pen, it will be on behalf of God and men."

In the December 1905 issue of Shinchô, Kaizan writes of his decision to "completely abandon socialism" in an essay titled "Sônen no ji" (Words to ring out the old year).

If material supplies are lacking, can we expect that people will lose spiritual responsibility, as is taught by socialism? Are the poor unable to maintain their individual authority? My socialism, which began with this problem, was on the verge of falling apart. So I questioned Uchimura Kanzô closely about these doubts and felt my faith in socialism becoming progressively weaker.

And in that moment, two factors finally motivated me to abandon socialism once and for all....

The first was the riot in Tokyo. I personally witnessed the uprising of that frenzied mob; I saw that the kind of brute force that arises from assembled humans is more to be feared than the fury of a wild beast. In that moment I saw the danger of a crowd capable of senseless violence carried out in the name of "justice." And I perceived the extreme danger of the plans of the socialists who hope to put their doctrine into practice through the force of the multitude.

The other motivation was the letter from Count Tolstoy which was sent to the Heiminsha.

The riot in Tokyo referred to by Kaizan was a disturbance in September 1905 that has come to be known as the Hibiya Riot. A crowd of 30,000 gathered in Hibiya Park to protest the terms of the peace treaty that ended the

 NKZ, vol. 20, 20. Kaizan's interactions with socialists from late 1903 did not bring to an end his association with Christians. According to Isogai Katsutarô, Kaizan occasionally attended the Christian church at Tsunohazu until 1904-05. He also sat in on Uchimura Kanzô's bible study sessions. Isogai Katsutarô, "Nakazato Kaizan to kurisutoyô --Uchimura Kanzô," 60-61.


 Nakazato Kaizan, "Sônen no ji" Shinchô vol. 3, no. 6 (Dec. 1905), 21.
Russo-Japanese War. The gathering unexpectedly turned violent when police tried to break it up. A peaceful demonstration had been planned for September 5 by the Kōwa mondai dōshi rengōkai (Federation of Activists on the Problem of Peace Negotiations, formed July 19, 1905), a chauvinistic organization that felt the peace treaty was unsatisfactory because it did not require the Russians to make reparations or large territorial concessions to the Japanese. However, when police attempted to intervene, the crowd reacted violently. Clashes between police and demonstrators spread. Soon the disturbance escalated into a full-scale riot.

The violence continued all day and throughout the night. On September 6, the government declared martial law in Tokyo and its environs. By the evening of September 7, the rioting was over. In the wake of three days of violence the headquarters of the Kokumin shinbun (which was regarded by rioters as a mouthpiece for the government because of its support of the peace treaty) was severely damaged. Thirteen Christian churches, 53 private homes, 15 streetcars and 266 police boxes were either burned or destroyed by the angry mob. The official residences of the prime minister, the foreign minister and the President of the Privy Council also sustained damage. Some 500 people were injured among police and government forces, while exact numbers of rioters injured could not be determined. The official number of casualties among protesters was set at 528, including 17 killed.36

As indicated in his essay "Sōnen no ji," Kaizan’s witnessing of the Hibiya Riot awakened him to the fact that the mass political action advocated by militant socialists had the potential for turning dangerously deadly. He had seen 36 Shumpei Okamoto, 206-14.
a peaceful mass demonstration quickly degenerate into mob violence, which resulted in the destruction of property owned by groups and individuals who were not the targets of the protest. Kaizan’s concern for the poor and disenfranchised remained a given, but as a result of this incident, his ideas about the best strategies to help them were transformed. Now Kaizan advocated individual responsibility and charity as the principles that governed the affairs of men. They were to be observed both by those who ruled and by those governed.

While Kaizan reported his change of heart in December 1905, judging from his comments in “Sônen no ji,” we must regard the letter from Tolstoy to the Heiminsha as the impetus for the intellectual struggle which resulted ultimately in his new outlook. This letter was sent in early November 1904 to the Christian socialist Abe Isoo, an editor for the Heimin shinbun, in reply to a letter Abe sent in September 1904. In his letter Tolstoy expressed his disapproval of socialism as a “feeble, illusory and fallacious theory” which progressive thinkers in Europe were beginning to abandon.

Socialism has for its aim the satisfaction of the meanest part of human nature: his material well being, and by the means it proposes can never attain them.

The true well being of humanity is spiritual, i.e., moral, and includes the material well being. And this higher goal can be attained only by religious, i.e., moral perfection of all the units which compose nations and humanity.

By religion I understand the reasonable belief in a (general for all humanity) law of God which practically is exposed in the precept of loving every man and doing to everybody what one wishes to be done to you.

I know that this method seems to be less expedient than socialism and other frail theories, but it is the sole true one. And all the efforts we use in trying to realize the false and not-reaching-their-aims theories only hinder us to employ the sole true means to attain the degree of
happiness of mankind and every individual which are so proper to our time."

Tolstoy's ideas as expressed here are clearly discernible in Kaizan's essays. Tolstoy's notion that the "true well being of humanity is spiritual" prompted Kaizan to reflect on his own materially-based reasons for embracing socialism. Moreover, the idea that spiritual well being can be attained only through the "religious perfection of all units" that compose society—a perfection practically expressed in "the precept of loving every man"—was doubtless reinforced by statements that Uchimura Kanzô had made. And while Kaizan was beginning to believe that the more "expedient" methods of socialism were insufficient to bring about the "religious perfection" requisite for the happiness of mankind, he had not fully realized the potential danger of those methods until he witnessed the Hibiya Riot. Kaizan "abandoned socialism altogether" and devoted himself instead to individualism and religion. The religion he had in mind had less and less to do with Uchimura Kanzô and Christianity, however; it was far more syncretic and Buddhist. Shimura Kunihiro suggests that Kaizan drew inspiration not from organized religion but from great men of faith—Jesus Christ, but also the Japanese Buddhist pioneers Bônen and Nichiren. In fact, in 1911 Kaizan began researching the life of Shôtoku Taishi, another important figure in the history of Japanese

57 R.F. Christian, trans., Tolstoy's Letters, vol. II, 1880-1910 (London: The Athlone Press, 1978), 645-46. A translation of Tolstoy's letter was carried in the newspaper Chokugen on August 27, 1905, at which time Kaizan was working as one of the editors. Abe Isoo's letter and Tolstoy's reply were both originally written in English. See Yanagi Tomiko, "Nakazato Kaizan no futatsu no Torustoi-ron," 2.
During his flirtation with socialism, Kaizan continued working as an elementary school teacher. After receiving his credential to teach in Tokyo schools in June 1904, he worked as a full instructor in elementary schools in the Azabu and Shiba districts. During his brief tenure at the elementary school in Azabu (a position he secured through Uchimura Kanzō’s introduction), he devoted his energies to educating the children of the many impoverished families living in that district. In early 1906, he decided to become a middle school teacher. But after months of study, he failed the accreditation examination in May. He then decided to pursue a career writing for newspapers. He applied to the Yomiuri shinbun and the Miyako shinbun and was hired by the latter toward the end of 1906.

During his first year on the Miyako shinbun staff, Kaizan’s articles did not appear with a byline. However, after becoming the newspaper’s book reviewer in early 1907, he started receiving credit for his articles, which included reviews of new books by Tokutomi Roka, Kinoshita Naoe, Katô Hiroyuki and Miyazaki Koshoshi. Kaizan also wrote a number of other articles under a variety of pen names on subjects ranging from his views on the literary establishment to agricultural improvement.  

Indications of Kaizan’s disillusionment with organized Christianity are discernible as early as February 1905, when he wrote in Shinchō his opinion that “today’s Christianity no longer has the power to save men.” See Nakazato Kaizan, “Reinetsu roku” (A record of indifference and ardor), Shinchō vol.2, no.2 (Feb. 1905), 61; Shimura Kunihiro, “Kaizan to daijō bukkyō,” in Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō, bessatsu: Daibosatsu tõge, 66.  

Shinchō Nihon bungaku arubamu: Nakazato Kaizan, 18.  

Miyako shinbunshi, 172. Among the pen names he used are Sonpûshi (a self-deprecating term which indicates a “country scholar” with narrow views), Hamura Shigeru (a reference to his native village), Nakazato Hamura, and Nakazato Sei.
Then in December 1909, he was given his first opportunity to write serial fiction. The regular novelist, Watanabe Katei, had suddenly become unable to complete serialization of his novel *Horibe Yasuhei*. The editors of *Miyako shinbun*, needing to find a quick replacement, called on Kaizan to step in. Kaizan’s novel, a *jidai shôsetsu* entitled *Kôri no hana* (Ice flowers) was serialized from December 18, 1909 to March 4, 1910. In a comment preceding the first installment, he explained that “while the time frame of the events is the Tenpô era (1830-44), generally I have used present day language.” A pattern was established with this work, and the reliance on contemporary language regardless of the narrative’s period setting came to characterize all of Kaizan’s subsequent *jidai shôsetsu*, including *Daibosatsu tôge*.

The three year famine (1833-36) in Tenpô is one of the most famous in Japanese history. Set in Ôiso on the Tôkaidô Road, *Kôri no hana* is the story of an evil rice merchant, Magoemon, who corners the market and makes a huge profit at the expense of starving local peasants. Angered by perpetual shortages and continually escalating prices, the farmers riot and vent their resentment at Magoemon by destroying his shop. After suffering further hardships, Magoemon undergoes a final change of heart and begins to treat the peasants with compassion. The implication of the title *Kôri no hana*, deriving from an old folk song, is made clear in the last line of the final installment. “And now you who grieve, you who weep, you who lament, I pray you, do not despair; only be patient and await the coming spring. Have not the flowers of compassion blossomed even within the cruel, icy heart of

*Miyako shinbunshi*, 174-75.
Magoemon?"

The socialistic theme of Kôri no hana—namely, popular resistance to capitalist forces of oppression—indicates that despite "abandoning socialism," Kaizan did not surrender his commitment to the plight of poor farmers and laborers. The line from the final installment indicates Kaizan’s intention to "bring spiritual solace" to society’s oppressed through this narrative, as Uchimura Kanzô had admonished him to do. The triumph of compassion for one’s fellow man also indicates the influence of Tolstoy’s aesthetics on Kaizan, who was an avid reader of Tolstoy’s work. In his treatise What is Art? (1897), Tolstoy describes what he calls "religious art" or "Christian art."

Christian art either evokes in men those feelings which, through love of God and of one’s neighbor, draw them to greater and ever greater union and make them ready for and capable of, such union, or evokes in them feelings which show them that they are already united in the joys and sorrows of life. And therefore the Christian art of our time can be and is of two kinds: (1) art transmitting feelings flowing from a religious perception of man’s position in the world in relation to God and to his neighbor—religious art in the limited meaning of the term; and (2) art transmitting the simplest feelings of common life, but such, always, as are accessible to all men in the whole world: the art of common life—the art of the people—universal art. Only these two kinds of art can be considered good art in our time."

Kôri no hana may be read as Kaizan’s attempt at producing art which readers that they are "united in the
"NKZ, vol. 13, 501. The words of folk song are "under a thousand layers of ice, flowers will bloom through the compassion of man" (sen-shaku tsunda kôri no naka ni, hito no nasake de hana ga saku).
"According to Matsumoto Ken’ichi, Kaizan had read through all of Tolstoy’s collected works available in translation as early as 1901. Kaizan was familiar enough with Tolstoy’s life, literature and aesthetics to write a monograph in 1909 entitled "Torustoi genkôroku" (A Tolstoy memoir) introducing Tolstoy to the uninitiated Japanese reader. See Matsumoto Ken’ichi, Nakazato Kaizan (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1978), 121; Yanagi Tomiko, "Nakazato Kaizan to Torustoi" (Nakazato Kaizan and Tolstoy), in Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshô, bessatsu: Daibosatsu tôge , 83.
joys and sorrows of life.” If the hardships endured by peasants during the Tenpō famine resonate with the sufferings of urban and rural poor in late Meiji, the novel’s hopeful admonition to “await the coming spring” implies Kaizan’s faith that social reform could be achieved, a faith shared by many Christian socialists circa 1909. However, the hopeful tone manifest in Magoemon’s change of heart is totally lacking in Daibosatsu tōge. As will be discussed shortly, Kaizan’s faith in the possibility of reform was shaken to the core by the government’s suppression of the socialist movement following the High Treason Incident. The hopelessness expressed in Daibosatsu tōge has been interpreted as his attempt to portray feelings common to many during the “winter years” (fuyu no jidai) of the socialist movement.

Kōri no hana was well received by the public and was adapted for the stage even before it completed serialization, a common occurrence with serials carried in the Miyako shinbun. “Beginning January 30, 1910, it was staged by Seki Sanjūrō’s troupe, the Asakusa Hōrai-za.” In spite of the novel’s popular appeal, however, an anonymous critic from the Yomiuri shinbun disparaged the novel by sardonically stating his “admiration” for Seki Sanjūrō’s “magniminity in bringing

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45 Miyako shinbunshi, 175.
46 Seki Sanjūrō (a.k.a. Seki Tominari, 1879-1931) came from a long line of kabuki actors. He was the fifth and final actor to use that stage name. The frequent staging of novels serialized in the Miyako shinbun was a result of the close contacts between those who worked for the newspaper and those who worked in the entertainment district. These ties were developed in the paper’s earliest days. See Miyako shinbunshi, 11. Moreover, anecdotal evidence of the ties between Miyako shinbun and the pleasure quarter is found in Muramatsu Shōfū’s admission that he first became acquainted the newspaper through his trips to demimonde. He relates that after spending the night at one of the establishments in the pleasure quarter, he would invariably wake to find a copy of Miyako shinbun by his pillow. It was commonly referred to through the early 1910s as the “pleasure quarter newspaper” (karyū shinbun). Muramatsu Shōfū, “Taishō bungeika sōhyō” (General commentary on popular writers) Chūō kōron (July 1926): 96.
this work to the stage." Kaizan’s self-righteous response to this criticism, carried at the end of the February 4 installment of Kôri no hana, expresses his belief in the power of his work to benefit society.

The first half of this novel Kôri no hana is to be performed by the Bôrai-za. Regarding yesterday’s ironic barb directed at the author by a Yomiuri reporter, I would like to offer a word of explanation. The author Nakazato Hamura is… but a youth of 26 years. Though I may err in my pursuit of literature, yet my intent is for the good of the public. Having been asked by the head of the troupe for permission to stage Kôri no hana, I merely consented. I certainly don’t see that as a case of appealing to ’Seki Sanjûrô’s magnanimity." I hope that such impolite language will be avoided in future."

Six months after the serialization of Kôri no hana, Kaizan was asked to write another serial novel. His next effort, entitled Kôya no gijin (The martyr of Mount Kôya), ran from September 4 to December 7, 1910. Like Kôri no hana, Kôya no gijin repeated the socialistic theme of popular resistance to an oppressive authority. The narrative deals with the exploitation of tenant farmers by Buddhist landlords from the Kôzan Temple on Mount Kôya circa 1720. The priests at Kôzanji exploit the farmers who work the lands belonging to the temple by exacting heavy taxes. They demand almost twice the amount of rice being paid by other tenant farmers across Japan.”

In the village of Shimano, Toya Shin’emon, the protagonist of Kôya no gijin, cannot bear to see the hardships his fellow villagers endure. Shin’emon is the son of the village headman, and he is respected by the villagers.

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" Miyako shinbunshi, 175; Shinchô Nihon bungaku arubamu: Nakazato Kaizan, 19.
" The measure used by the Kôzan-ji priests (Sanuki-masu) for determining the amount of rice farmers were to pay was almost twice the size of the standard measure (Kyô-masu) used throughout Japan.
for his moral character. Angered by the priests' exploitation and their failure to heed pleas for tax relief from the tenant farmers, Shin'emon goes directly to Edo and lodges a complaint with the Shogunal magistrate in charge of temple affairs. As a result, the Tokugawa government tightens its regulation of the Kōzan Temple, and the villagers' taxes are reduced. Shin'emon is hailed as a hero by the tenant farmers. But the priests take revenge on Shin'emon by apprehending him and burying him alive in an open pit. The villagers are outraged at the brutal murder of Shin'emon, especially as it occurs on the sacred soil of Mount Kōya. Thus, despite the priests' attempt to eradicate Shin'emon's influence, generations of villagers cherish the memory of this martyr and his sacrifice on their behalf."

The events portrayed in Kōya no gijin are based in history. Toya Shin'emon (d. 1722?) did in fact "rebel" against the Buddhist landlords of Kōzan Temple by alerting the Tokugawa authorities of their exploitive treatment of tenants farmers. After he was buried alive, villagers in the area did actually come to regard him as a "righteous martyr" (gijin) and later generations erected a large stone monument in his honor after the Meiji Restoration." Kaizan's choice in late 1910 of this particular incident as the basis for a historical novel was not accidental. He used the story of Toya Shin'emon's revolt and consequent execution as a forum for commenting on the events unfolding in his own historical moment. Kaizan began serialization of Kōya no gijin in September 1910, in the midst of the preliminary stages of

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50 NKZ, vol. 13, 207-86.
investigations into the anarchist activities of his friend and socialist mentor, Kôtoku Shûshui, who was implicated along with 25 other socialist activists in an alleged plot to assassinate the emperor. Accused in the "High Treason Incident" (Taigyaku jiken), they had been arrested in May and June 1910 on suspicion of planning to bomb the emperor's procession, a treasonable offense punishable by death.

Kaizan's fictionalization of an incident in which a man of high ideals, who goes to great lengths to alleviate the suffering of oppressed people and is eventually martyred for his actions has obvious parallels to the events surrounding Kôtoku's indictment. Kaizan was familiar with Kôtoku's socialist idealism, having long been an avid reader of his editorials in Yorozu chôhô, Heimin shinbun and other journals. Kaizan was also aware of Kôtoku's frustration at the lack of social reform (as well as government pressure curtailing his efforts to publish his ideas) had led to Kôtoku's flirtation with anarchism in the years following the Russo-Japanese War. Yet Kaizan believed his friend's desire to improve society and his attraction to a doctrine of violent activism would not lead him to commit the crime of lèse majesté. His belief in Kôtoku's innocence (a belief he continued to hold long after the affair ended”) notwithstanding, apparently he sensed the final outcome of the trial would go against Kôtoku, and his portrayal of Toya Shin'emon's execution foreshadows Kôtoku's fate. In late January 1911, Kôtoku and eleven of his co-defendants were

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52 Miyako shinbunshi, 183-84.
executed by hanging."

It appears that the trial and execution of Kôtoku were clearly disconcerting for Kaizan. But, like many other writers and intellectuals, he was also quite concerned about the ramifications of the High Treason Incident with regard to freedom of expression and free intellectual debate."

Following the execution of those involved in the High Treason Incident, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Bureau, as well as police bureaus in every prefecture, prohibited the sale and circulation of books written by socialist authors. Police confiscated all socialist books from bookstores and libraries. The authorities banned books by such socialist writers as Kinoshita Naoe, Sakai Toshihiko, and Katayama Sen on the grounds that they would "disturb the public peace." Although many had been published seven or eight years earlier, in the charged atmosphere following the High Treason Incident, anything smacking of socialism, anarchism, syndicalism—or even individualism—came to be considered by the authorities as too dangerous to remain in circulation."

Kaizan recognized the absurdity of banning all books containing ideas the government deemed dangerous. He knew that open-minded bureaucrats like Mori Ôgai were definitely in the minority. He expressed his dismay at this state of affairs in an ironic squib written in February 1912 entitled

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55 Although there was a news blackout, and newspapers were not allowed to print news of the preliminary investigation, Kaizan was aware of Kôtoku's arrest record and his previous experiences of government harassment. Kôtoku had been party to the conspiracy early on, but he appears to have had a change of heart toward the end of 1909 and had distanced himself from Miyashita Takichi, Kanno Suga and others involved in the assassination plot. In the end, Kôtoku was executed for inciting violence through his dissemination of dangerous ideas. Fred Notehelfer, 170-181; Jay Rubin, 157-60.

54 Jay Rubin discusses the reaction of Mori Ôgai, Ishikawa Takuboku, Hiraide Shû, Tokutomi Rôka, Arahata Kanson and several others. See Jay Rubin, 151-194.

55 Miyako shinbunshi, 184; Jay Rubin, 146.
"Hito kakeru moji" (The words men write). Toward the end of 1911, Kaizan had coughed up blood and was diagnosed as being in the early stages of pulmonary tuberculosis. His doctor sent him to recuperate at the seaside hot spring resort of Atami, where Kaizan often strolled along the beach and contemplated recent events.

This past winter I recuperated from an illness in Atami. At times I would go to the beach. I love the smoothness of the sand after a wave has washed over it. It gave me pleasure to write words with my bamboo walking stick in that smooth sand. Words like "eternity," or "humanity." Or "Li Bo," or "Gao Qingqiu." Then after walking a bit, I would turn and look back at the places where I had written these words, I saw that every character had been washed away by the waves. Not a trace remained. Then it occurred to me, all the words which men have written are bound to end that way!"

If Kaizan's choice of subject matter for Kôya no gijin indicates his desire to invest his jidai shôsetsu with contemporary import, the tone of the novel reflects the despair he shared with many socialist sympathizers on the eve of the so-called "winter years" of the socialist movement. For unlike Kôri no hana, Kôya no gijin does not contain a hopeful outlook that spring will come. In fact, as scholar Takemori Tenyû points out, Kôya no gijin is chiefly notable for its depiction of the evil of the Kôzan Temple priests, who give the work a certain "demonic force." The powerful portrayal of evil presages Kaizan's creation of the character Tsukue Ryûnosuke in Daibosatsu tôge, a character who has been described as the very embodiment of evil. The increasingly darker tone of Kaizan's subsequent fiction signals a subtle change in his perspective.

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59 NKZ, vol. 20, 29. Li Bo (701-82) was a famous Tang poet. Gao Qingqiu (1336-74) was a famous Ming poet. The work of both men was extremely popular in Japan.
54 Hashimoto Mineo, 250.
shift away from the production of “Christian art” which strove to unite men through evoking feelings of hope and brotherhood and toward the creation of works of literature which evoke a fellowship of despair and anger. Rather than the ultimate triumph of compassion, Kaizan chose to portray in his *jidai shôsetsu* the desperate and often futile struggle of disenfranchised members of society. In terms of Tolstoy’s aesthetics, Kaizan was shifting from “religious art” to creation of “the art of the people—a universal art.” The sense of frustration that permeates Kaizan’s historical fiction written after 1911 is certainly common to all men, but it was keenly felt among his contemporaries who longed for social reform, whether they were left-wing intellectuals or struggling farmers and laborers.

Following *Kôya no gijin* Kaizan serialized three more historical novels in the *Miyako shinbun* which demonstrate the continuing development of his craftsmanship. Not only were the narratives darker in tone, the development of characters became more complex stylistically. The first of the three novels, *Shimabara-jô* (Shimabara castle, 1911), is set against the 1637-38 insurrection staged in the Shimabara domain (today, part of Nagasaki Prefecture) by persecuted Christians, overtaxed peasants and masterless samurai opposed to the hegemony of Tokugawa Ieyasu who had gathered under the leadership of Amakusa Shirô. The narrative does not depict the final battle between the Shimabara rebels and the overwhelming military might of the Tokugawa army; instead it focuses on events leading up to the confrontation as experienced by a young Christian samurai, Hara Mondo. Kaizan
portrays both sides of the story, however: the effect of the Tokugawa government’s oppression on the people of Shimabara and the vexation the Shogunate experienced as a result of the rebel’s activities. We know without being shown the final siege that the revolt will be brutally crushed so that a certain dark fatalism looms over the narrative.

*Muro no yûjo* (The courtesans of Murotsu, 1911-12) is set at the beginning of the Kamakura period (1185-1333). The title refers to the noblewomen of the Taira clan who were reduced to prostitution in order to survive in the wake of the Gempei wars in which the Taira were defeated by the Minamoto. These destitute noblewomen gather in the Murotsu region (now part of Hyûgo Prefecture), where they sell themselves to pleasure-seeking courtiers and aristocrats from the capital. The protagonist of the narrative is a young prostitute Tomo-kun, who travels to Shikoku to receive instruction from the exiled priest Hônen, the founder of the Pure Land Buddhist sect. The novel cites examples of Hônen’s virtue, but the focus is on illustrating the depths to which the Taira clan has fallen in contrast to the rising fortunes of the Minamoto. *Oguremono hisashikarazu* (“the proud do not last long”) or the theme of impermanence which pervades *The Tale of Heike*, is echoed in *Muro no yûjo*, reflecting both the impact of that classic work of literature on Kaizan and his growing interest in Buddhism.

*Mongaku* (1912-13) is Kaizan’s version of the life and adventures of the Buddhist priest of the Shingon sect, Mongaku (fl. 1173-99), also known as Endô Moritô. A historical figure from the early Kamakura period who is also represented in the *Tale of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari*),
Mongaku’s life had been portrayed in tales and plays many times before Kaizan wrote his novel. What appealed to Kaizan about portraying Mongaku was the challenge of capturing the complexity of his character. Most of the characters Kaizan had depicted up to that point had been rather one-dimensional: either all good or all bad. But Mongaku’s character is riddled with contradictions. Driven by lust, Mongaku (i.e., Moritō) accidentally kills the object of his desire, Lady Kesa;” driven by grief over her death, he renounces the world and becomes a priest; exiled for soliciting funds from the retired emperor Go-Shirakawa to rebuild a temple, Mongaku befriends fellow exile Minamoto Yoritomo, whom he later aides in bringing down the Taira clan; yet for his role in aiding the Taira noblewoman Lady Rokudai and for allegedly plotting to overthrow Yoritomo’s government, he was sent into exile once again.

While Kaizan’s portrayal of Mongaku’s psychology is somewhat superficial, this early attempt at depicting a multifaceted character proved beneficial in his next and most important work, Daibosatsu tôge. Here he would attempt to portray characters who experience a range of emotions from cruelty and lust to compassion and love. In Daibosatsu tôge, too, his characters lack psychological depth, but many struggle with contradictory emotions and in the end emerge as more complex individuals.

The novels Kaizan serialized between 1911 and 1913 illustrate his efforts to transcend the stock characters and the kanzen chōaku (encourage virtue, chastise vice) didacticism that characterized the period serials and kōdan.

55 This episode, recorded in the Konjaku monogatari, was the basis for Akutagawa Ryūnosuke’s 1918 short story Kesa to Moritō (Kesa and Moritō).
transcriptions carried in newspapers in the late Meiji and early Taishô, and are even apparent in his earliest serial novels Kôri no hana and Kôya no gijin. To be sure, he did not abandon moralistic themes, conventional character types or familiar plot devices entirely. There are still noble heroes and evil villains, narrow escapes and improbable coincidences. Yet his efforts to introduce more complex characters and a variety of religious themes--from Christian inspired compassion to Buddhist notions of impermanence--indicate a gradual move toward the creation of more intricate narratives. This shift is discernible even in Kôya no gijin in which Kaizan introduced the malevolence and brutality of the priests. If there had been only the righteous violence of the peasants against their capitalist oppressors in Kôri no hana, then here we see instead a more complex, more sadistic notion of violence. The hopefulness of Kôri no hana gives way to pessimistic fatalism in Kaizan’s later novels.

By incorporating themes of despair and fatalism in novels which followed popular formulas for representing the past, Kaizan was able to reach a broader based, more complex audience that was not limited to working class readers. Kaizan appealed to laborers and farmers whose suffering he knew, but also to liberal-minded intellectuals whose ideals he shared. He also attracted readers who, like himself, drew inspiration from events and figures from Japan’s past. Kaizan’s readers responded to the entertaining way in which his fiction combined a portrayal of the past with the contemporary mood of pessimism. In Daibosatsu tôge, Kaizan took the play between past and present to a new level.
3.2 Daibosatsu tôge

Serialization of Daibosatsu tôge began September 12, 1913. The novel’s first volume, Rōgen ittō ryū, concluded February 9, 1914 after 150 installments. Remarks which Kaizan appended to the last installment demonstrate that he conceived of Daibosatsu tôge on a grander scale than anything he had serialized in the past. According to his plan, the narrative was not hardly complete in spite of having run to 150 installments.

This tale, up to the point where [the protagonist] returns from Kyoto to the Great Bodhisattva Pass, is still quite long. However, since we have already amassed a considerable number of installments, I will leave off here. To those of you who have supplied data, or who have sent sympathetic letters, I offer sincere thanks. Also, there are places where I have consciously disregarded chronology, etc. I will correct these at a later date."

His remarks reflected the enthusiastic reception that Daibosatsu tôge was accorded and the many letters he received from fans. One glaring example of the chronological inaccuracy he refers to is his depiction of the sword battle between the character Shimada Toranosuke and members of the pro-Bakufu assassination squad, the Shinchōgumi, at the end of Rōgen ittō ryū. The Shinchōgumi was formed in early 1863 by the masterless samurai Kiyokawa Hachirō with the support of Matsudaira Chikaranosuke, an official within the Tokugawa government. However, the historical figure Shimada Toranosuke, a master swordsman from the jiki-shinkage (trace of an honest heart) school of fencing, had died in 1852, a full eleven years before the Shinchōgumi has been commissioned. Such lack of historical accuracy

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P. Miyako shinbunshi, 221.

notwithstanding, *Daibosatsu tōge* was eagerly read by fans and fault-finders alike.

The writer and critic Kimura Ki provides anecdotal evidence of the extent of *Daibosatsu tōge*’s popularity. While working as a tutor in the Nihonbashi home of a merchant family, Kimura noticed the head of the household waited impatiently for delivery of the *Miyako shinbun*. When it arrived he turned immediately to the installment of *Daibosatsu tōge*. The man told Kimura that he heard that both the Empress Teimei and Shibusawa Eiichi also loved reading *Daibosatsu tōge*.

Moreover, *Daibosatsu tōge* was popular enough that the editors of the *Miyako shinbun* allowed Kaizan to serialize continuation of the narrative some six months after volume 1 was complete. The second volume, *Suzukayama*, ran from August 20 to December 5, 1914. As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Kaizan included in the last installment of *Suzukayama* a preview of what promised to be the final volume in which the protagonist is killed and the various tensions driving the narrative resolved. However, four months later when serialization of the third volume, *Ryūjin* (Dragon god), began on April 7, 1915, Kaizan’s plans had changed. By the time he published the last installment of *Ryūjin* on July 23, 1915, he had not killed off his protagonist, and he had left unresolved many of the novel’s conflicts. Kaizan did not publish anything related to *Daibosatsu tōge* during 1916, but the open-ended quality of *Ryūjin* indicates that he was contemplating a longer narrative. His vision of the novel

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appears to have expanded far beyond its original scope. Remarks attached to the final installment of Ryūjin bear this out.

This concludes the Ryūjin volume of Daibosatsu tōge. Speaking from the standpoint of the entire narrative, there is still a long way to go. It is a bit unclear just how many installments it will take to complete this tale. However, I do have a general framework for the story, so breaking here is not a matter of abandoning the narrative midway through because I have expanded too far and lost the thread of the plot. If I were to depict even the smallest matters from beginning to end, the story would become exceedingly long.... Try and imagine, and I believe you will easily comprehend which paths the characters will follow, and where they will end up. Simply put, the vendetta I have followed up to this point will be settled only through revenge. However, if I do not reach the point in the story where the vendetta passes beyond Hyoma’s sense of obligation to his brother, then it will never be settled. This fact naturally stretches the threads of destiny and makes them grow long.”

The vendetta central to the plot of Daibosatsu tōge involves the character Utsuki Hyoma, whose elder brother Bunnojō, is killed in a fencing match with Tsukue Ryūnosuke, the novel’s protagonist. Hyoma feels obliged to a whole cast of characters: his deceased elder brother; his sister-in-law Ohama, Bunnojō’s wife; his fencing teacher, Shimada Toranosuke; and many other characters in the novel who aid him in his effort exact revenge on against Ryūnosuke. As is often the case with tales of vengeance, Hyoma, the one seeking revenge, is portrayed as a righteous, pure-minded warrior. And his enemy, Ryūnosuke, is depicted as a brutal, evil character with few redeeming qualities, except perhaps his skill with a sword. Nonetheless, there is more to Ryūnosuke’s character than we are initially led to believe.

There is no doubt about Ryūnosuke’s cruelty. His brutality is defined in the opening scene of the novel, in

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83 Miyako shinbunshi, 223.

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which Ryunosuke viciously murders an elderly pilgrim traveling on the remote Great Bodhisattva Pass. As the scene opens, Ryunosuke is waiting atop the desolate mountain pass.

Although it was not a road on which people happened by readily, he appeared to be waiting for someone. After half an hour or more had passed, the sound of a voice came filtering through the thickets. [Ryunosuke] proceeded without ceremony in the direction of the Hagiwara Road and hid in a nearby stand of pines. Leaning out from behind a tree and looking about, he saw that the figures now climbing the winding, serpentine mountain path, were, in fact, two pilgrims.

"Grandpa!"
The bell-like voice of a child rang out. Looking again, he saw an old man and lagging behind him a young girl of about twelve or thirteen. The voice that called out "Grandpa!" belonged to this girl.

Having seen these two pilgrims traveling together, the samurai (what must he be thinking?) abruptly went and hid himself behind the Myoken Shrine.

From the tree tops, the monkeys watched with saucer-like eyes.

"Well, well. We've made it to the summit! Oh, there's a shrine here."
The old pilgrim walked to the front of the shrine, untied the chord to his bamboo hat and sat down. Just then, "Grandpa, is this the summit?"

She was a cheerful child, with a sweet face.

"It's all downhill from here. We'll have no trouble reaching the inn at Kawachi by sundown. And three days after that at about this time, we'll set foot once more on the soil of old Edo after three long years...Well, let's eat some lunch."
The old man opened his wicker basket and was about to take out a bundle wrapped in a bamboo sheath, when the girl said,

"Grandpa, give me the water gourd. Down there on the trail I heard the sound of water, so I'll just go and draw some for us."

"Oh. It does seem we drank all our water along the way. Well, Grandpa will just go and fetch it. You come over here and rest." The old man picked up the gourd and began to rise to his feet.

"It's alright, Grandpa. I'll go and get it."
The girl snatched the gourd from the old man's hand and ran down the mountain trail to draw some of the fresh water flowing from the spring below.

As the old man watched his granddaughter, staring vacantly at her retreating form, suddenly there was the sound of someone's footsteps behind him.
“Old man!” It was the samurai from a while back.  
The old man sat straight up in a great hurry. As he 
made ready to greet the samurai properly, the samurai, 
scanning the area, ordered the old man to get up and approach 
him. Because the samurai beckoned with only a slight gesture 
and did not remove his broad brimmed bamboo hat or even 
state his business, the old pilgrim grew fearful. 
“Yes? Is there something I can do for you, sir?” 
The old man bowed slightly and stepped forward. 
“Face that way!” 
With these words suddenly a spray of blood spurt 
forth, (what manner of cruelty was this?) and in an instant 
the old man’s torso had been cut clean in two and fallen 
across the green grass.“

Having established Tsukue Ryûnosuke’s cruelty in this 
opening passage, Kaizan goes on to fill in information on the 
character’s background. Ryûnosuke is a masterless samurai 
from the village of Sawai in Musashi. He operates his own 
fencing school, where his disciples learn their master’s oto 
nashi (“without a sound”) technique of wielding a sword. When 
not busy with his pupils, Ryûnosuke is found lurking in 
isolated areas waiting to soundlessly cut down unsuspecting 
travelers. Although he is respected throughout the Musashi 
region for his swordsmanship and there are few who can rival 
his oto nashi technique, he has a pathological need to 
murder. This dark side of his personality has alienated him 
from his father, Tsukue Danjô, an elderly master swordsman 
now paralyzed and bed-ridden. Danjô recognizes his son’s 
skill, but he also sees that the evil streak in Ryûnosuke’s 
nature prevents his son from reaching his true potential as a 
swordsman. Ultimately it will result in his destruction. Were 
he a well man, Danjô would have an active role in reforming 
his son’s wanton behavior.

At the beginning of the Kôgen ittô ryû volume, Ryûnosuke 
is preparing for a fencing match with Utsuki Bunnojô, a

\[\text{Daibosatsu tõge 1: Kôgen ittô ryû, 10-12.}\]
fencing instructor and chief disciple of the Kôgen ittô school of swordsmanship. The match is part of the dedicatory competition held every four years on Mount Mitake, and it draws hundreds swordsmen from all over the Kantô region and beyond. As Ryûnosuke trains, a beautiful young woman visits his fencing school and introduces herself as Bunnojô's younger sister. Actually, she is Bunnojô's common law wife, Ohama. Having heard rumors that Bunnojô is no match for Ryûnosuke, Ohama has come to plead with Ryûnosuke to let Bunnojô win. She appeals to his sense of "warrior's compassion," asserting (albeit through false tears) that victory for Bunnojô will bring honor to the Utsuki family and enable her to marry well.

Ryûnosuke is unmoved by Ohama's impassioned plea, however, because he knows that it is a tissue of lies. He is aware that Ohama is Bunnojô's common law wife and not his younger sister. But even if Ohama's plea had been genuine, he would not concede the match. That would violate the warrior's code as he understands it.

"When an opponent takes up his sword and faces me, I have neither parent nor child, neither disciple nor master. Match against even a bosom friend, I regard him as my mortal enemy when I face him. That is how I, Ryûnosuke, understand the way of the warrior."...

The young woman, so frightened as to be left visibly quaking, said, "You're too severe. I think you're cold-hearted."

Ohama glared at Ryûnosuke, her eyes brimming with hatred and tears. His eyes narrowed and flashed with a beam of light as they met her hate-filled gaze, yet it seemed as though a slight flush of color swept over his pale mien. After a moment, when his features had time to regain their usual wanness, he inched closer to Ohama and said, "I never expected to hear somebody say 'cold-hearted' in this day and age. How if I were to compare my warrior's

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55 The competition was first held in 1281 as a ceremony dedicated to honoring the Mitake shrine, which is said to house the armor of Prince Yamato Takeru, the legendary son of the sun goddess, Amaterasu. Daibosatsu tōge 1: Kôgen ittô ryû, 41-42.
code to something lofty, I would say it is like a lady’s virtue. I doubt that it is the way of a lady to sacrifice her chastity even if it be for the benefit of her parents or her siblings. Thus, to concede a match at someone’s request would violate the warrior’s code.”

“But there are times when the lives of one’s parents and siblings are at stake....”

“At such times, is it right for a lady to sacrifice her virtue?”

Although he does not understand the reasons for Ohama’s intervention, Ryûnosuke will not yield to manipulation. In fact, via his cold and menacing words he has turned the tables against her and put her on the defensive.

As a shaken Ohama returns to the Utsuki home that evening, Ryûnosuke cannot stop thinking about her. He bullies his manservant, Yohachi, into kidnapping her. Ryûnosuke rapes her and leaves her tied up until the following morning. This is the first of many extraordinary, erotically sadistic scenes that enliven the novel. When Ohama is finally able to return home, she discovers Bunnojô has learned from one of his servants where the mistress of the house has been.

Bunnojô dismisses her coldly, “I know that you went to see Ryûnosuke last night and he violated you.... Because you have impeded my efforts to elevate the reputation of our family as well as my own reputation as a warrior, I present you with this letter of divorce.” Ohama is humiliated. She had gone to see Ryûnosuke in order to save Bunnojô, who, aware of his own inability to win, has been crestfallen for weeks. Although Ohama thought she could win Ryûnosuke’s sympathy, she had been unable to manipulate a man of such strong will. Now, as she weeps bitter tears, her thoughts return to Ryûnosuke. In spite having been violated and humiliated by him, she is

66 Daibosatsu tôge 1: Kôgen ittô ryû, 22.
67 Daibosatsu tôge 1: Kôgen ittô ryû, 38.
strangely drawn to his powerful personality.

At length, Ryûnosuke and Bunnojô meet on Mount Mitake. The air is tense as the two face each other. Ryûnosuke assumes his oto nashi posture in which he does not move or make a sound, but merely waits for his opponent to strike first. Bunnojô also waits, but his rage at Ryûnosuke’s violation of Ohama roils within him. Although the match is supposedly offered in honor of the Mitake shrine, it quickly turns into a life and death struggle. The two contestants use only wooden practice swords (bokken), yet the officiating judge discerns a murderous glint in the eyes of both men. As tension mounts, and each man waits for the other to make the first move, the judge debates within himself whether to call the match a draw. Then just as the word “draw” falls from his lips, anger overcomes Bunnojô. Suddenly he strikes. Before he can land a single blow, however, Ryûnosuke counters and splits Bunnojô’s skull. Bunnojô falls from the ring and drops dead at the feet of his master and the other disciples of the Kôgen ittô school. A great uproar ensues. Though the match is called a draw, Ryûnosuke has killed Bunnojô.

As Ryûnosuke descends Mount Mitake at the end of the day, he is met by Ohama, who warns him that she has overheard the disciples of the Kôgen ittô school plotting to ambush him in revenge for Bunnojô’s death. She implores Ryûnosuke to flee with her so that they can start a new life together. As she draws close to him, pressing her body against his, she purrs seductively, “Are you as skillful with the ladies as you are with a sword?” Ryûnosuke says nothing, but this time he cannot resist Ohama’s feminine wiles. The two flee to Edo.

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68 Daibosatsu tōge 1: Kôgen ittô ryû, 52.
In the wake of these events, the character of Utuski Hyoma is introduced into the narrative. Ryûnosuke’s manservant, Yohachi, is traveling alone one night on the Kôshû highway. At the request of Tsukue Danjô, Yohachi has been searching for Ryûnosuke, but been unable to locate him. Presently he comes upon a band of highwaymen menacing a young samurai of about twelve or thirteen. Yohachi is a simple-minded creature, but he has the strength of a bull. Unaware that bandits are to be feared, he steps in and chastises the robbers for harassing the young samurai. He grabs one of the bandits and tosses him into the air “as though he were an eggplant.” The highwaymen flee, and Yohachi turns to the frightened youth. Yohachi discovers that the boy is Utsuki Hyoma, the younger brother of Utsuki Bunnojô and that he is heading for the village of Sawai to avenge Bunnojô’s death at the hands of Ryûnosuke. Hyoma’s story makes Yohachi feel guilty for his role in Ohama’s kidnapping and, indirectly, for Bunnojô’s death. He takes Hyoma to see Ryûnosuke’s bedridden father, Danjô.

Danjô is an honorable man and although it pains him to know that Hyoma has vowed to kill Ryûnosuke, he appreciates the young samurai’s singlemindedness and purity of spirit. Danjô tells Hyoma that he will need to perfect his swordsmanship before taking on an opponent as formidable as Ryûnosuke. Danjô advises Hyoma to study with his friend, the master swordsman Shimada Toranosuke. Ryûnosuke lacked the spiritual discipline needed to study with a man like Toranosuke, and now his evil ways are catching up with him. Danjô sees that Hyoma is a very different sort of young man.

He has the spiritual discipline necessary to learn

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Daibosatsu tōge 1: Kōgen ittō ryû, 86.
Toranosuke’s art and become a master in his own right. Hyoma heads off to Edo to study with Toranosuke.

The narrative jumps forward four years. Hyoma has learned his lessons well from Toranosuke, and he has become one of the most skillful disciples, despite his relative youth. Meanwhile, Ryūnosuke and Ohama have been living in obscurity on the grounds of the estate that belongs to an Edo magistrate. Maintaining a low profile, Ryūnosuke has resorted to teaching fencing to common foot soldiers. He and Ohama now have a young son, Ikutarō, but living the life of fugitives has made them miserable. They quarrel constantly. Ryūnosuke yearns for the days when he ran his own fencing school, while Ohama longs to go to the theater and mingle with the wives of other young samurai. Each blames the other for their current situation.

In order to satisfy his pathological need for violence and murder, Ryūnosuke has joined a pro-Bakufu assassination squad, the Shinchōgumi. One night Ryūnosuke and other members of Shinchōgumi go out to assassinate a samurai suspected of associating with the imperial forces. Although they patiently stalk the man for several hours, they find they have ambushed the wrong man when they finally attack his palanquin in a remote section of Edo. The samurai riding inside is none other than the master swordsman, Shimada Toranosuke. The assassins decide to try to kill him just the same, but this decision becomes the source of their downfall. Wielding his sword with complete composure, Toranosuke methodically dispatches his thirteen opponents one by one. Ryūnosuke marvels at the mastery with which his father’s old friend defeats his attackers. Toranosuke thrusts his sword into the
entrails of one opponent, for example, only to instantly spin about and thrust it at another assailant attacking him from behind--with the first man still impaled on his blade. As he watches Toranosuke's show of superhuman skill, suddenly Ryûnosuke becomes aware of the great gulf that lies between his own level of competence as a swordsman and that of Toranosuke.

Ryûnosuke looked on with utter fascination. Never before had he seen such splendid skill, nor doubtless would he ever again. Try as he might, this was not the kind of exhibition one witnessed every day. At first he thought, "This Shimada doesn't look like much!" But his scorn soon gave way to the realization that Toranosuke was not an opponent to be taken lightly. As he looked on, his sense of wonder grew, until at length he marveled, "Is this a man or a god?"

His estimation of Toranosuke's skill had changed by succeeding degrees. By the time Toranosuke had dispatched every last one of his assailants, Ryûnosuke was left dumbfounded. In the end, he reached the conclusion, "Let things come to this, and I am no match for the man." It was a realization more painful than having his life taken away. No matter how he looked at the situation, there was no other conclusion to be drawn."

The dreams Ryûnosuke had cherished of one day defeating Toranosuke, whom Ryûnosuke's father had held up as the model of a true warrior, are completely shattered. Ryûnosuke leaves the scene without even attempting to challenge Toranosuke.

After the failed assassination, Ryûnosuke spends much of his time at home drowning his sorrows in sake. Since the alcohol has a soothing effect on his personality, it actually helps make life with Ohama easier. One snowy afternoon as Ryûnosuke is in his cups, he becomes nostalgic for his life in his home village of Sawai. Ohama, too, would like to return to her hometown and see her family again. The two begin planning a return visit to Musashi. At that point,

16 Daibosatsu tôge 1: Kôgen ittô ryû, 129.
however, the leader of the Shinchôgumi, Serizawa Kamo, appears and admonishes Ryûnosuke to restore the honor of the Shinchôgumi by killing Toranosuke. Realizing that he is no match for Toranosuke, Ryûnosuke begs off. But Serizawa mentions that other members of the Shinchôgumi have been approached by a young samurai named Hyoma who is hunting for Ryûnosuke. Angered at Ryûnosuke’s lack of action, the other Shinchôgumi members may switch sides and assist Hyoma in accomplishing his vendetta. Ryûnosuke promises to think matters over and arranges to meet Serizawa later.

Ohama has eavesdropped on her husband’s conversation from the kitchen. When she hears Hyoma’s name, she realizes immediately that her former brother-in-law is planning to avenge Bunnojô’s death. Ohama doubts whether Hyoma can defeat Ryûnosuke, and she begins to feel guilt for her role in Bunnojô’s death. (Ryûnosuke has convinced her that it was because of her meddling that the match with Bunnojô had turned fatal: in short, both men were driven by their desire for Ohama.) Now she is in danger of risking the life of Bunnojô’s little brother. When Hyoma sends a letter challenging Ryûnosuke, Ohama resolves to take matters into her own hands once again. In the wee hours of the morning, Ryûnosuke returns from his meeting with Serizawa. Ohama tries to wheedle him into taking her back to her hometown, but he announces brusquely that he is leaving for Kyoto, immediately after he has taken care of Hyoma. Ohama realizes that she must act quickly. When Ryûnosuke drifts off to sleep, she decides to cut his throat. Ryûnosuke awakens just in time, however, and wrests the dagger from her hands. Ohama bolts from the house and flees into the early morning gloom leaving

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behind a wailing child.

It was still dark, but dawn would be breaking soon. The eastern sky was already beginning to whiten. Ryūnosuke could see Ohama’s figure retreat into the distance as she ran along the road that stretched from Shinmei to Hamamatsu. He finally chased her down in front of the stand of pines outside the Mountain Gate of Zōjō Temple.

"Wait!"
Ryūnosuke grabbed Ohama by the scruff of the neck and pulled her to the ground.

"Let me go!"
"Hama! You betrayed me for Hyoma!"
"Please kill me quickly!"

To kill someone was an event of little significance for Ryūnosuke. It was no great adventure either. Even in the midst of attacking an opponent, he was able to remain calm and collected. He glared at Ohama’s disheveled form.

"Ryūnosuke, I beg you to kill me and that you, too, shall be killed."

The sky had brightened considerably by then. When they looked at each other, they could see each other’s faces clearly. Ohama had passed the point of screaming hysterically for help or to be let go. Now her speech sounded quite reasonable.

"Since I refuse to resist and am letting you kill me, I ask that you, too, meekly die at Hyoma’s hand. You see, if you do that, everything will be set right. We’ll eliminate all the sins we’ve committed. Don’t you see, Ryūnosuke?"

From inside the main gate of the Zōjōji came the sound of footsteps, and then the ringing of the temple bell.

"Murder! Someone’s being murdered!"
At last, Ryūnosuke killed Ohama."

At that moment, Hyoma, accompanied by Yohachi, is heading for the place set aside for his duel with Ryūnosuke when he hears the commotion in the temple grounds. They run toward the grove of pine trees by the temple and there discover Ohama bathed in blood. Hyoma is grief stricken at the sight of his sister-in-law’s corpse, but he resolves to go through with his duel with Ryūnosuke. But Ryūnosuke never shows up. Hyoma and Yohachi then search for him, finding only the infant Ikutarō, left behind and crying himself hoarse. Beside him is a note written in Ryūnosuke’s hand addressed to

1) Daibosatsu tōge 1: Suzukayama, 181.
Serizawa Kamo, stating his intention to rendezvous with Serizawa in Kyoto after killing Hyoma. As the letter provides the only clue to Ryûnosuke's whereabouts, Hyoma heads off to Kyoto. Yohachi takes Ohama's remains back to her home village and then heads back to Sawai with the orphaned Ikutarô. Yohachi himself had been abandoned as an infant, and he feels a special bond with Ikutarô. He resolves to raise the child as his own.

The fundamentals of the plot are in place by this point in the narrative. The remaining 39 volumes of this long novel are devoted to Ryûnosuke's cruel exploits as he wanders throughout Japan searching for ways to quench his bloodthirst and Hyoma's trials in pursuing Ryûnosuke. In the course of their respective journeys, Ryûnosuke and Hyoma meet a variety of new characters and encounter miscellaneous dangers and adventures. New characters are introduced and developed and woven into the fabric of the narrative. They often interact, through sheer coincidence, with both Ryûnosuke and Hyoma, albeit at different times.

Much of Daibosatsu tõge follows conventions employed in other popular entertainments such as kabuki, kôdan and even the fictionalized accounts of dokufu (poison women) serialized in newspapers in the late 1870s. There is the formulaic vendetta plot in which the virtuous warrior pursues his enemy throughout the country in the hope of avenge the death of a family member. There are stereotypical characters: the manipulative virago—Ohama is actually only one of several; the hulking simpleton whose ineloquence belies his spiritual sagacity; the sage/mentor—Toranosuke is only one
of several; the virtuous maiden—Omatsu, the granddaughter of
the elderly pilgrim Ryûnosuke murders in the opening scene,
is perpetually in danger; and the noble thief. The novel is
full of improbable coincidences and narrow escapes. And as
the chapters summarized above indicate, there is a great deal
of violence and sadistic eroticism.

The lack of realism (e.g., Toranosuke defeats thirteen
opponents in succession without even breaking into a sweat)
and Kaizan’s reliance on received conventions are grounds for
dismissing Daibosatsu tôge as just another melodramatic
potboiler. However, his introduction of Ryûnosuke, the evil
villain, as the protagonist is a refreshing innovation. His
nihilism and cruel streak are clearly defined by his initial
gratuitous and brutal murder of the elderly pilgrim, his
kidnap, rape and murder of Ohama, his killing of Bunnojô, his
actions in league with the cutthroats of the Shinchôgumi, and
his periodic slaying of unsuspecting travelers (tsujigiri).

Scholar Hashimoto Mineo suggests that Ryûnosuke’s nihilism is
different from that depicted by the Russian author
Dostoyevsky. The nihilism of Dostoyevsky’s characters derives
from their rejection of established morality in favor of the
revolutionary ideals they espouse. Ryûnosuke, on the other
hand, espouses no theories of moral behavior and seems
utterly lacking in any moral sense. His nihilism is not a
rejection of existing mores but a form of self-assertion.
This reading echoes that of Ôya Sôichi, who asserts that
Ryûnosuke’s egoism is the principal attraction for bourgeois
readers.  

72 Hashimoto Mineo, 251; Ôya Sôichi, “Kikagaku senjô no ranbôsha ” (One who dances wildly on a
geometric line) Chûô kôron (March 1928), 34
Nihilistic cruelty depicted in Daibosatsu tôge is not limited to Ryûnosuke’s character, however. Even the characters who are portrayed as “righteous” exhibit a certain sadism. Witness the cool brutality of even the enlightened master swordsman Shimada Toranosuke as he cuts down the members of the Shinchôgumi who try to assassinate him. Hyoma, too, has his evil moments. Desperate to buy out the contract of a high ranking courtesan in Yoshiwara with whom he has become infatuated, he hires himself out as an assassin to raise the money. It should be noted, however, that Hyoma, who is perhaps the most stereotypically noble character in the story, lacks the killer instinct that enables Ryûnosuke and even Toranosuke to kill with calm efficiency. After bungling his first assassination attempt, a somber Hyoma abruptly drops his plan of redeeming the prostitute.

More representative of a virtuous character with a sadistic streak is the chivalrous thief, Shichibei, who first appears in the narrative following Ryûnosuke’s murder of the aged pilgrim on the Great Bodhisattva Pass. This is one of the important subplots in the narrative. Shichibei arrives at to find the young girl who had gone to fetch water weeping beside her grandfather’s corpse. He takes the girl, Omatsu, to Edo in order to return her to her relatives. But upon their arrival in Edo, Omatsu’s aunt—Otaki, the vain wife of a prosperous merchant—denies even knowing the girl. She refuses to speak directly with Shichibei, conveying her disdain and through one of the shop’s apprentices. Presently, she offers Shichibei a pay-off, inferring that his story is merely a pretext for extorting money. Shichibei angrily declares that, given the circumstances, he will raise Omatsu
as his own daughter. He and Omatsu depart, but that night, Shichibei returns and stealthfully breaks into Otaki’s house. Since Otaki’s husband is away on business, she is amusing herself with a foppish young lover. The nervous young man hears sounds outside Otaki’s room.

“Oh! It’s footsteps!”
“It’s probably just the cat.”
“No, this was definitely a person’s footsteps.”
“You’re such a spineless fellow! Such timidity!” Here, open the door and see.”
“Hello.”
Indeed there was a man standing there.
“What the...?! Who are you?”
“I’m nobody, only the peasant that you chased from the front of your shop this afternoon....”
“What?!”
“First things first. Let me come in.” He entered the room, sat down and crossed his legs, then pulled back the black kerchief which concealed his features. It was Shichibei all right. He reached into his breast pocket, drew out a dagger and thrust it into the tatami mat.
“If...if it’s money you’ve come for, I’ll give you whatever you want. But please, please, spare my life....”
“Missus, you’re always talking about money. You tried to buy me off this afternoon, too. Like I told you then, I didn’t come to see you because I want money.”
“Then take whatever valuables you like... I’ll lead you to the storehouse.”
“You don’t give up, do you? I didn’t come tonight to steal anything.”
Otaki started to tremble, when, as if the idea just dawned on her, she said, “Oh, I understand. I understand. Your story from this afternoon - the matter concerning the daughter of Hikosaburô of Honmachi. Well, I only heard bits and pieces from the apprentice. I sincerely apologize. She is my niece, no mistake about it.... Uh, thank you for bringing her. I’ll take her from you right away and raise her as if she were my own child. I must beg your pardon for this afternoon. The damned apprentice is always so careless. We’ve done you a great disservice....”
“Too late, too late. Don’t try talking nonsense now. I’ve made certain the girl will know no further suffering. I’ve adopted her, she has no connection with you anymore.”
“Then I’ll give you money to help raise her.”
“Idiot! Does a child who’s no relation to you need your support?!”
“Please, just spare my life!”
“I never said I’d take your life.”
“Then, you’ll spare me?”
“I’ll spare your life, but I can’t just leave empty-handed.”
“Money, then...”
“I don’t need money.”
“Well...”
Shichibei sneered coldly at Otaki’s desperation.
“Missus, I have no other desire than to make you feel shame. That’s why I’ve come.”
“Shame...?”
Shichibei, watching the color drain from her face, added pleasantly, “There’s nothing to be scared about. When I say ‘shame,’ it’s not as though I’m going to toy with you. You see, ever since I was a child, I’ve been a peevish sort, the type who always has to retaliate, to give back in kind whatever he gets, whether good or bad. That’s the reason I’ve come back tonight, to thank you for this afternoon. Now, Missus, this may seem a little rude, but I’m going to strip you...”
“What?!”
“I’d like you to get undressed, and then I’m going to lightly tie you up. Then, Missus, I want you to wait out in front of your shop, right where you summarily dismissed Omatsu and me this afternoon. Understand? In the morning, people will pass by and they won’t be able to overlook a fine merchant’s wife like yourself standing there stark naked. Surely they’ll do something for you. You may feel a little lonely, but it’ll only be for a little while. And fortunately, your young man is here. He’ll keep you company...”
“Somebody help! Help us!”
The two began to shout. But, after that, there was only the sound of Otaki writhing on the ground.”

While Shichibei’s revenge on Otaki is not as brutal as Ryūnosuke’s kidnapping, rape and murder of Ohama, there is a slightly sadistic eroticism in the way that he chooses to humiliate her. One can probably assume that the projection of sado-erotic imagery is a major source of the novel’s popularity right down to the present, though the eroticism of the work is clothed in the ideology of the warrior’s code or justifiable retribution. The breezy conversational style of the passage is representative of much of Daibosatsu tōge. Kaizan often uses extended passages of dialogue to define his characters and advance the plot. And while such a style does
not provide characters with a great deal of psychological
depth, it is perfectly suited to a work of popular fiction
which after all, is plot driven.

Later in the narrative, we learn the details of
Shichibei's life. He developed his passion for burglary while
still a boy. However, whatever he stole he immediately shared
with his playmates. What he enjoyed was the challenge of
breaking into a house and stealing something without being
caught. When he was serving in the home of a provincial
samurai, his master tried unsuccessfully to break him of his
kleptomania. His master released him from service with a
warning that his thieving would one day get him in serious
trouble. Shichibei took the warning to heart and learned to
control his urge. He worked hard as a farmer and married a
beautiful girl. However, she proved to be unfaithful and
after giving birth to what may have been another man's child,
she ran off with her lover and left Shichibei with the baby.
His reaction to this unhappy affair was to abandon the baby
in the woods and take up the life of a burglar. But
Shichibei's hard edge is tempered by a certain kindness. For
example, he only burglarizes the estates of wealthy merchants
and samurai far removed from his home village. Moreover, he
does not use force in his burglaries, but merely slips in,
steals his victim's valuables and slips out. Moreover, his
paternal affection for Omatsu is genuine.

Shichibei is an example of Kaizan's reliance on the
stock characters of the popular arts. The noble thief is
depicted in *shiranami mono* (tales of virtuous thieves) of the
vaudeville narrator, as well as in the kabuki of the mid
nineteenth-century." Ohama, too, is a stock character: the manipulative "poison woman" (dokufu) common in kôdan, kabuki and newspaper serials from the late Edo to the mid Meiji. However, Kaizan has invested her with a slightly wider range of emotional qualities than the average dokufu. If at times she is deceitful, capricious, manipulative, at others she is sincere, dutiful, remorseful. For all her self-assertiveness, she occasionally exhibits values more in keeping with conventional morality. For example, she feels a sense of duty to the family of her late husband, Bunnojô. This sense of duty, coupled with her remorse for having been an "unfaithful" wife," compels her to sacrifice herself in an effort to save her brother-in-law Ryoma from being killed by Ryûnosuke. Kaizan’s attempt at imparting some complexity to Ohama’s character is framed by the feudal value system of the period novel.

Working within the context of this feudal morality, Kaizan also attempts to imbue Ryûnosuke with psychological complexity. Although Ryûnosuke is a cold-blooded killer, he is also capable of chivalry, as when he comes to the aid of a young lady who is being badgered by palanquin bearers in the Suzukayama volume. In the Miwa no kamisugi (Divine trees of Miwa) volume, the paternalistic warmth expressed by the elderly Lord Ueda of Miwa elicits filial feelings in Ryûnosuke, and he begins to regret his estrangement from his

\[\text{Two famous examples of shiranami mono are the kôdan Nezumi Kozôjirôkichi by Shôrin Hakuen (1832-1905) and the kabuki play Benten the Thief (Benten Kozô, 1862) by Kawatake Mokuami (1816-93).}

\[\text{While it is true that Ohama was raped by Ryûnosuke, Kaizan portrays her as feeling responsible for the incident: through her meddling in Bunnojô’s business, she precipitated his death. Such morality reflects the Neo-Confucian (and Victorian!) notion that a wife should meekly obey her husband. In other words, the morality of Daibosatsu tõge, as reflected in Ohama's character, is as much a product of the Meiji era as the Edo era. See Daibosatsu tõge 1: Suzukayama, 174-81.}\]
own father. He even prays for his father’s health, like a true filial son. There are also instances in which Ryûnosuke expresses tender longing for the son he abandoned, admitting at one point the heartache he feels whenever sees a little boy of about the same age. But these glimmers of humanity in the cold-hearted Ryûnosuke are short lived. Kaizan prefers to emphasize Ryûnosuke’s unremittently evil nature, rather than portray him as a psychologically tortured individual. In fact, as the narrative progresses, Ryûnosuke’s character becomes increasingly one-dimensional.

Following his brief stay with Lord Ueda in the Miwa no kamisugi volume, Ryûnosuke joins a terrorist group loyal to the Imperialist cause, the Tenchûgumi. After their rebellion at Totsukawa is put down by Shogunal forces, remnants of Tenchûgumi flee into the mountains. Ryûnosuke travels in a band of survivors who hole up in the mountain shack of a game hunter. The Shogunal forces track them down and attempt to flush them out. In the process a keg of the hunter’s gunpowder ignites. The resulting blast kills all of Ryûnosuke’s confederates and leaves him blinded, but he manages to escape nevertheless. After resting at a hot spring resort, he begins to drift across Japan. He settles for a time in the city of Kôfu, where, despite his blindness, he resumes his former practice of killing unsuspecting travelers. His nightly murders begin to cause a stir in Kôfu, so he flees with his new lover, Ogin. They end up in the village of Yahata, the home town of Ryûnosuke’s murdered lover, Ohama. Staying in Ohama’s old home town proves disquieting for Ryûnosuke. One night he sets out to ease his torment by making an “offering of blood” to Ohama’s spirit.
After killing a peasant girl near the town's water mill, Ryûnosuke returns to his lodgings. Ogin awakens and he asks her to write up a strange account for him, dictating to her the terms to be entered in each column: "girl whose name is unknown;" "slightly over eighteen of age;" and "below the left breast." When she looks puzzled and asks what it is all about, he replies that he is keeping track of his offerings for a deceased person. Ogin is more puzzled than ever, but questions him no further. The following morning, when Ogin learns from a woman of the village about the peasant girl's murder, she hurries to rouse Ryûnosuke.

"Dear?" Ogin stared into Ryûnosuke's face. "Dear?" she called a second time.
"What?" Ryûnosuke answered wearily.
"Where did you go last night? Did you go over by the water mill by chance?"
"I went by the water mill."
"And what did you do there?"
"I didn't do anything."
"Did you see anything?"
"Nothing in particular...besides, how could I have seen anything anyhow, even if I wanted to?"
"You didn't run into an eighteen-year-old village girl along the way, did you?"
Ryunosuke began to laugh, but what his laughter meant, Ogin had no idea.
"This is awful!" Ogin suddenly felt as if cold water had been dumped on her. Ryûnosuke rolled over in bed and made no effort to reply.
Ogin, utterly horrified, looked first at Ryûnosuke lying with his back turned toward her, and then at the record of account which he had dictated last night and she, despite her misgivings, had obediently written down. She stood up abruptly, shook Ryûnosuke from his slumber, snatched up the record of account and thrust it before Ryûnosuke's unseeing eyes.

"'Below the left breast'...It was you, wasn't it? You're the one who murdered that poor, innocent village girl, running her through below the left breast and then throwing her body in a ditch. Why did you do such a thing? Why would you have to do something like that? And then, when you come home, you make me write down this account. What is the meaning if such behavior?!!"
“This isn’t the first time” said Ryūnosuke, sitting up. “You probably heard the gossip when we were still in Kōfu. Those nightly murders which caused such a commotion in the city? They were all my doing.”

“What? You’re the one who committed all those murders?”

“It’s a little late for you to act shocked. Well, last night the craving came back again, and I grew restless. By and by, I went out and killed the girl.”

“Oh, what is this dreadful thing, this sickness that makes you want to kill people?”

“It is not an sickness, it is my calling. It has been my calling up to this point, and it will be from now on. I have no occupation, other than killing people. Aside from murder, I have no pleasure. Nothing to live for.”

“I don’t know what to say. You...you’re not human.”

“Of course, I don’t have the heart of a human being. ‘Humans’ live in droves, the earth swarms with them, yet none of them are worth a damn.”

“Are human beings so hateful to you?”

“Nonsense! Because you see some value in mankind, you think my murders must stem from hatred. Well, as far as I’m concerned, human beings aren’t even worth hating. No matter how many I cut down, I don’t see it as being a crime or a sin.”

As this passage illustrates, by the time Kaizan wrote the Manshin oshō (The abbot Manshin) volume in 1919 (the volume from which this scene is taken) whatever human affection had smoldered in Ryūnosuke’s heart in the Miwa no kamisugï volume (published in 1915) has completely disappeared. Ryūnosuke’s character has become so thoroughly evil that he can take pleasure only in destruction and murder. The leftist critic Nakatani Hiroshi interprets the violent destruction portrayed in Daibosatsu tōge and other jidai shōsetsu as vicarious rebellion waged on behalf of emasculated left-wing intellectuals.” There is evidence that Kaizan was disturbed by the rice riots of 1918 and the miserable economic and social conditions in Japan following

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16 Daibosatsu tōge 4: Manshin oshō, 360-63.
17 Nakatani Hiroshi, “Taishū bungaku honshitsu ron,” quoted in Itō Kazuya, “Daibosatsu tōge kenkyūshi to bunken mokuroku” (The history of research on Daibosatsu tōge, with a list of research materials) in Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō, bessatsu: Daibosatsu tōge, 291.
the First World War." Ryūnosuke's contempt for humanity may
be as well a generalized outrage against various aspects of
Japanese society, including the publishing industry.

Kaizan made no secret of his disdain for the
commercialism of the publishing industry. As a writer
influenced by Tolstoy's principles regarding "good art,"
Kaizan believed in that literature was meant to unite mankind
in common feelings. Nevertheless, by 1919 he had spent enough
time in journalism to realize that what management wanted was
violence and sex, that is, what would sell newspapers. In the
Taishō era, publishers became less interested in ideas and
ideals than they had been during Meiji, and more interested
in circulation figures. The change in Ryūnosuke's
cororization may be read as a reflection of Kaizan's
displeasure with the commodification of print culture.
Although Ryūnosuke had manifested traces of humanity in
earlier installments, by 1919 Kaizan had decided that
Ryūnosuke's sole reason for being was murder and mayhem. As
if to acknowledge his obligation to supply what readers and
editors want, he puts these words in Ryūnosuke's mouth: "I
have no occupation, other than killing people." Kaizan's
frustration may also be inferred in Ryūnosuke's contempt for
humanity. He had stated as early as 1910 that his intent in
pursuing literature was to benefit his fellow Japanese
(kokorozashi wa tenka ni ari). Yet producing formulaic serial
fiction laden with sex and violence afforded few
opportunities to do so. He succeeded in capturing the
public's mood of despair in the nihilism of Ryūnosuke, but by
1919 his protagonist becomes completely misanthropic, and

begins manifesting the characteristics of a Nietzschean

\(^{7}\) See Kaizan's "Jika nenpyō" in Nakazo Kaizan: kokô no shisakusha, 244.
superman, crushing lesser men and women who are “not worth hating.” Unable to resolve the contradiction between his Tolstoian desire to create “good art” and the limitations of producing formulaic literature for the commercial publishing industry, he turned to publishing on his own.”

Kaizan had been interested in “home publishing” since 1915, from which time he began publishing two irregularly circulating magazines, Tegami no kawari (In place of letters) and Rinjin no tomo (Neighbors’ companion) which he distributed to friends and acquaintances. Kaizan wrote virtually all the articles and features carried in these magazines, then typeset and printed each edition. He continued publishing Rinjin no tomo until 1943 and even serialized Daibosatsu tôge in the magazine from September 1928 to July 1930 and again from March 1933 to May 1934. He also brought out another magazine in 1935 entitled Tôge (The pass). In fact, from late 1928 to 1943 the majority of Kaizan’s fiction and essays were published in one of these independent periodicals, illustrating concretely his dislike of the commercial publishing industry.”

Kaizan had a number of experiences around this time which exacerbated his already considerable distaste for the commercialism of the publishing industry. In 1918 he accepted a cash advance from the Asahi shibun to write a series of travel essays on the stations along the old Tôkai highway. After extensive research, he submitted some three hundred manuscript pages to the newspaper. But an economically driven disagreement between Asahi shibun management and the editorial staff led to the abandonment of the project without a word being published. This kindled in Kaizan a bitterness toward the Asahi which he cherished for the rest of his life.

Then, in September 1919 a rumor began circulating at Miyako shibun that management was preparing to terminate Daibosatsu tôge because it felt the novel was running too long. Kaizan began negotiations with the Fukuoka nichinichi shibun to carry the novel, but in the end, he consented management’s requests to continue serialization in Miyako shibun. Although he continued to serialize the novel in Miyako shibun until October 1921, he resigned from the staff of the paper in November 1919 just before the company came under new ownership. NKZ, vol. 20, 403; Miyako shibunshi, 270.

NKZ, vol. 20, 403; Miyako shibunshi, 224-25, 270.

NKZ, vol. 20, 414-17, Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshô, bessatsu: Daibosatsu tôge, 311.
If through his depiction of Ryûnosuke’s murderous actions Kaizan yields to the commercially motivated demands of his publisher to provide the public with what they want, at the same time he undermines that commercialism by gradually limiting his literary output to private publishing. Kaizan was subverting the genre of popular literature even as he was helping to define it. His attempts at offering social criticism notwithstanding, the formulas he relied upon in writing Daibosatsu tôge tended to reinforce the hegemony of the mass media. The contradiction of his work, manifest in the effort to incorporate an awareness of contemporary social problems within the trite conventions of jidai shôsetsu, represents a problem that has continued to plague writers working in formulaic genres up to the present.

3.3 Critical response to Daibosatsu tôge

As indicated above, Kaizan’s acknowledgment of reader’s letters following the completion of the first volume of Daibosatsu tôge in 1914, as well as Kimura Ki’s anecdotal evidence regarding the broad-based appeal of the novel indicate that popular response to Daibosatsu tôge was favorable from the time of its serialization in the Miyako shinbun. However, reaction among members of Japan’s literary establishment was not forthcoming until the mid 1920s, around the same time that popular authors such as Kikuchi Kan, Shirai Kôji and Naoki Sanjûgo began promoting taishû bungaku
in various literary magazines." As the attention of the literary establishment turned toward mass literature, critics and authors began to look again at Daibosatsu tōge and to regard it as the progenitor of taishū bungaku. And while Kaizan welcomed the fact that new readers were attracted to his novel, he disputed the claim that Daibosatsu tōge was mass literature or that he was a taishū bungaku writer.

A second reason for renewed interest in Daibosatsu tōge was its first commercial publication in book form in 1921. The owner of publishing house Shunjūsha, at the persistent urging of Kimura Ki, who was one of its junior employees, negotiated with Kaizan to publish the Kōgen ittō ryū volume of Daibosatsu tōge. Sales of the book exceeded expectations, and a deal was quickly struck to publish the remaining volumes. Kaizan had published the very first edition of Daibosatsu tōge in book form using his own funds four years earlier. In fact, he set the type himself and printed the first edition on a printing press set up in his home. Binding and distribution were handled by his younger brother Kōsaku, who operated a used book dealership.

Kikuchi Kan had been involved in writing domestic novels (katei shōsetsu) and newspaper serials since 1920 and had been an especially strong advocate of literature as entertainment for a mass audience after the Kantō earthquake in 1923. Sensing the emergence of new trends in publishing, Kōdansha owner Noma Seiichi launched the magazine King in 1924, which targeted a mass audience with highly entertaining serials and short works of fiction. As taishū bungaku gained momentum, members of the literary establishment began to debate in print the merits of the new genre. Shirai Kōji, himself a writer of popular historical fiction, championed taishū bungaku, forming an association for mass fiction writers in 1924 called the "Nijūichi-nichi kai" (Society of the 21st). Shirai also launched the association's magazine entitled Taishū bungei in 1925. Naoki Sanjūro, another jidai shōsetsu writer, was an active member of the Nijūichi-nichi kai and, like Shirai, contributed articles in support of taishū bungaku to literary journals, including Kikuchi Kan's Bungei shunju and Chūō kōron. See Inagaki Tatsurō and Shimomura Fujio, eds., Nihon bungaku no rekishi, vol. 11, 364, 414 and 425, Taishū bungaku no rekishi, vol. 1, 60-61.

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Early reactions to Daibosatsu tōge among members of the literary establishment are largely anecdotal. For example, in his long serial essay "Jōzetsu roku" (A record of my loquacity, February - December 1927), Tanizaki Jun‘ichiro remarks that he first heard of Daibosatsu tōge from Izumi Kyōka in 1919 or 1920.

Kaizan's Daibosatsu tōge is terribly popular now, but as far as I know, the person who was the first to notice this work was Izumi Kyōka.

"I tell you, it's no mere popular novel. It's plan is quite different. By all means, read it and see for yourself!" I think it was a certain evening in 1919 or 1920 when Kyōka praised the novel. He, Satomi [Ton] and I were drinking at a teahouse in Akasaka. At the time, Izumi was kind enough to give us a rough outline of the narrative, but afterward I completely forgot about it. Then, after the novel began to be carried in the evening edition of the Osaka Mainichi shinbun [publication in this paper began in January 1924 with serialization of the novel's 21st volume], I went back and made a point of reading through the first part of the novel. But I didn't read it all in one sitting. The first time was when I caught a cold while staying at the Nara Hotel and had taken to my bed. I remember calling for and reading the second volume and the fourth volume. The second time I was at home, and read the remaining volumes, again while sick in bed. Because of this novel I was able to greatly relieve the tedium of my illness, and for that I thank Kaizan. And, of course, I completely agree with Izumi’s opinion. It is "no mere popular novel."”

The popular novelist Sasaki Mitsuzō is the source of a reaction to Daibosatsu tōge expressed by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. In a 1925 conversation with his friend Akutagawa, Sasaki lamented the fact that he had to abandon his dreams of becoming a serious writer because he needed money to support his family. He said he earned much more writing fiction for a mass audience. Akutagawa consoled his friend by reassuring him that creating entertaining literature was an important endeavor. Certainly it was nothing to be ashamed of.

Look ahead to one hundred years from now. When they put together a literary encyclopedia, most of the writers active today will probably have no more than two or three lines devoted to their careers, but Nakazato Kaizan will get a full two or three pages!...The ordinary novel will disappear after fifty years or so, but Daibosatsu tõge will be around for one or two hundred years. Even then, it will be valued highly.”

Akutagawa’s remarks give an indication of the extent of Daibosatsu tõge’s popularity; they also show that the novel was regarded by some members of the literary establishment as more than “mere popular fiction.” But what was it about the novel that elicited such a reaction? Tanizaki articulates one reason in “Jõzetsu roku.” For Tanizaki, whose fiction is often associated with diabolism (akuma shugi), Daibosatsu tõge’s appeal lies in the cold cruelty of the protagonist, Tsukue Ryûnosuke.

This work is definitely not a novel with an abiding interest in swashbuckling. The fact is the swashbuckling is nothing more than the surface layer; what courses through the depths of the work is an icy coldness with Tsukue Ryûnosuke at its core, a coldness that penetrates the marrow of one’s bones. Previously, when I heard a rumor that Kikuchi Kan was going to dramatize this novel, I thought, “This work is not up Kikuchi’s alley. To the contrary, it is perfect for Sato Haruo. If Haruo were to adapt a scene from this novel for the stage...then the chill which permeates the work will come across.”

[T]here are many character-types portrayed, but that is all; the author does not probe their personalities. This weakness is especially evident in the handling of women: Otoyo, Okimi, Oyuki, etc., they all give the reader the same impression. However, mysteriously, Ryûnosuke’s character, and his alone, is truly alive and active. Every scene in which Ryûnosuke appears, without exception, is dazzling. With the long novels of the past, whether it be Shui hu chuan [Suikô-den or The Water Margin] or Les Miserables, the appearance of many characters generally becomes the main point. The author is not able to portray the personality of any one character in much depth. But this is not necessarily


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a problem, because the appeal of these long novels lies elsewhere. At any rate, if Kaizan is able to portray only his protagonist Ryûnosuke, then, as with those long novels I mentioned, it is sufficient even if the other characters are merely types. Personally, I wonder whether Ryûnosuke’s personality does not lurk within the author himself. It is not as though Ryûnosuke’s interior is described with special care. But by merely appearing in a scene, Ryûnosuke conveys a vaguely ghoulish impression. In fact, Ryûnosuke’s character seems all the more alive due to the very absence of a lengthy description or tedious explanation."

The penetrating coldness of Tsukue Ryûnosuke’s character, the vaguely ghoulish quality which he embodied, his unremitting cruelty, these are what attracted Tanizaki to Daibosatsu tôge. Quite possibly it was this same macabre quality that appealed to the gothic sensibilities of Izumi Ryôka and the decadent aesthetic of Akutagawa Ryûnosuke. The lack of psychological depth of Kaizan’s characters is duly noted, but it is more than compensated by the chilling nature of his protagonist. Tanizaki’s observation regarding the monotony of the female characters appearing in Daibosatsu tôge has been echoed by a number of critics writing in the years since “Jôzetsu roku” was published.” In fact, Kaizan himself alludes to the lack of variation among Ryûnosuke’s female foils. In the Suzukayama volume, when Ryûnosuke first lays eyes on Otoyo--the young woman whom he gallantly saves from the belligerent palanquin bearer and eventually takes as his lover--he is amazed by her resemblance to Ohama, whom he has just murdered. “Ryûnosuke closed his eyes and imagined the woman’s visage, listening to the voice that pressed upon his ears. In every respect, she was the living image of Ohama.”88

88 "Jôzetsu roku," 74-75.
87 For example, Ozaki Hotsuki (Nakazato Kaizan: kokô no shisakusha, 28-29), Hashimoto Mineo ("Daibosatsu tôge ron," 268-69) and Ito Kazuya ("Nakazato Kaizan to josei," 120-21).
86 Daibosatsu tôge 1: Suzukayama, 200.
Kaizan’s portrayal of Otoyo, and the majority of Ryūnosuke’s lovers as the mirror image of Ohama serves several purposes. First, it continually reminds readers of Ryūnosuke’s brutal rape and murder of Ohama, thus reinforcing his cruelty. It also serves to remind readers of his sexual prowess, because all the women he encounters succumb to his powerful personality. Moreover, it reminds Ryūnosuke of Ohama’s betrayal, and thus perpetually renews his hatred of humanity and for woman in particular. It also evokes a Buddhistic theme of karmic cause and effect. Of all the people Ryūnosuke murders, only Ohama haunts him. In retribution for killing her, he is destined to continue meeting her and suffering pangs of guilt. This karmic subtext is further strengthened by the novel’s recurring theme of the abandonment of children. Yohachi, who was abandoned as an infant, takes charge of the baby Ikutarô after Ryūnosuke murders Ohama and deserts the child. Omatsu, orphaned when Ryūnosuke murders her grandfather at the beginning of the novel, later becomes the guardian of the illegitimate daughter born to Okimi, who has died as a result of the deprivations of grinding poverty and her bitter disappointment in a love affair with a man above her station.

Other members of the literary establishment also found Tsukue Ryūnosuke’s character the most compelling aspect of Daibosatsu tōge. The leftist critic Nakatani Hiroshi suggested that the violence of Daibosatsu tōge (and of all jidai shōsetsu) gave leftist intellectuals an outlet for their frustration in the face of the economic recession of the 1920s and the Kantō earthquake, the growth of monopoly capital at the expense of laborers and the lack of social
relevance of much of the autobiographical fiction being produced by the literary establishment. But Nakatani fails to address the appeal of Tsukue Ryūnosuke to the non-proletarian sector of the reading public.

However, in his 1928 essay “Kikagaku senjō no ranbusha” (One who dances wildly on a geometric line), the critic Ôya Sōichi insightfully discusses this attraction. According to Ôya, the appeal of Ryūnosuke lies in his egoism, in his completely free exercise of self-will. Ôya describes Ryūnosuke as a veritable Nietzschean superman.

Tsukue Ryūnosuke is a free being, just like a god. No one restricts him. He adheres to nothing. The only thing that holds any fascination for him is this: the moment of pleasure he derives from extinguishing the life of those poor souls who have received the gift of life in this cruel world and who, while struggling through an existence which is no match for death, vainly seek only to go on living. Ryūnosuke exploits this pleasure to the fullest. Like a bee flying from flower to flower in search of nectar, Ryūnosuke, seeking this momentary pleasure, goes murdering one person after the other. Although he joined the Shinchōgumi, it was definitely not for the purpose of defending the [Tokugawa] Bakufu. And although he became a member of the Tenchūgumi, it was definitely not in order to attempt an imperial restoration.... Ryūnosuke is completely free from all the obligations of contemporary society. He tramples upon all human emotions. He is a superman who is able to perform a wild, nihilistic dance along the invisible line which separates life and death—that geometric line which has neither length nor breadth.89

Ôya’s reading of Tsukue Ryūnosuke as a superman completely free from political or ethical strictures resonates with the interpretation of leftist intellectuals like Nakatani Hiroshi. However, what Ôya finds most fascinating is the fact that such a violently revolutionary character could be so warmly embraced by the bourgeoisie.

Modern society is a grand novel which takes as its protagonist an entity far more unfeeling, far more cruel,

89 Ôya Sōichi, 34.
far more brutally merciless, far more typically nihilistic than Tsukue Ryûnosuke, namely, “money.” See how completely money subjugates, controls and dictates our feelings, our ideals, our scholarship, our art, our religion, our education, our sense of honor, our sense of disgrace, our love, our existence. This is an undeniable reality. Yet see how this reality is perverted, distorted and obscured by the “loyalty and filial piety” taught by our educators, by the “love” preached by our religionists, by the “justice” advocated by our legal experts and by the “duty and compassion” by which all members of our society are bound to each other. The existence of modern man is an obstacle race upon which each one’s fate is staked and in which all must dash for the finish line of “self-interest,” skillfully negotiating the hurdles of “loyalty and filial piety,” “love,” “justice,” and “duty and compassion.”

However, if a single Titan should appear on the scene who, disregarding the rules of this obstacle race, tramples all the hurdles underfoot and calmly advances toward the finish line, then all of those people with their heads caught in the rungs of the ladder of “love,” who are unable to free themselves, and all those people entangled hand and foot in the net of “duty and compassion” and left flailing about will look at the Titan’s enormous figure and will be in awe of him. They will admire and envy him. They will aspire to be like him.”

Ôya suggests that Daibosatsu tôge has given readers a protagonist who fully embodies unmitigated self-interest, who most closely approximates the Titanic ideal illustrated in the passage cited above. He concludes that this is why bourgeois readers have welcomed Daibosatsu tôge so enthusiastically. They regard Ryûnosuke as the incarnation of the capitalist ideal of naked egoism. However, noting that Ryûnosuke is as utterly indifferent to money—the god of modern capitalist society—as he is to human feelings or ethical codes, Ôya himself regards Daibosatsu tôge as the “literature of revolution” (kakumei bungaku). Thus, he marvels that the novel has the completely opposite effect on its bourgeois readers.

Ôya Sôichi, 35.
Readers from diverse backgrounds have read *Daibosatsu tôge* differently, some as entertainment, some as rebellion, some as social commentary. While I have focused on the critical response to *Daibosatsu tôge* of Kaizan’s contemporaries, the novel has continued to generate interest in the postwar period among readers espousing a variety of ideological principles. Some, including Ozaki Hotsuki and Tsurumi Shunsuke, echo the interpretation of earlier socialist critics and read the novel as a literature of revolution. Others, such as Kuwabara Takeo, read *Daibosatsu tôge* as a profoundly complex work. Kuwabara suggests that this novel, unlike “most modern literature,” incorporates the totality of Japanese culture—from the shamanism of its prehistory, to the neo-Confucianism and warrior ethic of the feudal period, to the western influence of the modern period. In addition to illuminating the “shamanism” to which Kuwabara alludes, Hashimoto Mineo discusses at length two Buddhist themes in *Daibosatsu tôge*, impermanence and karmic retribution. The fact that the novel has continued to generate critical interest well into the postwar period is testament to Kaizan’s skill as a popular writer. The anti-hero Tsukue Ryûnosuke, perhaps his most significant contribution to the genre of popular historical fiction, still has the power to captivate audiences. Ryûnosuke endures as the prototype of the nihilistic swordsman which writers of *jidai shôsetsu* continue to follow.

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1 Kuwabara Takeo, “Daibosatsu tôge,” *Paagora* (May 1957). Reprinted as an afterward to *Daibosatsu tôge* 2, 400-403. Kuwabara asserts his belief that Nakazato Kaizan is “a better writer” than Yokomitsu Riichi because he is able to incorporate the totality of Japanese culture within *Daibosatsu tôge*, whereas “Yokomitsu’s literature, like most modern literature” is largely rooted in the western influence culture of modern Japan.

2 Hashimoto Mineo, 252-56. Hashimoto explains the shamanism of the novel in terms of Ryûnosuke’s function as the medium through which evil is visited upon the other characters.
CHAPTER 4

OSARAGI JIRÔ'S KURAMA TENGU: A ROMANTIC HERO WITH A DEMOCRATIC TWIST

I will never stain my sword with blood, unless it be for the sake of the country, for the sake of Japan!

Kurama Tengu

Fiction is a business in which one creates a truth distinct from history.

Osaragi Jirô

Readers from various walks of life—from leftist intellectuals to members of the literary establishment to middle-class salaried workers—have enjoyed Osaragi Jirô's popular historical novels depicting the adventures of the mysterious master swordsman, Kurama Tengu. As in the case of Nakazato Kaizan's Daibosatsu tōge, reaction to Osaragi's Kurama Tengu series is as varied as its readership. Critical response to the Kurama Tengu series, which began with the May 1924 publication of the short story Kimen no rōjo (Old woman in a demon mask), ranges from summary dismissal of the novels as mere escapism (see for example, the comments of Ijūin Hitoshi) to unabashed praise for their liberalism and resistance to authoritarianism (see Tsurumi Shunsuke). One reason for the variety of responses merely lies in the fact that, like Kaizan's Daibosatsu tōge, Kurama Tengu is extremely long, incorporating some forty-six "installments"
written between 1924 and 1965. The “installments” in the Kurama Tengu series range from short stories to medium-length novellas to long novels. The themes Osaragi treated in these installments naturally changed over the course of forty-one years, and later critiques would reassess the Kurama Tengu series in light of later titles. Still, the themes of liberalism (riberarizumu), humanism (jindō shugi) and anti-authoritarianism (hanken'i shugi) noted by Tsurumi Shunsuke, Komatsu Shinroku, Kata Kōji, Asai Kiyoshi and others can be detected in installments written as early as 1924.

The values associated with Taishō liberalism—democracy, pluralism, egalitarianism, and a humanistic commitment to social reform through nonviolent means—were not generally incorporated into the formulaic kōdan transcriptions popular throughout the Taishō period. Thus, Kurama Tengu’s embodiment of such new, “Western” ideas made the Kurama Tengu series appealing to urban readers, according to Osaragi’s principal biographer, Murakami Mitsuhiko. Urban middle-class readers, who constituted the social basis of Taishō liberalism were, like Osaragi, better educated and more familiar with Western concepts than previous generations. Middle-class readers craved something new to relieve the ennui they experienced during the economic depression that plagued Japan in the wake of the First World War and the Kantō earthquake, a boredom and dissatisfaction which the old-fashioned kōdan could not relieve. Murakami suggests that for these urban readers, Kurama Tengu’s appearance was like a “breath of fresh air.”

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1 "Sakuhin mokuroku" (List of works), Osaragi Jirō jidai shōsetsu zenshū (hereafter listed as OJJJSZ) vol. 24 (Tokyo: Asahi shimbunsha, 1977), 358-86.
Accompanying the development of capitalism was the formation of a new class, that of the salaried workers. And following the panic of 1920 [when the Japanese economy went into a severe depression], these miserable salaried workers came to the realization that they were powerless before the huge cogwheels of the economy. This educated petit bourgeoisie [shōshimin] found no pleasure in reading silly, old-fashioned kōdan. They needed something more intellectual, something which would represent their latent spirit of rebellion. Accordingly, Kurama Tengu's appearance on the scene was most opportune. The Western ideas and sentiments manifest in these "new kōdan" were the breath of fresh air that the petit bourgeoisie had been hoping for.  

The reference to a "latent spirit of rebellion" (senzai teki hankōshin) among the petit bourgeoisie suggests that resentment toward the government during the depression of the early 1920s was not limited to farmers, laborers and leftist intellectuals, but also extended to the middle-class. However, rather than appeal to that spirit of rebellion through gratuitous violence and sadistic eroticism as Nakazato Kaizan and other jidai shōsetsu writers did, Osaragi created a hero who embodied boldness and expert swordsmanship and at the same time was unswervingly devoted to the ideals of liberty, humanity and equality.  

Like many of the heroes portrayed in Taishō and early Shōwa era jidai shōsetsu, Kurama Tengu is a Bakumatsu-era masterless samurai committed to toppling the ruling Tokugawa government and restoring authority to the Emperor. However, his life is shrouded in more mystery than the average Imperial Loyalist: Osaragi never tells readers where Kurama Tengu comes from, where he lives, which school of fencing he studied or even what his real name is. "Kurama Tengu" is one of the aliases the hero uses and derives from the legend of the goblin on Mount Kurama who instructed the young Minamoto

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no Yoshitsune in the art of the sword. As an anti-government activist, Kurama Tengu must maintain secrecy about himself, and so he leads the shadowy existence of an outlaw. He even conceals his features in a dark kerchief (zukin) from time to time.

Yet for all the mystery surrounding Kurama Tengu, his commitment to human progress is clear. In *jidai shōsetsu* which take the Bakumatsu era as their setting, including the *Kurama Tengu* series, “progress” implies the restoration of the Emperor to power, an event which thrusts Japan into the modern era. When Kurama Tengu engages in anti-government terrorism, it is with the belief that his activism will bring about a peaceful and more harmonious society. But the violence of anti-government activism pains him. He confides to a comrade, “Even though I wrap myself in the banner of the loyalist cause, I still find killing abhorrent. The sooner the day comes when people cease to shed blood in the name of any cause, the better.” Kurama Tengu’s humanism is manifest in his reluctance to take life unless it is absolutely unavoidable. Although the *Kurama Tengu* novels incorporate a degree of violence, it is the protagonist’s embodiment of humanistic, democratic values that sets these novels apart.

Murakami observes that while Osaragi had showed an interest in socialism and Marxism while still a university student, as a “sensitive urbanite” (sensai na tokaijin), he hesitated to participate in the sometimes violent activism of

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the leftist movement. However, following the publication of the *Kimen no rôjo*, fiction became Osaragi's outlet for his awareness of society's problems. Murakami writes, "Having been thrust onto the popular literature scene by Kurama Tengu, Osaragi polished his technique for grappling with the present using the disguise known as 'historical fiction.'" Osaragi's experimentation with liberalistic themes in the early *Kurama Tengu* novels led to his more confident incorporation of similarly progressive themes in subsequent works, including the historical novels *Teru hi kumoru hi* (Sunny days, cloudy days; 1926-27), *Akô rôshi* (The masterless samurai of Akô, 1927-28) and *Yui Shôsetsu* (Yui Shôsetsu; 1929-30) as well as his "non-fiction" novels *Dorefyus jiken* (The Dreyfus Affair; 1930) and *Buuranje taishô no higeki* (The tragedy of General Boulanger; 1935-36). The focus of his historical fiction gradually shifted from escapist entertainment to more deliberate social commentary.

While left-leaning critics and scholars have read Kurama Tengu's humanism and resistance to oppression as liberal themes, at the same time these novels contain a considerable amount of bourgeois idealism. Throughout the series, justice invariably triumphs, good always prevailing over evil. Kurama Tengu is not a nihilistic anti-hero like Tsukue Ryûnosuke in *Daibosatsu tôge*, but like him, he is certainly an individualist. He believes in the individual's capacity to bring about change. Consequently he struggles untiringly against the Tokugawa government to restore authority to the Emperor. Though the struggle is difficult, he never gives up: "Whatever the case may be, to surrender and admit defeat, when you have done no wrong, is cowardice. To decide that you..."
can't succeed and to quit midstream is cowardice." Moreover, Kurama Tengu always fights fair, never resorting to underhanded tricks. When he draws his sword, he confronts his opponent manfully. And if his opponent happens to lose his sword, Kurama Tengu always returns it instead of cutting down an unarmed man."

Added into this ideological mix of liberalism and bourgeois romanticism is an unmistakable nationalism manifest in Kurama Tengu's unwavering devotion to the Emperor. For example, if his activism runs contrary to the laws of the existing regime, or contrary even to the humanistic ideals he strives to uphold, Kurama Tengu finds justification in his commitment to create a nation in which all Japanese can live "equally" as Imperial Subjects.

"I do not hope to wrest power from the Tokugawa and install the Shimazu in their place.... I regard the entire country as the exclusive possession of the Emperor.... Likewise, all people in Japan are the Emperor's people. The Shōgun and the beggar beneath the bridge are both equally His Majesty's people [Ōgimi no tami]; and in the eyes of the Son of Heaven, all are equal."

From the inception of the series, we see the popularization of liberal ideas within the framework of Japanese nationalism as manifest in patriotic loyalty to and reverence for the Emperor as the "true" sovereign of Japan. Thus, from the perspective of the liberal left in the early Shōwa years, it is Osaragi's positioning of liberal values, personified by Kurama Tengu, within the Emperor system that arouses

2 See specifically *Kakubei jishi*, 103-04 and 151-52 for two scenes in which Kurama Tengu returns an opponent's sword, thereby displaying "splendid conduct most becoming of a Japanese warrior" (Nihon no bushi ni fusawashii migoto na furuma!).
3 Osaragi Jirō, *Goyōtō ibun* (Strange tale of His Majesty's bandits), *OJJSZ*, vol. 1, 273. The Shimazu were the daimyō of the Satsuma domain who sponsored much of the Imperial Loyalists' anti-Bakufu activism.
contradictory evaluations of the series' political utility. But one thing is certain: the Kurama Tengu series was extraordinarily popular among a burgeoning urban readership from 1925 through the 1930s, and the popularity of the series contributed to the widespread acceptance of democratic values in the prewar period.

The inaugural installment of the Kurama Tengu series was published in the popular fiction magazine Poketto (Pocket) in May 1924 and was extremely well received by the public. In fact, Osaragi had originally conceived of Kimen no rōjo as a simple short story (tanpen yomikiri) and not as the first "installment" of a series. However, his editor at Poketto, Suzuki Tokutarō, recognized the appeal of the Kurama Tengu character and urged Osaragi to stretch the story into a series, even offering to reformat the magazine so that the Kurama Tengu installment would be the highlight of each month's issue. Osaragi consented and from May 1924 to December 1926 every issue of Poketto was organized around an installment of Kurama Tengu. Osaragi also wrote many other manuscripts for Poketto during this period (using some seventeen different pen names), but it was Kurama Tengu which earned him popular acclaim. By 1926, he had become more independent and began publishing fiction in other magazines and newspapers. From March 1927 to 1965, Kurama Tengu was carried in a number of popular magazines more prominent than Poketto, including Shōnen kurabu (Boys' club), Bungei kurabu (Literary arts club), Kōdan kurabu (Kōdan club), Ōru yomimono (All reading matter), Sandee Mainichi (Sunday Mainichi), and
"Shunkan Asahi (Asahi weekly)." Osaragi would remark wryly in 1954: "It occurs to me that it was not through my own volition that I joined the ranks of those who write for a living; instead I was dragged into it by Kurama Tengu."

Evidence of the popularity of the Kurama Tengu series is largely anecdotal. While actual figures have not survived, Murakami Mitsuhiko estimates the circulation of Poketto was somewhere in the tens of thousands. Circulation figures are somewhat clearer for Shônen kurabu, the juvenile literature magazine that serialized the Kurama Tengu novel Kakubei jishi (Street acrobat) from 1927 to 1928: in 1927, its circulation was 300,000; and in 1928, it was 450,000. Murakami points out, however, that a single issue of these popular magazines was often passed around among several friends, or would end up in a book lenders stall. Thus, these circulation figures do not necessarily reflect the actual total readership of Kurama Tengu. The manner in which a number of postwar critics and literary historians reminisce about reading Kurama Tengu during their youth indicates that the series was quite widely read during the late 1920s and 1930s, particularly by young men and boys. Osaragi even describes meeting a young navy

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5 "Sakuhin mokuroku," 359-78. The greatest number of manuscripts Osaragi contributed to a single issue of Poketto was nine, which he did in April, September and December 1925. This amounted to nearly half the magazine's content for the month. Every issue of Poketto carried multiple pieces written by Osaragi: as many as eight and no less than four. Among the pen names he employed most frequently were Nagareyama Ryûtarô, Yui Hamato, Sakanošita Gorô, Minami Kitarô (apparently a play on the alternate reading of the characters 南北 from the name of Edo playwright Tsuruya Nanboku 南北), Yagi Shundei and Tamura Hiroshi. For some of his early translations Osaragi used the pen name Anri Reinirô, derived from the name of one of his favorite Symbolist writers, Henri de Régnier. See Fukushima Köichi, "Hyōden Osaragi Jirô," Shincho Nihon bungaku arubamu: Osaragi Jirô, 31; Murakami Mitsuhiko, Osaragi Jirô: sono seishin no bōken, 11.

11 "Kurama Tengu to sanjûnen," 116.

12 Murakami Mitsuhiko, Osaragi Jirô: sono seishin no bōken, 42-43

13 See for example, Terada Hiroshi, Chanbara kaishô, 42; Murakami Mitsuhiko, Osaragi Jirô: sono seishin no bōken, 297-98; and Tsurumi Shunsuke, Taishô bungaku ron, 7-8.
lieutenant in 1944 who confessed to being an ardent fan of Kurama Tengu novels ever since reading Kakubei jishi as a youth. The lieutenant went on to relate how he used to wait anxiously every month for the new issue of Shônen kurabu to hit the newstands just so he could read the next installment of Kakubei jishi."

In addition to the print medium, Kurama Tengu gained popularity through cinema, stage, and later, radio and television adaptations of Osaragi’s novels. Even performers of kami shibai (“paper theater,” an entertainment popular from the 1930s to the mid 1950s in which a storyteller/candy seller told a story using illustrated placards to the children who bought his candy) told stories featuring Kurama Tengu as the hero. The first film adaptation of Kurama Tengu was produced in 1925 by Nikkatsu Studios in response to the popular acclaim of the Poketto series. The film featured Nikkatsu star Onoe Matsunosuke as the hero and was quite successful." However, the star most commonly identified with Kurama Tengu was Arai Kanjûrô (a.k.a. Arai Chôzaburô) who made some forty Kurama Tengu films from 1927 to 1960. Although nine other actors portrayed Kurama Tengu on film, Arai Kanjûrô’s interpretation of the character became the standard against which all other performers have been judged." Shimada Shôgo’s voice brought Kurama Tengu to life for many radio listeners in the immediate postwar period, and

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14 “Kurama Tengu to sanjûnen,” 111-12. This experience occurred when Osaragi was serving as a war correspondent in Southeast Asia. He met the lieutenant on a plane as he was flying between islands in Indonesia.

15 Gundaibô Kohei, “Eiga ni narihajimeta goro” (When [Kurama Tengu] was first made a film), Sandee Mainichi (special issue November 1954), 116.

16 Misono Kyôhei, “Jûichi-nin no Tengu” (Eleven Tengus), Katsudô shiryô (Movie facts) (March 1966); excerpted in OJJSZ, vol. 24, 329-30. The majority of Arai Kanjûrô’s Kurama Tengu films were made between 1935 and 1945. See Terada Hiroshi, 42 and 46; Kata Kôji, Kunisada Chûji, Sarutobi Sasuke, Kurama Tengu, 179 and 189.
fans of the 1963 Kurama Tengu television series associated Nakamura Takeya with the hero. 17 Noting the ubiquity of Kurama Tengu in Shôwa popular culture, Kata Kôji states rather hyperbolically that “Kurama Tengu is a hero known to everyone born during the Shôwa era.” 18

While Kurama Tengu was an incredibly durable popular hero, who went through various media manifestations in the course of the Shôwa period, this chapter focuses on his image as portrayed in the early years of the Kurama Tengu series, those works written between 1924 and 1927. It was during these early years that the essential elements of Kurama Tengu’s popular appeal crystalized: his humanism, egalitarianism, and fair-mindedness. In short, the liberal values which distinguished Osaragi’s hero are apparent from the start of the series. At the same time, the concurrent presence in these early installments of more reactionary elements—feudal machismo, Emperor-centered nationalism—caused some early Shôwa critics to reject Kurama Tengu as mere escapism, feudalistic romanticism. Postwar critics, however, have been able to take the long view of the Kurama Tengu series and to see how Osaragi expanded his treatment of liberal values in later installments, as in subsequent works, including Akô rôshi, Yuki Shôsetsu and Nezumi Kozôjirôkichî. Critics after the war have thus reevaluated those early installments of Kurama Tengu, to the point of overlooking the nationalism. Taking note of the nationalistic elements in the early part of the series, and bearing in mind the prevailing ideological context of late Taishô and early Shôwa, Osaragi’s

17 Kata Kôji, 189-90.  
18 Kata Kôji, 173.
treatment of liberal values in the fundamentally reactionary literary form of *jidai shōsetsu* becomes all the more remarkable.

**4.1 Osaragi Jirō’s background**

Osaragi Jirō was born Nojiri Kiyohiko in Yokohama City on October 9, 1897. He was the last of five children born to Nojiri Masasuke and his wife Ogin. As Masasuke was a salaried worker employed by the steamship company Nippon Yûsen, the family was financially well-off and lived comfortably in a home in the Hanabuki section of the city, with maids to help raise the children. At the time of Osaragi’s birth, Masasuke (who was then 47 years old) was working in a regional branch office and lived apart from his family. In fact, Masasuke did not move back to his family until after his retirement when Osaragi was twelve. The absence of a father during Osaragi’s formative years was offset to a degree by his relationship with his eldest brother, Hôei (a.k.a. Masafusa, 1885-1977), who was twelve years his senior.

In 1904, when Osaragi was seven, his family moved to Ushigome Ward in Tokyo to be closer to the schools his brothers attended. Eldest brother Hôei had been accepted at Waseda University and his brother, Takashi, was to begin at the Hitotsubashi Commercial Higher School. During these years in Ushigome, Osaragi developed a love of reading. His family subscribed to the newspaper *Hôchi shinbun* and enjoyed reading and discussing the *kôdan* serialized in each day’s edition. Soon, Jirô too was reading them.¹⁹ He then moved on to

children’s magazines, including *Shônen* (Boy) and *Shônen sekai* (Boy’s world). He would buy them as soon as they went on sale each month. He also collected all the titles in the series *Sekai otogibanashi* (Fairytales of the world) by Iwaya Sazanami (1870-1933). Osaragi particularly enjoyed Sazanami’s fairytales and Emi Shuiin’s (1869-1934) accounts of exploration. He also attended the programs sponsored by the “Ushigome Fairytale Club” (*Ushigome otogi kurabu*) at which noted children’s authors, including Sazanami and Kurushima Takehiko (1874-1960), regaled the children with wonderful stories.  

It was about this time that Osaragi began to aspire to becoming a writer of children’s stories. Composition was one of his favorite subjects in school, and his exposure to children’s magazines and lectures by his favorite authors deeply inspired him. When he was in the fifth grade (1909), he submitted an essay to a collection being compiled by Tanenuki Kasui (1875-1922) and other writers working for *Shônen sekai*. Osaragi’s essay, entitled “Futatsu no shushi” (Two seeds), was published. It is one of the few works ever published under his real name, Nojiri Kiyohiko.

When Osaragi was in the sixth grade (1910), his father retired from Nippon Yûsen, purchased a home in the Shiba district and moved the family from Ushigome. Jirô soon graduated from elementary school and entered the prestigious Tokyo First Middle School (*Tokyo-furitsu daiichi chûgakkô*) in Hibiya. Meanwhile, his brother, Hôei, had graduated from Waseda with a degree in English literature and had taken a

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20 “Watakushi no rirekisho,” 313-14. According to *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten* (vol. 1, page 185) these programs began in March 1906. Osaragi writes that he attended three or four programs and listened with great interest. He was especially awed whenever Sazanami spoke.
position as an English teacher at Kofu City Middle School. In 1912, Hôei married the daughter of the Kofu City Middle School principal, Ōshima Masatake (1859-1938). Ōshima was a noted philologist and a graduate of the Sapporo Agricultural School (Sapporo nôgakkô), which he attended with Uchimura Kanzô and other prominent Japanese Christians.

During summer recess from First Middle School, Osaragi visited Hôei and his new sister-in-law at the Ōshima family home. The following year Hôei and his wife moved to Shiba when he was transferred to Azabu Middle School, and Osaragi began visiting more frequently. Through his sister-in-law's family, Osaragi also came into contact with the families of Itô Kazutaka (1859-1929), a classmate of Ōshima Masatake at Sapporo Agricultural School whose younger sister Ōshima had married, and Nagao Hanpei (1865-1936), a civil engineer who had married Ōshima's niece. Both men, like Ōshima, were devout Christians. Both had spent time living abroad, and both had middle school age children with whom Osaragi socialized. Osaragi was impressed by the international atmosphere which permeated the homes of these "Meiji gentlemen": books in English filling the shelves of their libraries, grace before dinner, vases filled with Western
Osaragi also admired the highly developed sense of individualism these men exhibited and the way they adhered to their Christian ideals. Though Osaragi never embraced Christianity, he respected the determination of Itô and Nagao, who were both active in the Japanese Temperance Movement, to abstain from alcohol at social gatherings as well as at home. Osaragi especially admired Itô Kazutaka who combined a Christian-inspired morality with the brashness often associated with an "Edokko" (Edo native). For example, on one occasion Itô and his daughters encountered an obnoxious drunk bothering people on the streetcar. Itô became indignant, gave the fellow a withering rebuke and then dragged him off the train. Itô’s daughters were so mortified by their father’s behavior they refused to ride the streetcar with him after that. However, Young Jirō, a timid and somewhat undersize teenager, was deeply impressed with Itô’s capacity to stand up for his principles. This impression remained strong well into the writer’s later life, as he records in his 1964 memoir “Watakushi no rirekisho” (My Life).  

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21 "Watakushi no rirekisho," 319. Osaragi reports that Itô Kazutaka made some ten trips to America, and Nagao Hanpei had visited America and England, living for a time in the London apartment building next door to the one where Natsume Soseki lived. As for the background of these two men, Itô Kazutaka was instrumental in building the first fish hatcheries on Hokkaido’s rivers and had advised Hokkaido’s farmers in Western techniques of animal husbandry. In 1900 Itô founded the International Petroleum Company. Afterward he joined the management of Nippon Sekiyu. Nagao Hanpei joined the Interior Ministry in 1891 after graduating with an engineering degree from Tokyo Imperial University. He was soon tapped by Gotô Shinpei, then a senior bureaucrat with the Home Ministry and later mayor of Tokyo, to tour public works in the US and UK and subsequently was sent to Taiwan as a government civil engineer. In 1910, Nagao went to work for the Railway Bureau, managing the operations for Kyūshū and then Chūbu. In 1921 Nagao became the chief of Tokyo’s electric utility. And in 1930 he was elected to the Lower House of the Diet. See Nippon kiristokyō rekishi daijiten (Dictionary of the history of Christianity in Japan) (Tokyo: Kyōbunkan, 1988), 119 and 976.

22 "Watakushi no rirekisho," 319-20. Itô and Nagao served as officers in the Nippon Kokumin Kinshū Dōmei (People’s Temperance Alliance of Japan). Nippon kiristokyō rekishi daijiten, 119 and 976.

23 "Watakushi no rirekisho," 320.
personal history.

Without a doubt I have been greatly influenced by Mr. Itô. His influence has not diminished to this day. Because of my timidity, I never possessed his intensity. But as for the will to resist what I feel is unjust, and the mindset which forbids any human baseness in my own conduct, these I have undoubtedly acquired from this old gentleman in his starched high collar... I understand that within the literary establishment I have the reputation of being a gentleman. If that is the case, I must conclude that it is because of the manifold influence of this devout Christian, Itô Kazutaka.24

While Itô Kazutaka’s influence on Osaragi’s personal conduct may be of biographical interest, more significant for this study is the extent to which the “old gentleman in his starched high collar” influenced the Kurama Tengu series. Many of the qualities Osaragi has attributed to Itô—his deeply entrenched sense of ethics; his activist, if somewhat impulsive, impatience with injustice; his cheerfulness—are also manifest in Kurama Tengu. Fukushima Kōichi suggests that Osaragi’s admiration for Itô inspired in the idealism of the heroes portrayed in his fiction.25 Yet Fukushima stops short of declaring Itô a model for Kurama Tengu. Whether or not the Christian idealism of Itô, Nagao Hanpei and Ōshima Masatake provided the kernel for Kurama Tengu’s character, the combination of humanity and individualism manifest in Kurama Tengu was rather exceptional among the masterless samurai portrayed in late Taishō and early Shōwa jidai shōsetsu.

While one may speculate about the impact on Osaragi’s literature of his interaction Itô Kazutaka and other “Meiji gentlemen” during his middle school years, the influence of the literature Osaragi read during the same period is less

24 “Watakushi no rirekisho,” 320.
controversial. Osaragi's deft employment of the formulas and conventions of popular fiction—narrow escapes, amazing coincidences, the episodic nature of long narratives—derive to a considerable extent from his familiarity with kōdan, magemono (literally "topknot piece," a historical romance set during Japan's Edo period) and popular classics such as Takizawa Bakin's Hakkenden and the Saiyūki (Xi youji, The Journey to the West by Wu Cheng-en), which he read as a youth. Osaragi was particularly fond of historical fiction while in middle school and spent hours reading novels rather than preparing for his high school entrance examinations. He was especially fond of the historical novels of Tsukahara Jūshien (1848-1917) and of Nakazato Kaizan's Kōya no gijin."

At the same time, his exposure to more "serious" works of literature awakened him to the fact that literature could serve as social commentary as well as entertainment. From the time he was a middle school student Osaragi enjoyed reading translations of the fiction of the Symbolist writers Dimitri Merezhkovsky and Maurice Maeterlinck. After entering high school, he attempted reading Henri de Régnier in the original French. Also, his high school classmates introduced him to the novels of Natsume Soseki (1867-1916), Naïgai Kafū (1879-1959) and the writings of the humanists of the Shirakaba-ha (White Birch school). Osaragi's diverse tastes, similar to those of other bungaku seinen (literary youths) during early Taishō, are reflected in the variety of books and magazines he purchased on his frequent trips to the used book stores of Kanda. He would buy anything from old special editions of the magazine Bungei kurabu (Literary club) devoted exclusively to kōdan and rakugo transcriptions to an English translation of

\[\text{"Watakushi no rirekisho," 323.}\]
Maeterlinck's play *The Blue Bird.*”

Though he claims to have spent more time reading novels than studying, Osaragi passed the entrance examination for the First Higher School (*Tokyo-furitsu daiichi kōtō gakkō*) in 1915 and entered the department of French law. Osaragi’s father wanted him to become a government official, but his son resented the arrogance he perceived among civil servants, the exceptional example of Nagao Hanpei notwithstanding. As a compromise, Osaragi decided on French law as his course of study, reasoning that if he had to become a bureaucrat, he would aim for a position in the foreign ministry. He believed an overseas post might obviate the necessity of maintaining the self-important air of Japanese civil servant.23

While ostensibly studying to become a government official, Osaragi actually began practical training for a career as a popular writer. In 1916 he attended a gathering at the home of Tanenuki Kasui, contributing editor of *Shônen sekai* magazine and compiler of the essay collection in which Osaragi’s first literary endeavor appeared. Tanenuki remembered Osaragi’s skill and commissioned the eighteen year old to write a serial about life at the First Higher School to be published in Hakubunkan’s magazine *Chûgaku sekai* (Middle school world). The series, entitled *Ichikô romansu* (First Higher School adventures, 1916-17) was very well received and later republished by Toan publishers, who paid Osaragi fifty yen for the rights to the story. Then, in 1918, Osaragi’s brother Hôei resigned from the Azabu Middle School and took an position with Kenkyûsha, serving on the editorial staff of the juvenile magazines *Chûgakusei* (Middle school

27 “Watakushi no rirekisho,” 323.
28 “Watakushi no rirekisho,” 324.
student) and Jogakusei (School girl). Hôei invited his brother, by this time a political science student at Tokyo Imperial University, to submit manuscripts. Jirô wrote a number of short stories and serial novels for both magazines, including three baseball novels and a translation of Babe Ruth's autobiographical *Homerun King.*

Osaragi spent the earnings from this "part time work" at the book stores of Kanda. Increasingly he was drawn to books on fine art and Western theater. One such book actually precipitated Osaragi's involvement in a *shingeki* (new theater) production of Maeterlinck's play *The Blue Bird* in 1920. It was a richly illustrated book he had found at Maruzen which included detailed descriptions of the costumes and sets from a Moscow production of *The Blue Bird.* When Osaragi learned that several of his former classmates from the First Higher School were participating in a production of *The Blue Bird* mounted by the Minshûza (People's troupe), he offered to loan his book to the director, Hatanaka Ryôha (a.k.a. Sakuyoshi 1877-1959). Hatanaka invited Osaragi to attend rehearsals to get to know the cast members. Osaragi became particularly friendly with Azuma Teru (a.k.a. Harada Toriko, 1898-1980), a rising young actress from Asakusa who had performed in a number of *shingeki* plays and had also appeared in a few films for the Matsutake Film Studio.

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32 "Watakushi no rirekisho." 329-30.
33 "Watakushi no rirekisho," 337-38; Fukushima Kôichi, "Hyôden Osaragi Jirô," 21-23. According to Fukushima Kôichi, Osaragi and his friends formed a "theater group" (called *Teatre d'bijou*) and, following the success of the *Minshûza* production, staged their own production of *The Blue Bird* at the Yôraku Theater in which some of the *Minshûza* players also performed. Kon Hidemi reports seeing Osaragi and Azuma Teru performing together in the *Teatre d'bijou* production. Kon Hidemi, "Osaragi-san no arekore" (This and that about Mr. Osaragi), *Shinchô* vol. 70, no. 7 (July 1973), 201.
His backstage experience of *shingeki* and his attraction to Azuma Teru inspired Osaragi to become a playwright and theater critic. The idea of becoming a foreign service bureaucrat had long since ceased to interest him, and he believed he had found a career which appealed to him. In February 1921, six months before he was to graduate from the university, Osaragi married Azuma Teru against his family's wishes. Only to please his father, he took his exams and graduated. In June of 1921, Osaragi had a new wife, mounting debts and no income. He had not pursued a government position, had no experience writing plays or criticism and could no longer rely on his father's support. Jirō and his bride moved to a small flat in Kamakura and he took a job teaching history and Japanese (*kokugo*) at Kamakura Girl's High School (*Kamakura kōtō jogakkō*). But to make ends meet, he continued to serialize baseball novels and other juvenile fiction in *Chūgakusei* and *Jogakusei* magazines.

However, Osaragi's literary production at this time was not limited to juvenile fiction. He also began publishing more serious work. In fact, shortly after his graduation in June 1921, his translation of Romain Rolland's collection of antiwar essays, *Les Précurseurs*, was published by Rakuyōdō, a small Kanda publishing house. In January 1922, Osaragi published a translation of Romain Rolland's antiwar novel...
Clérambault and a translation of a Henri de Régnier novella."
The Régnier translation appeared in the Hakubunkan magazine
Shinshumi (New tastes) which was devoted to translations of
Western fiction. During Shinshumi's brief run from January
1922 to November 1923, Osaragi contributed ten manuscripts
and developed a rapport with the editor, Suzuki Tokutarō.
Osaragi also contributed to Osanai Kaoru's (1881-1928)
journal Geki to hyōron (Theater and criticism) and to a
short-lived coterie magazine called Senzai (Potential) which
Osaragi established in 1921 with Suga Tadao (1899-1942)." His
translation of Romain Rolland's 1920 antiwar novella Pierre
et Luce was published in August 1924.

In the midst of this period of literary production,
Osaragi was offered a position at the treaty office of the
foreign ministry through the good offices of a former middle
school teacher and to the delight of his aged father. For
Osaragi, who had run up a considerable bill at Maruzen, the
lure of a government salary was difficult to resist, and he
accepted the position despite his disinterest in a career as
a bureaucrat. He continued his "part time" journalism and
translation work, however. In fact, when the Kantō earthquake

Osaragi also worked on the Régnier translation as a university student. In a 1959 essay, he
wrote of seeking advice on his translation from Nagai Ka'fū. Osaragi had first become acquainted
with Régnier through Ka'fū's Sangoshū (Coral antliology, 1913), a collection of translations of
various French poets. He sent a draft of his translation to Ka'fū and was later summoned to Ka'fū's
home, the Henkikan. Osaragi reports that Ka'fū had revised the first few pages of the translation,
but then stopped. Ka'fū explained: "I've suggested a tone that seems more like Régnier. But if I
were to revise this any more, your individual style would be lost, so I stopped." Osaragi was
impressed that Ka'fū had taken the time to read the translation and then invited him to his home to
discuss it. Osaragi found Ka'fū to be warm and considerate despite the latter's reputation as a
misanthrope. Osaragi Jirō, "Kafū no hitokirai" (Ka'fū the misanthrope), Kanagawa shinbun (May 5,
1959), excerpted in OJJSZ, vol. 24, 324.

Fukushima Kōichi, "Hyōden Osaragi Jirō," 25, 26,103. Neither "Hyōden Osaragi Jirō" nor the
list of Osaragi's publications in volume 24 of OJJSZ include any titles from Geki to hyōron. As for
Osaragi's contributions to Senzai, Fukushima lists an original essay, NIHONJIN (The Japanese), as
well as two translations of classical music criticism. Senzai folded after the fourth issue,
apparently published in March or April 1923.

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struck around noon on September 1, 1923, Osaragi was at home working on a manuscript for Shinshumi.34 As it turned out, the devastation of the earthquake set in motion a series of events which led Osaragi to embrace writing serial fiction as a full time career.

The earthquake forced many publishing houses to restructure and even cut some publications. As a result, Osaragi lost all his former avenues for publishing. Geki to hyōron suspended publication in September 1923 and would not begin again until June 1926. Shinshumi ceased publication in November 1923. The following February, editor Suzuki Tokutarō was transferred to another Hakubunkan publication, Poketto, devoted to jidai shōsetsu and shinkōdan. When he informed Osaragi of his transfer, Suzuki offered these words of parting, “Should you ever write a period piece (magemono), I’ll gladly look it over.”35 Also in February, Osaragi’s brother Höei left Kenkyūsha, ending Osaragi’s access to Chūgakusei and Jogakusei. Unable to make ends meet on his government salary alone, Jirō decided to take Suzuki’s parting words at face value. One week after his former editor had offered to look over his magemono, Osaragi showed up in Suzuki’s office with the manuscript for a work of historical fiction, Hayabusa no Genji (Genji the Falcon, 1924). Suzuki promptly agreed to publish the piece and encouraged Osaragi to write more. The work was the beginning of Osaragi’s career

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34 OJJSZ, vol. 24, 327; “Kurama Tengu to sanjūnen,” 113. Osaragi relates that he often stayed home from the office, in part because his work at the foreign ministry did not appeal to him. However, his main reason for skipping work was to avoid the sales representative from Maruzen who would visit Osaragi’s office every pay day to collect from employees who had purchased books from him. Because Osaragi continued to run up a large bill—as much as a full month’s salary—he would stay home from work on the day pay envelopes were distributed rather than have to hand over all his earnings to the Maruzen representative. Paying off that Maruzen debt was part of the impetus to his continuing journalistic activities.

35 “Kurama Tengu to sanjūnen,” 114; OJJSZ, vol. 24, 327.
as a *jidai shōsetsu* writer.

*Hayabusa no Genji* is the tale of two boys in the provincial village of Suginami—Genji the son of a peasant and Kazuma the son of a samurai—who happen to look exactly alike. Despite the difference in their social status, the two become best friends and enjoy fooling their playmates by masquerading as each other. But when Kazuma reaches the age of fourteen, his father summons him to Edo where he must begin his training as a samurai. Absorbed in his training, Kazuma eventually forgets about Genji. Meanwhile, Genji begins to lead the life of a farmer. But he hates always having to show deference to his elder brother. At the age of fifteen, he gathers what little money he has and travels to Edo, where he soon exhausts his meager funds in revelry. Through the introduction of one of his drinking companions, Genji gets a job working as a stage hand for a kabuki theater. In time he learns to mimic the actors and is soon performing minor roles. As his skills improve he is given bigger roles. He is especially gifted at portraying the swagger of generals and samurai. Soon the head of the troupe tells Genji that he plans to put his name on the marquee. But Genji's dissipation is an on-going problem and eventually it causes the head of the troupe to "expel" him. Seeing no other course, Genji joins a band of petty thieves and becomes a pickpocket, earning the moniker "the Falcon" for his nimble movements.

In the course of the narrative, Genji and Kazuma are reunited. Despite the passage of time, they are still as alike as "two melons" (*uri futatsu*). They share a drink and fondly reminisce about their childhood games, but then
Kazuma's mood darkens. He informs Genji that he has uncovered a plot among his fellow vassals to betray his feudal lord. Kazuma knows that the chief conspirator is his lord's elderly senior retainer (karō), but he does not dare to accuse him without solid evidence. The evidence is difficult for Kazuma to gather because he is so easily recognized by the conspirators and their web of informants. However, upon learning of Genji's achievements on the stage, Kazuma conceives a plan: he will trade places with Genji. Disguised as the Edo playboy Genji, Kazuma will be able to move about the city freely (particularly the pleasure quarter) to collect evidence of the plot against his lord. And no one will suspect that Kazuma is away from his lord's mansion with Genji there acting as his stand-in.

The remainder of the story depicts the execution of the scheme in which Kazuma, posing as Genji the Falcon, is pursued by the Edo police and Genji masquerades as a noble samurai. Gradually Genji's performance progresses beyond mere posturing as he discovers nobility within himself: he too begins to feel a sense of loyalty, duty and a willingness to sacrifice his life for Kazuma's lord. Presently Genji is captured by the evil senior retainer, who sends him off to be killed. But Genji manages to escape just as Kazuma returns with evidence of the conspiracy. Together the two heroes confront the senior retainer. Upon seeing his enemy back from the dead, and seeing him in duplicate, the senior retainer suffers a massive heart attack. The conspiracy dies with him.

While Osaragi reports that his inspiration for the story came from Edgar Allan Poe's short story *William Wilson* (1839), the plot and theatricality of *Hayabusa no Genji*
suggest a greater debt to kabuki plays—Osaragi had enjoyed kabuki since childhood—than to Poe’s supernatural tale of morality.  Where William Wilson’s more upright doppelgänger is unable to redeem him in the end, the influence of Genji’s noble double, Kazuma, does have a regenerative effect on the protagonist’s character. Though at first he only imitates the qualities associated with a samurai—nobility, dignity, self-sacrifice—Genji soon assimilates these attributes.

“Somewhere along the line, Genji had begun living like a true samurai and not play acting.” The reader sees Genji transformed from a misguided scoundrel who accosts a virtuous barmaid at the beginning of the narrative to a chivalrous hero willing to throw away his life in the pursuit of justice. Thus, when the individual is provided with dignity and responsibility by society, he or she responds in kind.

Osaragi also mingles a fair amount of humor and word play into the story’s moralizing. In one scene, Genji and Kazuma, dressed as townsmen idlers (asobinin), hide in the bushes along the road from the pleasure quarter waiting to intercept several of the conspirators who have taken Kazuma’s lord to the Yoshiwara district for an evening of illicit

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35 "Kurama Tengu to sanjūninen," 115; Murakami Mitsuhiko, Osaragi Jirō: sono seishin no bōken, 13; Fukushima Kōichi, "Hyōden Osaragi Jirō," 29. Aside from the fact that the protagonist in each story has a double, Hayabusa no Genji and William Wilson have little in common. In Poe’s story, a reprobate youth is nagged by fellow student who is exactly like him in every particular, from physical appearance to name and date of birth. The only difference is that the double possesses a more fully developed moral sense. Each time the youth tries to cause trouble, his doppelgänger appears, reprimands him and spoils the fun. In the end the protagonist fatally stabs his double only to discover that it is actually his own conscience he has murdered. As Ogikubo Yasuyuki points out, Hayabusa no Genji has more in common with Mark Twain’s The Prince and the Pauper (1882) than with Poe’s William Wilson. In Twain’s novel, a cloistered prince and an impoverished townsman, who happen to look exactly alike, meet by chance and decide to exchange places to escape the pressures of their respective lives. As the narrative unfolds, they discover a conspiracy to wrest power from the prince. They use their physical similarities to expose the plot and bring the conspirators to justice. Ogikubo Yasuyuki, "Osaragi Jirō," Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō vol. 44, no. 3 (March 1979): 72.

37 Osaragi Jirō, Hayabusa no Genji (Genji the Falcon), OJJSZ, vol. 24, 32.
entertainment. Kazuma wants Genji, who embodies both the bluster and the familiarity with Yoshiwara etiquette essential for a true son of Edo, to pick a fight with the conspirators and draw them away from his lord's palanquin. In their absence Kazuma plans to remonstrate with his lord about the inappropriateness of dissipation for a daimyō. Hiding in the bushes on this summer night, Genji is assailed by a swarm of mosquitoes. The longer they wait, the angrier he gets.

"Oh! The mosquitoes are terrible! I can't stand it! If those guys don't come soon, my whole body will be so swollen I won't be able to move!"

"Just wait. They should be along any moment."

"What the hell are they doing lingering about? Don't they know that whores hate it when you fail to leave a brothel promptly? The fools have got no sense!"

Genji continued to fume. The mosquitoes continued to hum. (Genji wa punpun okotte iru. Yabuke wa bunbun itte iru.)"

The parallelism of the rhythm and the onomatopoeia of these last two phrases (punpun indicating Genji's anger and bunbun depicting the buzz of the mosquitoes) suggests an orality which readers would associate with the vaudeville theater. The humor, the word play and the morality combine to give Hayabusa no Genji the flavor of kōdan. In fact, Osaragi described the piece in 1954 as a "kōdan-like piece which, when I think about it even now, makes me break out in a cold sweat [of mortification]."

Despite Osaragi's later embarrassment at the simplicity of Hayabusa no Genji, it was exactly the kind of entertaining fiction with which Poketto supplied readers in 1924. Upon reading the manuscript, Suzuki Tokutarō realized that Osaragi had talent for more than translation; he could also write

37 "Kurama Tengu to sanjōnen," 115. Ogikubo also notes the kōdan-like orality of Hayabusa no Genji. See Ogikubo Yasuyuki, 72.
entertaining historical fiction. He was particularly pleased with Osaragi's next submission, *Kimen no rōjo*, and its mysterious protagonist, Kurama Tengu. Suzuki succeeded in persuading Osaragi to expand the short story into a series and his hunch about the popular appeal of the Kurama Tengu character proved to be right on the mark. " *Kimen no rōjo* contained some of the kōdan-like qualities discernible in *Hayabusa no Genji*. Yet, as I will discuss below, the characteristics of humanism, egalitarianism and liberalism with which Osaragi imbued Kurama Tengu in subsequent installments indicate that he had determined to make his protagonist a hero for the present age and not a throwback to the values of the past.

4.2 Kurama Tengu novels between 1924 and 1927

Murakami Mitsuhiko likens the appearance of the character Kurama Tengu on the popular literature scene in 1924 to the appearance of a god or noble visitor (marebito) at a folk festival in ancient times. Such visits were reason for celebration, and they broke up the tedium of a peasant's quotidian existence. Murakami asserts that Kurama Tengu similarly broke up the boredom experienced by "the people" in late Taishō Japan. Extending his analogy, he observes that, in *Kimen no rōjo* and other early installments in the *Kurama Tengu* series, the reader does not interface with Kurama Tengu directly, but rather through the agency of the deuteragonist, an impoverished young noble named Ono Munefusa, whose role is reminiscent of that of the *saishi* (officiating priest) at a folk festival. The *saishi* acts as the intermediary between

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the god or the marebito and the villagers attending the festival." The fact that Munefusa shaves his head and disguises himself as a priest beginning with the fourth installment Kagebōshi ("Silhouette," or literally "Shadow Priest," 1924), lends support to Murakami’s reading. However, as the series progresses, Kurama Tengu becomes less godlike and more human. He retains his superhuman aspects: his expert swordsmanship; his superior strength; his equestrian skill; his keen powers of deduction. But occasionally the reader glimpses the hero’s self-doubt, regret and grief. As Kurama Tengu is gradually humanized, the need for an intermediary diminishes and by 1927, Munefusa disappears from the series.

But in Kimen no rōjo, Munefusa plays a crucial role as intermediary. It is through his eyes that the reader first glimpses Kurama Tengu. As the narrative begins, we learn that Munefusa is the only son of Ono Muneharu, a court noble who is disgusted with his fellow courtier’s jockeying for influence with the Tokugawa Bakufu and their lack of commitment to the Emperor. When Commodore Perry’s “black ships” sail into Urage Bay and demand that the Tokugawa government open Japan to the West (1853), Munefusa’s father resolves to contribute his wealth and influence to the movement to restore authority to the Emperor, but before he can take any action he is stricken with illness and dies. Rumor has it he was poisoned by enemies at court. His estate is transferred to his younger brother, Muneyuki, who does not share Muneharu’s imperialist sympathies. Muneyuki promises to raise Munefusa as his own son, but once Muneharu dies,

"Murakami Mitsuhiko, "Kurama Tengu ni okeru sōzōryoku," 113-15, 122. A similar dynamic exists between the shite (protagonist) and wake (deuteragonist) in Nō drama, a vestige of the time when sanjaku nō was performed as part of the festivals honoring local dieties. The wake in Nō drama is regularly a priest."

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Muneyuki neglects the boy's upbringing and education. Disgusted with Muneyuki's negligence, Muneharu's loyal retainer, Urabe Jindayû, takes him in and raises him as a samurai. As years pass, Jindayû combines Munefusa's martial training with constant reminders of his father's nobility and devotion to the Emperor. In short, he grooms Munefusa to be a Restorationist. Having exhausted his meager resources to raise the boy, Jindayû, on his deathbed, urges Munefusa to seek his share of his father's estate from Muneyuki. But Muneyuki is shrewd and manipulative and he twists Munefusa's request for fair treatment into a plea for charity. Insulted by his uncle's feigned expression of compassion, Munefusa bolts from Muneyuki's mansion. On the dark, lonely road back to his humble home on Mount Osaka, he has a remarkable encounter with a mysterious masked warrior. The mysterious fellow is Kurama Tengu.

The highway that leads from Kyoto to Yamashina, a road which is always deserted after the sun goes down, was all the more desolate during this turbulent age. There were no other travelers about. The clouds parted for a bit as the sky appeared to clear, but suddenly it darkened and the rain began to fall even more violently.

"Blast!" thought Munefusa, and stopping beneath a dense grove of old pine trees growing by the side of the road, waited for a break in the rain.

In a corner of the sky over Òzu the clouds parted and the bright light of the moon poured down. They say that the sky clears from behind a traveler, but in this case it seemed that the rain was abating in the direction toward which he was walking. However, even as the moon shone brightly in the distance, all around Munefusa it was dreadfully dark. An ominous night....

Suddenly a strange sound rose faintly in the direction from which Munefusa had just now come. Soon the sound drew closer and more distinct. It was the rhythmic pounding of a horse's hooves....

The sound drew closer. At length, he could see the form of a horse galloping at full speed through the middle of the violent downpour. It appeared the rider had extremely urgent business. He could not see him clearly because of the
dark, but he seemed to be a warrior. Yet, he appeared to be more than usually expert in the equestrian arts. His technique was so skillful it conformed perfectly to the often-used metaphor “as though no one were in the saddle.”

Munefusa looked on captivated by the sight. The steed raced on like an arrow in flight. One moment Munefusa saw the horse right beside him; the next moment it had disappeared into the shadows of the forest ahead. After that, he could only hear the staccato of the horse’s hoof beats punctuating the steady rainfall. Eventually these too grew distant. Munefusa had learned the general principles of equestrianism, and on occasion he had seen the riding techniques of those who were called experts. But he felt he had never seen anyone as skillful as this rider....

Presently the rain stopped, and Munefusa started walking again.... When he had walked about half a mile, he heard something. A horse neighed somewhere....

“Hmph, there must be a home around here,” he thought. Then he remembered the mounted warrior. But he couldn’t imagine that someone in such a hurry would have stopped here in the middle of the mountains. As he toyed with the thought, he passed a deep bamboo thicket. Suddenly two pitch-black figures jumped out in front of him.

“Hold it!” they shouted abruptly.

Munefusa was enraged. “What insolence! Suddenly two fellows jump out in front of me and block my path and then, as if to betray their lack of manners, they shout ‘Hold it!’ What is this? Bandits no doubt. The bastards! They are taking advantage of the current chaos in society to cause suffering to law-abiding people. Well, a fight in the rain and mud will be difficult, but I think they’ll learn their lesson!”

Then, feigning indifference, Munefusa started to pass them....

“Where did you come from? And where are you going? Tell us now!” his opponents demanded.

“Where I come from and where I go is my business. It’s not anything you need to know.”

“Make trouble and it’ll cost you your life!”...

Just then, another fellow emerged from the thicket.

“Please forgive the rudeness of my subordinates. We have our reasons for arbitrarily setting up a barrier here and are asking the names and destinations of all who travel on the highway tonight. I know it is an terrible imposition, but I ask that you tell us.”

The fellow had concealed his face with a black cloth, but Munefusa realized immediately that he was a gentleman who wore a dignified air and was well acquainted with etiquette. Moreover, judging from the riding trousers the fellow wore, it was clear he was the mounted warrior. Having been addressed in such a courteous and proper manner, Munefusa could not help but reply in kind.

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"I do not know for what purpose you have taken such measures, but I commend your efforts. However, since you have asked for my cooperation, why not first give me your name?"

"While it is impolite of me, for certain reasons, I find it difficult to share it with you."

"In that case, I too refuse."

"Hmm." The masked man squared his shoulders. "If you refuse, I shall ask you with my sword."

"If you address me with sword, I will reply with a sword."

"If that's the way it must be..."

The masked fellow appeared to resign himself, but suddenly he took one step back and signaled his subordinates. As though they had been eagerly anticipating this moment, the two drew their swords and attacked. Munefusa had no time to draw his sword. But even if there had been time, why should he bother with a sword to dispense with the upstarts? He executed a graceful feint, causing his opponents to slash at the air in vain. Then, knocking the swords from their hands, he thrust forward and delivered a series of quick, well-placed punches which sent both men crashing to the ground.

"Pardon me," Munefusa offered, but in that same instant, the fellow who appeared to be the leader suddenly attacked, his blade moving faster than the eye could follow. However, the agile Munefusa merely leapt back a step and in a flash drew his own sword and parried the thrust of his opponent with a ringing of steel. The two men pressed each other, their blades locked in a struggle to take the advantage. Then with a shout they leapt apart. Raising their swords in preparation for another clash, they glared at each other. The clouds had parted at some point, and now bright, rain-washed moonlight bathed the profiles of both men, whose eyes glowed with a ferocious intensity.

But, after a moment, the masked man cried out, "Wait!" and lowered his sword.

"It may be rude of me to say so, but I am quite impressed with your remarkable skill."

"Why have you lowered your sword?" demanded Munefusa.

"Because I feel that nothing will be gained in the end by our fighting. Your skill has made it clear to me that you are not the enemy we came to ambush here tonight."

"What?"

"Let me explain. The reason we set up this barrier tonight was to intercept a secret messenger on his way from Kyoto to Edo. We know in general about the movements of our enemy’s secret messengers. And I believe that there is not one among them who can use a sword the way you do."

"Hmm. Then are you saying that I may go?"

"By all means. But let me offer my sincere apologies for this rudeness. And though it may seem I am merely..."
heaping insolence upon insolence, I'd like to ask your views about the current state of national affairs, if you don't mind. Do you support the Bakufu? Or the imperial court?"

"It goes without saying. Like my fathers before me, I believe that the only legitimate government is the government of the Son of Heaven."

"I am so glad to hear it. Until today, I, Kurama Tengu, had not the slightest idea that a fine warrior such as yourself was one of our allies."

"What did you say? 'Kurama Tengu'?"

"That is my alias. I ask that you let me keep my real name to myself for a while. And you are...?"

"Ono Munefusa."

"What? Did I hear you say 'Ono Munefusa'?"

"Indeed you did."

"This may sound strange, but your name reminds me of both the person whom I most respect and the person I most despise. Forgive me for asking, but what is your father's name?"

"Ono Muneharu."

Upon hearing this name, the mysterious character named Kurama Tengu seemed unable to speak because of a deep emotion welling up inside him. He sheathed his sword, removed his mask and drew near to Munefusa. He appeared to be not quite forty—a handsome fellow in the prime of his manhood with a perfectly-shaped nose, thick eyebrows and penetrating eyes.

"I had no idea Lord Muneharu had a son. Of course, there is no better proof of your lineage than your face—the eyes, the mouth. Not only do you resemble your father, you are his living image," he said reverently.

"What's that? You knew my father?"

"I did, indeed."

Munefusa was strangely gladdened by the news. Having been parted from his father while still a boy, he had only heard of his father's character and conduct from stories which Jindayû had repeated over and over again. But this fellow Kurama Tengu, whom he had met tonight quite by accident, certainly knew aspects of his father's life which Jindayû did not know. Does not every child who has lost his father hunger to know all he can about the man?...

"It's an old-fashioned expression," said Tengu, "but I just want to say that 'if we lived in simpler times,' things might have worked out differently for you. Ours is a cruel age. Oh, listen to me, grumbling like some old woman! Well, we'll probably meet again some time. But, for tonight, I bid you farewell."

In this first encounter with Kurama Tengu, the reader learns little about the central character. He rides a horse

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22Kimen no rōjo, OJJSZ, vol. 1, 12-16.
more masterfully than most warriors, and he wields a sword with considerable skill. His dignified bearing, knowledge of etiquette and refined masculinity suggest a noble background. But Osaragi tells us nothing of his background, not even his real name. By revealing little and leaving the reader eager to know more, Osaragi imbues his protagonist with a mysterious charm. Even Munefusa, anxious to learn more about his father, does not know where to find Kurama Tengu, or even how to inquire after him. Like the reader, Munefusa must wait for Kurama Tengu to reappear.

This passage is important not only for its introduction of Kurama Tengu. It also demonstrates that at the beginning of his career as a *jidai shōsetsu* author, Osaragi lacked restraint in appealing to deeply engrained heroic images among his petit bourgeois audience. Osaragi’s heavy handed use of stale metaphors and folk sayings is a prime example. Consider, for example, the natural imagery setting the mood. The sky is dark and overcast, the road is quiet and deserted. The setting reflects Munefusa’s emotional state. He has lost both his parents and his mentor, Jindayû, and he has been denied his birthright by his evil uncle Muneyuki. He has been reduced to leading a lonely, impoverished existence. But as Munefusa trudges along in the darkness, the clouds in the distance part, and bright moonlight shines down, portending the positive change in his life that his association with Kurama Tengu will bring: namely, that when Munefusa joins Kurama Tengu in the struggle to restore the Emperor to power, the monotony and misery of his daily existence will give way to adventure and excitement.
But the popular appeal of this sort of writing also depends on an overt use of formulaic expressions. Osaragi highlights the auspicious omen by reinforcing it with the old folk saying, "the sky clears from behind a traveler" (tabibito no ato yori haruru). The use of a cliché here would not be remarkable were it the only one Osaragi employs. But subsequent paragraphs become hackneyed through the repeated use of platitudes. When Osaragi portrays Kurama Tengu's superior horsemanship, which he clearly intends as one indication of the protagonist's suprahuman nature, at the same time he trots out the "often used metaphor 'as though no one were in the saddle'" (yoku iu anjō ni hito naku unnun no keiyōshi) to describe the graceful skill with which Tengu rides his mount. Osaragi's concession that the metaphor is "often used" reinforces its lack of originality. Still other examples include Osaragi's use of the folk saying kei o saku ni nanzo gyūtō o mochin (literally, "why use a beef knife to butcher a chicken?" derived from the a passage in the Analects¹) to illustrate the fact that Munefusa's contempt for the two upstarts who attack him is so great that he considers it beneath him to draw a sword against them. There is also his use of the expression yo ga yo nara ("if times were more favorable...") by which Kurama Tengu expresses his sympathy for Munefusa's difficult circumstances. Again, Osaragi acknowledges the triteness of this saying by having Kurama Tengu qualify it, "it's an old-fashioned, expression, but..." (furui iigusa ja ga).

¹ The text in the Analects is 割腹通用牛刀 from the passage in which Confucius jokes about the overqualification of his disciple Zi You (子游) to govern the provincial town of Wu Cheng (武城). Yoshida Kenkō, Rongo (The Analects) (Tokyo: Meiji Shobō, 1980), 376-77.
However, given the formulaic genre within which Osaragi was working, it is hardly surprising that he should resort often to clichés. His work here is closer in spirit to the kōdan performance in a yose theater than to serious historical fiction. Osaragi’s reference to Hayabusa no Genji as a “kōdan-like piece” (kōdantai no yomimono) reminds us that he patterned his early jidai shōsetsu on the kōdan and popular historical fiction published in pulp magazines, in which the use of platitudinous sayings and conventional metaphors was the rule. In fact, Fukushima Kōichi reports Osaragi rushed out and bought a copy of Poketto in order to get ideas on form and content before beginning his manuscript of Hayabusa no Genji.“ Yet, Osaragi’s acknowledgement that certain expressions are “often used” or “old-fashioned” indicates his discomfort with the kōdan-like form he was using. Indeed, his use of formulaic expressions in was not unusual in the magemono being produced by other writers at the time, but it is remarkable when one compares Kimen no rōjo with the jidai shōsetsu Osaragi was to write only a few months later. As he gained confidence in his ability to create compelling jidai shōsetsu, he relied less on models provided by other writers and invested his fiction with his own style. This is not to say that he completely eliminated the formulas and plot devices of popular historical fiction from his narratives. Instead, he employed violence, coincidence and other jidai shōsetsu conventions in an unprecedented way to highlight Kurama Tengu’s democratic values.

As *Kimen no rōjo* unfolds, Munefusa is visited by Kurama Tengu a week after their initial meeting. Munefusa is paying his respects at his father’s grave when Tengu appears as if out of thin air to say he has an important matter to discuss. He tells Munefusa that there is a rumor that his father’s mountain retreat at Shishigatani is haunted. When Munefusa’s father, Muneharu, passed away there a decade earlier the retreat fell idle; his uncle, Muneyuki, did not visit it even once, or charge his servants to maintain it. Now the once beautiful villa sits empty and dilapidated, with weeds and grasses covering the property. Kurama Tengu informs Munefusa that a rumor circulates that Muneharu haunts the retreat. Moreover, when some bold individuals went to investigate the story, they disappeared. Their corpses were later found floating at the bottom of a well.

Kurama Tengu states emphatically that he does not believe the rumors. He proposes that Munefusa accompany him to the Shishigatani retreat that night. Munefusa agrees, reasoning that proving the rumor false would remove the cloud hanging over the retreat and tainting the memory of his father. But if the rumor is true, at least he will have the opportunity to see his father again. At this point, Osaragi inserts himself into the narrative rather clumsily, as if to make sure the reader is paying attention by asking, “Is this fellow who calls himself Kurama Tengu as virtuous as he appears to be? Or is he really evil? Why would he persuade Ono Munefusa to accompany him to the mountain villa? His explanation does not reveal the whole truth behind the matter.”44 Again, the orality associated with *kōdan* wins out over novelistic narrative consistency.

44 *Kimen no rōjo, OJJSZ*, vol. 1, 21.
Munefusa and Kurama Tengu arrive at Muneharu's desolate mountain retreat late at night. Above the dense forest of Shishigatani, the hazy spring moon takes on a ghoulish hue. The two men make their way through a tangle of vines and grasses to the main house, where they sit on the mildewed tatami mats and wait for the spirit to make its appearance. The decay of the once fine villa fills Munefusa with dread, and he becomes increasingly anxious about the prospect of seeing a ghost. The two men chat idly as the night wares on. Presently, the specter makes its appearance.

Kurama Tengu whispered, "There it is!"
Munefusa looked up with a start and gazed in terror. There in a corner of the garden, flooded with moonlight, was a gleaming white figure. It was a woman, a refined old woman with her hair cut short. Her hair, like her robe, was bright white. Munefusa held his breath and stared at her.

The old woman turned almost imperceptibly and faced the two men. She smiled sweetly. The moonlight was so bright they could read every line on her wrinkled face. As Munefusa looked at the old woman, he noticed that she was sitting on the side of the well in the corner of the garden. Suddenly he remembered that the others who had come to investigate the haunted estate had all been fished out of that well dead.

Kurama Tengu sat silent and motionless. Following his example, Munefusa also remained still. The mysterious old woman also kept perfectly still and uttered no sound. The mountain retreat was utterly quiet, as though not a soul was there. The night deepened.

The first one to make a move was the old woman. She reached behind herself to fetch something. Then she covered her face with it. It was, of all things, a bright red demon's mask. An indefinable terror seized Munefusa. Yet in that moment, Kurama Tengu calmly offered his opinion to the old woman.

"It doesn't work! You were more frightening without the mask!"
He spoke as if everything were normal. He showed no fear at all. In fact, his remark was coolly derisive. The mysterious old woman seemed quite startled by this unanticipated reaction, and she collapsed in a heap. In the next instant, Kurama Tengu let fly a shout that was as sharp as the tip of a sword.

"Don't move!"
Be jumped to his feet, drew his sword and began to run toward the garden. Munefusa, slower to react, got up to follow him. Suddenly, a spearhead came thrusting from out of the darkness of the hallway aimed at Tengu’s torso. He groaned as the unexpected blow glanced off his rib cage, but he did not shrink back. Be quickly grabbed the shaft of the spear and gave it a mighty tug. From out of the darkness stumbled a large man wearing a hood. He appeared to be strong and fearless. Be let go of the spear, drew his sword and lunged at Tengu. The sound of clashing steel filled the air as Tengu fended off this latest attack. Munefusa ran up and prepared to join the fray, but Tengu told him to go after the old woman. “And bring her back alive!”...

Kurama Tengu struggled with the mysterious hooded assailant. If possible, he wanted to take him alive as well. But since Munefusa had captured the old woman, Tengu was free to kill the man if need be. His opponent was quite a fighter. While Tengu knew he could kill the man, taking him alive would certainly be difficult.

Kurama Tengu resolved to take the man’s life. After exchanging seven or eight more blows, he saw an opening and promptly slashed his opponent diagonally from the shoulder downward. The hooded man let out a groan and toppled to the ground like a fallen tree.

Meanwhile, Munefusa had bound the woman and led her over. Kurama Tengu drew a piece of paper from his pocket, wiped the blood from his blade and then placed his sword back in its scabbard.

“I had intended to spare him, but ended up having to take a life pointlessly. But, we caught the imposter, and we ought to be able to make her reveal the plot. I’ll interrogate her; you keep watch over there.”

Kurama Tengu begins to intimidate the woman in an attempt to frighten a confession out of her. In fact, he has already deduced that the rumor about the haunting of the Shishigatani villa was merely a cover up for a pro-Bakufu conspiracy. He found evidence to that effect on the person of the messenger whom he intercepted on the night that he first met Munefusa. Tengu suspects that the chief conspirator is someone at the Imperial Court who has been communicating secretly with the Bakufu about the movements of Imperial Loyalists in Kyoto. The old woman’s refined bearing suggests that his suspicions are accurate. “Clearly she does not

belong in the house of a common merchant or a samurai. No doubt she serves in the house of a courtier," Tengu observes. Yet without her confession, he cannot identify the conspirator. Thus, he interrogates her forcefully, even menacing her with his sword, until the old woman finally agrees to talk. But just as she begins to confess, an arrow flies out of the night, pierces her windpipe and kills her instantly.

Gla ring in the direction from which the arrow had come, Munefusa sees a hooded, black-garbed samurai standing on the veranda of the adjacent detached house. In his hand is a small bow. Munefusa challenges the samurai, who he perceives to be rather small. Contrary to his expectations, the samurai does not stand and fight, but he runs away. Munefusa pursues him down the inky darkness of a secret underground passage. When he finally grapples with the samurai, he realizes that he is really a woman disguised as a man! In fact, she is the lovely Shiragiku-hime, the daughter of Munefusa’s uncle, Muneyuki. She confesses tearfully that she had observed the suspicious behavior of the old woman, who served in her father’s household, and thereby discovered her father was the ringleader of the conspiracy and was involved in the murders of the people who had gone to Shishigatani to investigate the rumor of the haunted villa. Shiragiku-hime admonished him to give up his nefarious activities, but he rebuffed her. Growing increasingly fearful that her father would be implicated if the plot were exposed, she resolved to take action. That night, she disguised herself as a samurai and followed the old woman. When she saw that the old woman had been captured and was on the verge of implicating her father,

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"Kimen no rōjo, OJJSZ, vol. 1, 25."
Shiragiku-hime reacted as a filial child. She shot the old woman to protect him. “Even though he is an evil person, he is still my father,” she explains.*

Munefusa praises Shiragiku-hime’s filial piety and swears he will tell no one—neither of her father’s involvement in the conspiracy, nor of her murder of the old woman. He even promises to make up a phony story to tell Kurama Tengu. But, just then, Kurama Tengu’s booming voice resounds through the dark passage. He has heard the whole story. When Munefusa thinks he will have to kill Kurama Tengu to keep his promise to Shiragiku-hime, Tengu unexpectedly swears by his sword that he too will keep her secret. “Anyone who hears Shiragiku-hime’s story and remains unmoved by her filial piety is not a samurai. I will never reveal the matter to anyone.”** Shiragiku-hime dissolves into tears of gratitude.

Even at this early stage, it is clear that Osaragi has mastered the conventions of popular historical fiction: the clichés mentioned above; the emphasis on traditional or “feudal” values such as filial piety; the formulaic depiction of violent action replete with the onomatopoetic ringing of swords (charin!); and the intrusive commentary of

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*Kimen no rōjo, OJJSZ, vol. 1, 28.
**Kimen no rōjo, OJJSZ, vol. 1, 28.

Tsurumi Shunsuke considered the ideals depicted in Kimen no rōjo, namely filial piety and reverence for the Emperor, to be reactionary. His comments specifically about Shiragiku-hime’s killing of the old woman indicate his socialist concern for the oppressed class. “Killing a servant in an attempt to save one’s father whom one knows to be evil is, I think, a horrible thing...I think it would be better to spare the innocent servant and rather go and kill one’s own father. But this beautiful young lady did not think so, nor did her male counterparts, Ono Munefusa and Kurama Tengu.” Tsurumi attributes the depiction of “these Emperor-centered and family-centered authoritarian ideas” not to reactionist political views on Osaragi’s part but to Osaragi’s lack of understanding of jidai shōsetsu as a progressive genre. His recognition of popular historical fiction’s political utility grew as the series progressed, Tsurumi suggests. Consequently later Kurama Tengu novels contain more progressive themes. Tsurumi Shunsuke, Taishō bungakuron, 75-77.
the narrator. However, there is also an indication even in this story of Kurama Tengu’s humanity; his reluctance to kill without reason; his regret after he is forced to kill; and his belief in the egalitarian potential of the Imperial system. It is this kernel of humanity and sympathy for others that Osaragi would eventually develop in order to define the character Kurama Tengu.

The second Kurama Tengu story Osaragi published was titled Gingiseru (The silver tobacco pipe, June 1924). The action in this story picks up where Rimen no rōjo leaves off. Several weeks after the incident at the Shishigatani retreat, Kurama Tengu calls on Munefusa and invites him to a secret meeting of Imperial Loyalists. The main topic of discussion is recent Bakufu suppression of the Imperial Restoration movement. Among the seven or eight loyalists at the meeting is Saigō Kichinosuke (a.k.a. Saigō Takamori, 1827-77) from the province of Satsuma and Nakahara Tomisaburō from the province of Tosa. While Saigō is based on an actual historical figure, Nakahara is strictly fictional. Kurama Tengu starts the discussion by reviewing the impact Bakufu pressure has already had on the Restorationists.

“A number of our comrades have already fallen victim. The night before last, Murakami was assassinated on Teramachi Street. And Takahashi was ambushed recently and barely managed to escape, but not before being severely wounded in the shoulder. The Bakufu has gone beyond throwing us in prison. It now has embarked on a treacherous policy of violence.”

“There is even a rumor that Kondō Isami has entered the capital,” someone offered. “We must not let down our guard even in broad daylight! Kondō is a man of tremendous skill. And he carries a Kotetsu sword.” (Kotetsu was a famous swordsmith during the early Edo period whose swords were highly regarded for their ability to hold an edge and
"Recompense violence with violence, that’s what I say. Why don’t we match them murder for murder?" The speaker was a young samurai with a tense face, remarkably pale in comparison to the other loyalists. He was a samurai from Tosa named Nakahara Tomisaburô.

Saigô Kichinosuke, who had been sitting silently to one side with his arms folded across his chest suddenly looked up and spoke. Despite his silence, he still carried considerable weight with those assembled.

"I wonder about the wisdom of our resorting to violent methods. It pains us that the peace of our capital has been disrupted and our Emperor’s heart troubled. Yet if you think about it, it was the blind, impulsive acts of masterless samurai who call themselves Imperial Loyalists but who in reality are not, that directly brought about the Bakufu’s oppressive policy. To provoke the opposition of our enemies pointlessly is foolish. Why don’t we refrain from such violent acts until the situation comes to an critical pass?"

Nakahara leaned forward and said, "If the situation comes to a critical pass, we may well have no chance at victory. To merely employ stopgap measures is to fail in our great duty to His Majesty. The attitude we must adopt is one of firm resolve."

Saigô Kichinosuke continued in his usual, even tone. "Human beings may fail, but the current of the age never falters. It flows calmly and unfailingly to its destination. No matter how desperately the Bakufu may prop up its falling fortunes and former glory, its efforts are like the final spasms of a dying man. That the government will be returned to the Emperor is the current of our times. It cannot be resisted nor can it be hastened. What is necessary is to go along with this current and not to disrupt it."

Nakahara’s face turned crimson. He leapt to his feet. "What the...?! To imagine that we can achieve our ideals through such a passive strategy is like looking for fish up in a tree! If you think that way, what the hell are you doing in Kyoto? You’d best go back to Satsuma and plant potatoes!"

All those assembled grew agitated. Nakahara’s abusive language was hard for any samurai to endure. Munefusa felt sure that Saigô would stand up and settle the matter with his sword. However, Saigô answered in the same unfazed way. "Your words are right on the mark. I am planning to go back to my home province."

Originally I too had confidence in my ability. I believed that if a man put his will into action, there was nothing he could not do. But as I think about it now, I realize its only a dream. A single grain of millet cannot resist the vast ocean. The power of time is undeniable."

"Even that which we call fate is not impervious to the exercise of human will," Nakahara said. "I envy your ability to believe so," replied Saigô. "But now, the only one who knows my mind is Gesshô, chief priest of Kiyomizu temple."

"Your relations with the chief priest have also given you the disposition of a monk and made you spineless! You damned coward!"

"Hold on, Nakahara." Kurama Tengu intervened for the first time.

"It is best that we be allowed to debate each other with dignity and honesty. To give in to one's vanity is not the way to bring major issues to the fore and consider them carefully. A problem with another's individual beliefs is not something that we can do anything about. Saigô is Saigô, and you are you. Each of you must act according to your respective beliefs. There is no other way."

"I see, but no matter what you say, the fact remains that for a warrior to be corrupted like this is, in the end, simply a waste. All right. I'll do as I think right. If the only one who knows Saigô's mind is some priest, then the only one who knows my mind is my Sukehiro," said Nakahara, placing his hand on his beloved sword. He stood up and walked out.

After the meeting ended, Munefusa headed home thinking about what he had heard. He was quite impressed with Saigô Kichinosuke's depth of insight and broadmindedness.

When he learned shortly thereafter that Saigô did indeed return home to Satsuma and, together with the priest Gesshô, tried to drown himself into Satsuma Bay, Munefusa was shocked. However, he drew comfort from the news that Saigô had been rescued from drowning."

The political theme introduced in this passage gives a clear indication of the contemporaneity of the Kurama Tengu series. The question of how to best reform the government was also relevant to the Taishô period, a time when the leftwing took advantage of an anti-establishment mood in society to try and affect change. Similar to the debate between imperial

Oaragi Jirô, Gingsaru (The silver tobacco pipe), OJSZ, vol. 1, 31-33. It is interesting to note the chronological error in this passage. The action in this story supposedly takes place in 1862 as that is the date hinted at in Kmen no rôjo. However, Saigô Takamori and Gesshô fled to Satsuma and attempted to drown themselves in 1858 following the Ansei Purge of Ii Naosuke's opponents.
loyalists (shishi) Saigô Kichinosuke and Nakahara Tomisaburô depicted in Gingiseru, there were differing opinions among Taishô leftists regarding the most effective means of political activism. Those on the far left, anarcho-syndicalists and communists, advocated violence. On the other hand, liberals and Christian socialists rejected violence on humanitarian grounds, preferring a campaign of public education, political discourse and parliamentary debate in their efforts to gain a more representative government.

An example of divergent approaches of the Taishô left can be seen in the struggle for universal male suffrage. The democratic liberal Yoshino Sakuzô (1878-1933), who was one of Osaragi's professors at Tokyo University, organized the Reimeikai, a "society aimed at 'enlightening' the Japanese public by discussing new political ideas." He also encouraged his students to study issues of suffrage and electoral reform. The Reimeikai sponsored public rallies in support of universal male suffrage, calling for a government which reflected the popular will. Student groups moved by Yoshino's eloquent speeches mounted demonstrations in support of the cause. Liberal intellectuals, journalists and Christian socialists also organized groups and published articles promoting expanded suffrage. In the end, however, their efforts were unsuccessful. Hara Kei (a.k.a. Hara Takashi 1856-1921), the first commoner and party politician to become

55 It is interesting that despite Saigô's advocacy of a cool, reasoned approach to political activism in Gingiseru, in the October 1924 installment, irazumi (Tattoo), Saigô instigates a campaign of terror against Edo in order to provoke the Shogunate into open conflict with the Satsuma Loyalists. He reasons that Loyalists throughout Japan will rally to the Imperial banner upon seeing the forces of the Shogunate openly attack the Satsuma Loyalists. Saigô thus dispatches Kurama Tengu and Munefusa to Edo to cause trouble.


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Prime Minister, refused to allow the issue to be debated in the Diet.

Radical leftists, seeing the failure of the liberals’ peaceful efforts, resolved to take direct action and began a campaign of violent agitation. There were also demonstrations by students, farmers and labor unionists, who had gained power after winning concessions from management in the Kobe dockyard strike of 1921 in which 30,000 workers walked off the job. Due in part to mass agitation, and in part to party struggles within the Diet, legislation was enacted in May 1925 which granted suffrage to all males over the age of 25. But the victory came at a price. The suffrage bill was linked to the Peace Preservation Law, which gave police sweeping authority to suppress freedom of speech and assembly and to control “dangerous thoughts” (kiken no shisō).

Police persecution of leftist activists by means of this law began in December 1925 with the arrest of 37 student activists for distributing anti-military printed matter. On March 15, 1928, authorities again invoked the Peace Preservation Law in a massive nationwide campaign against Communist party members and communist sympathizers in which 1,568 leftists were arrested and some 488 were prosecuted. The persecution of leftists continued into the 1930s, and included the arrest, detention and torture of members of the Proletarian Literary Movement. By 1941, virtually all leftists had either recanted their “dangerous thoughts” or

were in prison. Others, like proletarian author Kobayashi Takiji (1903-33), were tortured to death while in police custody."

For an educated member of the middle-class like Osaragi, who sympathized with the left but opposed violent activism (his views being a reflection of the influence of Romain Rolland's pacifist writings and Yoshino Sakuzō's advice during Osaragi's years at Tokyo University), it may have seemed as though leftwing violence in the early 1920s "directly brought about the (government's) oppressive policy," to paraphrase Saigō Kichinosuke's comments concerning the Tokugawa Bakufu's commissioning of Kondō Isami's assassination squad, Shinsengumi. Reading the scene cited above as Osaragi's prediction of a government crackdown on the leftist movement may be a bit of a stretch. Nevertheless, the theme of that scene was as relevant to Japan's political situation in the 1920s as in the 1860s.

When the debate between the Saigō and Nakahara begins to degenerate, Kurama Tengu calls for restraint on the part of the hot-blooded Nakahara, and stresses the importance of intellectual debate free from demagoguery. Tengu's advocacy of pluralism and free political discourse—"it is best we be allowed to debate each other with dignity and honesty"—provide another indication of his emerging liberalism. But Gingiseru is not primarily a tale of political debate; it is bourgeois entertainment. Accordingly, having whetted his readers' appetite for violence through Nakahara's appeal to recompense murder with murder, Osaragi proceeds to portray

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the brutal consequences of Nakahara's "direct action" approach.

As the narrative unfolds, Kurama Tengu is implicated in the murder of Munefusa's evil uncle, Muneyuki. Shiragiku-hime asks Munefusa to help her capture and punish Tengu. Munefusa suspects that Tengu has been framed, but he lacks the proof, for his mysterious friend refuses to divulge his whereabouts on the night of the murder. However, Tengu pledges to find the real killer in three days. If he should fail to do so, he promises to turn himself over to Shiragiku-hime. Gingiseru thus becomes a novel of detection.

Visiting the crime scene, Tengu and Munefusa find a silver tobacco pipe. Since neither Muneyuki nor his attendants smoked, the pipe can only belong to the murderer. A brief examination of Muneyuki's corpse reveals that his wounds could only have been inflicted by an expert swordsman. Tengu and Munefusa also deduce that the killer must be an Imperial Loyalist since the Muneyuki was known to be a Bakufu sympathizer. When a member of Kondō Isami's Shinsengumi death squad is murdered in the same grisly manner, Tengu and Munefusa suspect the killer has struck again. At length, Tengu solves the mystery and confronts the killer, none other than Nakahara Tomisaburo, who tried to frame Tengu for Muneyuki's murder. When Tengu confronts him, Nakahara openly admits to the murders and defiantly pledges to continue killing any who oppose Imperial Restoration. Munefusa then arranges a duel between Nakahara and Shiragiku-hime, who is determined to avenge her father. But before she has the chance, Nakahara is brutally cut down by Kondō Isami.
For all the contemporaneity of the Loyalists' debate in
Gingiseru, the foregoing plot summary shows that the story's
selling point was its entertainment value. It is a formulaic
mystery with plenty of bloodshed. The scene in which Munefusa
watches police examine the corpse of the murdered Shinsengumi
member contains grisly detail, right down to the strong scent
of blood which draws both a swarm of flies and a crowd of
rubberneckers. The bloodthirsty character Nakahara Tomisaburô
is reminiscent of Nakazato Kaizan's nihilistic protagonist
Tsukue Ryûnosuke, both in his pale, thin features and in his
sadism. Stroking his beloved sword as one would stroke a cat,
Nakahara remarks ghoulishly, "My Sukehiro is thirsty for
blood. He gets irritable when I don't let him drink his
fill."

There is also a degree of eroticism in Gingiseru, as
when Munefusa accompanies Kurama Tengu to his "home" only to
discover that he is living in the house of a geisha. When
Munefusa calls one afternoon, he is greeted by a voluptuous
geisha whose disheveled appearance suggests she has just
gotten out of bed. She informs him that "the master" is out,
then invites him to come in and wait. But Munefusa makes
excuses and hurries off, ashamed to be "walking in the gay
quarter in the middle of the day." And while Munefusa
believes Kurama Tengu is innocent of Muneyuki's murder, he
has no proof until he discovers that Tengu was carousing in
Shimabara on the night in question. For all these teasing
hints at Kurama Tengu's active sex life, in subsequent
installments, Kurama Tengu never visits the pleasure quarter,
nor does he even show much interest in women. In fact, there

57 Gingiseru, OJJSZ vol. 1, 39.
58 Gingiseru, OJJSZ, vol. 1, 40.
is a scene in the 1925 novel Goyōtō ibun (Strange tale of His Majesty's bandits) in which Kurama Tengu has discovered that an Edo geisha, Kumeji, has fallen in love with him. Despite her physical charms, he feels no sexual attraction to her. He is more concerned with matters of state than matters of the heart. As the two share an awkward silence, the narrator reveals Kurama Tengu's thoughts.

For a long while they said nothing. During that silence, it seemed as though Kumeji was on the verge of speaking. Although Kurama Tengu was a man of matchless strength and courage whenever he wielded his sword, he now grew frightened at the thought of the words which might spill from Kumeji's ruby lips....Up until now, the thought of uniting with a woman had never occurred to him. Every woman he met, he addressed with a feeling of utter indifference. He felt the same way toward Kumeji. It was mere coincidence that he had come to her rescue upon his arrival in Edo. And he thought that the kindness she had shown him was merely her way of returning the favor, in keeping with the character of a true Edo geisha. But now the situation was getting out of hand. Kumeji was in love with him. He could well imagine what was in her heart, but he intended to devote himself to one mistress only: Japan."

The "pure-minded," almost asexual hero is one of the conventions of jidai shōsetsu written in the Taishō and early Shōwa eras. In contrast to the Epicurean heroes of postwar jidai shōsetsu, or even to Nakazato Kaizan's sexually active anti-hero, Tsukue Ryūnosuke, the majority of protagonists from Taishō and early Shōwa popular historical fiction had little time for meaningful interaction with women. They devote themselves exclusively to martial training or, like Tengu, to the cause of Imperial Restoration. Of course, the "pure-minded" hero rescues a damsel in distress. In fact, the eroticism of jidai shōsetsu usually derives from the villain's obsessive desire for the heroine. But once rescued,

the beautiful maiden merely fades into the background, or becomes a pathetic creature consumed by unrequited love for the hero. Osaragi expresses some regret in 1954 over Kurama Tengu’s lack of sexual assertiveness, referring to it as one of his hero’s “shortcomings.” However, Osaragi’s election to follow the bourgeois formula of a “pure-minded” hero in all installments after Gingiseru indicates his awareness of, and desire to cater to the expectations of his audience. As Ozaki Hotsuki writes, a popular writer must always “appeal to the masses within himself and write according to their reactions.” If an author’s awareness of popular tastes informs him that his readers will object to certain “aberrations” within a character he portrays, then he must make the adjustments necessary to bring the character into line with the expectations of his audience.

Although Osaragi is the first popular writer to introduce liberal values in jidai shōsetsu, he does so within the context of conventionality. That framework of conventionality has two manifestations: the formulas of jidai shōsetsu; and the predominant ideological discourse of Taishō and early Shōwa years, namely, nationalism. Having touched on Osaragi’s concessions to the formulas of popular historical fiction, I now turn to his incorporation of nationalist rhetoric in the Kurama Tengu series, specifically his affirmation of the Emperor system.

Yoshikawa Eiji often employs the convention of the lovesick heroine in his jidai shōsetsu. A number of his heroines are literally “consumed” by their desire, that is, they develop pulmonary tuberculosis, thus becoming all the more tragic. Yoshikawa describes the beauty of such a consumptive heroine as enhanced by her illness: her white skin becomes translucent, her delicate features more ethereal. The hero generally remains as ignorant of the heroine’s illness as he is unresponsive to her love.

“Kurama Tengu to sanjūnen,” 118.

“Dokusha no hakken to dentō,” 497. The original text reads: Sakka wa mazu jibun no naka ni iru taishū ni yobikake, sono hannō o tashikamenagara, fude o susumeru.
In the installments following *Gingiseru*, Osaragi returns to the issue of how to best bring about a more orderly society. The question for the Imperial Loyalists is no longer whether or not to use violence, but rather, how much violence is justified. The implication of the *Kurama Tengu* series, as well as of all popular historical fiction set in the Bakumatsu period, is that the objective of restoring authority to the Emperor justifies whatever violent means are necessary. Kurama Tengu believes that it is the "forces of nature" (*shizen no ikioi*) which are returning power to the Emperor and that the Imperial Loyalists (referred to alternately as *kinnōka*, "Imperialists," and *kokushi*, "patriots") are merely facilitating the restoration of natural order in which the Son of Heaven governs Japan."

Such romantic rhetoric, not uncommon in Taishō and early Shōwa jidai shōsetsu, serves to validate the modern state and its founders, the Meiji oligarchs, for returning the Emperor to his rightful and natural position as Japan’s political, cultural and spiritual Center.

In the story *Nyonin jikoku* (A woman’s hell, August 1924), Kurama Tengu and Munefusa participate in planning a major offensive against the Shinsengumi and Bakufu forces in Kyoto. Due to an intrigue involving the wife of the Loyalist leader and the leader’s right-hand man, however, the offensive must be aborted at the last minute. The Loyalists scatter, vowing to reassemble in the future and attempt another assault. The story *Irezumi* (Tattoo, October 1924), finds Kurama Tengu and Munefusa again involved in plotting agitation, this time with Saigō Kichinosuke (who has suddenly returned to Kyoto, although no mention is made of his exile as *Goyōto ibun, OJJSZ*, vol. 1, 264.)
following his suicide attempt in Satsuma Bay) and another historical figure, the Satsuma loyalist Masumitsu Kyûnosuke (1841-68). Saigô envisions a major upheaval in Edo, “the Bakufu’s home base.” He charges Kurama Tengu, Munefusa and Masumitsu with the planning and execution of the agitation, merely admonishing them to “stir up as much trouble as you can.” Tengu even volunteers to recruit burglars and pickpockets to help disturb the peace.

The installments published in November and December 1924 deal with Tengu’s recruitment of thieves to participate in the “Edo Disturbance” and his subsequent journey to Edo with his small band of troublemakers. As they draw near Edo, Tengu decides that it would be safest to split up before entering the city rather than risk being caught in a body. They plan to rendezvous at the Mita estate of the Satsuma daimyô, where Masumitsu Kyûnosuke is plotting the Edo disturbance. However, Kondô Isami has learned of Tengu’s departure from Kyoto and suspects he is planning some mischief in Edo. Kondô notifies his colleagues in Edo, who set a trap for Tengu. As the December installment draws to a close, Tengu is shot while crossing the Tama River on the outskirts of Edo. As Tengu falls into the frigid waters, the reader is left wondering whether he is dead or merely wounded. Even if he is only wounded, he could well freeze to death in the icy waters of the Tama River. And should he survive the river, how will he escape the Bakufu agents who have ambushed him?

Saigô Takamori was banished to the island of Amami Ōshima from 1858 until 1861, at which time he was recalled Kagoshima. However, when he refused the orders of his new lord Shimazu Hisamitsu to participate in plan to force the Bakufu into a coalition with the imperial court, Saigô again sent into exile, this time on Tokunoshima. Hisamitsu pardoned Saigô in 1864 and made him commander of Satsuma troops in Kyoto. “Saigô Takamori,” Heibonsha hyakka jiten, vol. 6, (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1985), 40.

Ozaragi Jirô, Inazumi, OJJSZ, vol. 1, 104.
Questions regarding Tengu's fate are answered in Goyôto ibun, the first long novel of the Kurama Tengu series which began serialization in January 1925. As the novel opens, Munefusa and the Kyoto thieves gather at the Mita estate, but Tengu does not appear. Although he is not physically present, Tengu is the inspiration for the principle of justice which Munefusa advocates in his heart. Masumitsu Kyûnosuke briefs Munefusa and the thieves on the progress of the Edo Disturbance: he and his fellow Loyalists have spread rumors among outlaws and brigands in the outlying areas that Edo is "ripe for the picking." As a result, legions of bandits have begun attacking ordinary citizens on a daily basis, giving rise to chaos in the city. Upon hearing this news, Munefusa is troubled. Surely if Kurama Tengu were present, he would also disapprove.

"In support of our plan, we have spread rumors everywhere," Masumitsu informed them. "For example, we told masterless samurai and renegade soldiers that the Bakufu has decided to give relief to the poor, that it is opening up the rice storehouses of Asakusa and it has ordered the richest merchants in the city to distribute a portion of their wealth to the needy....

"What they say about a rumor getting more exaggerated as it spreads is true. It wasn't long before people were saying that if a fellow goes to Edo, he is free to break into homes and rob people at will. Now they even say that he is not limited to stealing rice or valuables. He can take any woman he wants.... Waves of villains from every corner of Kantô far and near have come surging into Edo like a terrible force. One might as well say the dregs of society have suddenly struck gold!

"Burglary is everywhere. Arson is rampant. Why, not a night passes that there is not a murder or a fire in the city. In one night alone, at least ten homes get burglarized. The citizens are terrified and lock their doors even during the day. At night, no can sleep for fear of being made a victim....

Masumitsu's face shone with a look of smug satisfaction. The other three Satsuma Loyalists wore similar expressions.
“Well.... That’s something....” Munefusa said with a vagueness that bordered on incivility. Outwardly, he neither agreed with nor rejected Masumitsu’s satisfied point of view. But the thoughts of his heart were far clearer.

"Even if I discount the better part of his story as exaggeration, it is still incredible. They call it the ‘Edo Disturbance,’ yet because the objective is strictly to provoke the Bakufu, it would be more in line with a warrior’s sense of compassion to devise a plan which minimizes the suffering of the citizens. What would Kurama Tengu say upon hearing Masumitsu’s story? No doubt he would share my opinion.... Yes, there’s no doubt about it. Even if exhausting the Bakufu with the busy work of maintaining order in the city does benefit our objective, we must avoid making innocent citizens suffer as much as possible,” Munefusa thought to himself."

This passage introduces a theme which recurs throughout Goyōtō ibun: namely, whether or not the ends of revolution justify the means for bringing it to pass. If the restoration of the Emperor to power is the will of Heaven, is it necessary to resort to cruel terrorism? Munefusa and Masumitsu debate the issue only once, but Osaragi returns to the question in his portrayal of Kurama Tengu and another character, the pragmatic Bakufu official, Katsu Awa (a.k.a. Katsu Kaishū, 1823–99). Osaragi also incorporates nationalist rhetoric in the depiction of these characters, articulated in terms of the kazoku kokka ideology current in Japan from around 1910 through the end of the Greater East Asian War. The kazoku kokka (Nation-state family) doctrine was first officially propogated in primary school ethics textbooks produced by the Ministry of Education in 1910. It likened the Japanese nation to one great family with the Imperial Household as the head family and the Emperor as the
benevolent patriarch." The kazoku kokka ideology was refined during the Taishô and early Shôwa eras and disseminated through Ministry of Education publications (including the Kokutai no hongi [Fundamentals of our national polity; 1937]) to nurture patriotic Emperor-loyalty (chûkun aikoku) among young Japanese." Romantic depictions of patriots like Kurama Tengu and Katsu Awa tended to reinforce such ideology.

Having escaped the group of soldiers who ambushed him at the Tama River, Kurama Tengu remains on the lam for over half the novel, playing cat and mouse with the notorious Matsudaira Chikaranosuke, a fencing instructor at the Bakufu's Military Training Academy and co-founder of the Shinchôgumi, the Edo-based counterpart to Kondô Isami's Shinsengumi. While Tengu hides at the Yanagibashi home of the geisha Kumeji, whom he rescued from the clutches of a gang of lascivious vagrants at the beginning of the novel, he learns that Chikaranosuke is involved in a plot to borrow money from Russia to finance a Bakufu offensive against Satsuma and Chôshû Loyalists. The intermediary who brokers the deal is the pompous Hakodate merchant, Saikokuya Monbei, who also has designs on Kumeji. When Monbei confers with Chikaranosuke in

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87 Matsumoto Sannosuke, "Kokka shugi to 'ie ideorgi" (Nationalism and 'family' ideology), in Aoyama Michio, et.al., eds., Kôza kazoku, vol. 8, Kazoku kan no keifu (Lectures on the family: The lineage of our view of the family) (Tokyo: Kôbundô, 1974), 55-57; Ishida Takeshi, Meiji seiji shitôshi kenyû (Research on the history of Meiji political thought) (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1954), 7; Wilbur F. Fridell, "Government Ethics Textbooks in Late Meiji Japan," Journal of Asian Studies vol. 29, no. 4 (August 1970), 829-32. Fridell points out that Higashikuze Michitomi first conceived of the Emperor as the father of the nation in his 1890 commentaries on the Imperial Rescript on Education entitled Shûshin Kyôkashô (Morals Textbook). Higashikuze's concepts were refined and expanded for the 1910 textbook in which "official ethical instruction rose to a kind of plateau" (Wilbur F. Fridell, 824-25).

88 Wilbur F. Fridell, 831; Fujii Shôichi, "Sensô to fashizumû' ki no tennôsei" (The Emperor system during the 'war and fascism' period), in Tennôsei to minshû (The Emperor system and the people), Gotô Yasushi, ed. (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1976), 205; Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., Sources of Japanese Tradition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 758.
the privacy of Kumeji’s home, Tengu spies on their conversation. Shocked by the audacity of the scheme, Tengu bursts from his hiding place and reprimands Monbei and Chikarano. Inviting foreign intervention in domestic affairs is not good for Japan, he asserts righteously. But Chikarano replies with a sneer, “Don’t you mean ‘not good for Satsuma’?” Tengu then launches into an impassioned speech.

“I am not a Satsuma retainer,” Tengu began. “I do not hope to wrest power from the Tokugawa and install the Shimazu in their place. In fact, were the Shimazu to try and replace the Tokugawa as hegemons, I would turn from fighting the Bakufu and redirect my energies toward bringing down the Shimazu.

“I regard the entire country as the exclusive possession of the Emperor. The two thousand year history of our nation, indeed, the blood flowing through my veins which I have received from my fathers, tell me so. Not one inch of Japan, not one blade of grass belongs to me or anyone other than His Majesty.

“Likewise, all people in Japan are the Emperor’s people. The Shōgun and the beggar beneath the bridge are equally His Majesty’s people; and in the eyes of the Son of Heaven, all are equal. There is neither Edo, Kyoto nor Satsuma.”

“If that is the case,” Chikarano broke in, “why have you enlisted the aid of the Satsuma and Chôshû domains in an effort to bring down the Bakufu?”

“It is the force of the age,” replied Tengu. “Must not the grass withered by frost be burned in order that new shoots may sprout?”

“And what of the sacrifice of Edo’s citizens? Have you no pity for them?”

“A Japanese warrior is well acquainted with pity. But the age advances via blind force. It knows no resting place, but rushes headlong. Blood will flow on account of it. There will also be greater sacrifice than necessary. But that is unavoidable. There is no way to accomplish a revolution without this blind force. However, every true warrior knows that the heroes of a revolution are not just those who set the fires. Those who are burned are equally distinguished in their contribution. When an old power and a new power stand abreast, war is inescapable. And what begins as war, ends in revolution....”69


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Kurama Tengu's assertion that "all people in Japan are the Emperor's people" is evocative of the kazoku kokka notion of Japan as a national family. Indeed, Osaragi reinforces the national family metaphor through Tengu's declaration that the awareness of the Emperor's sovereignty is in his blood, the "blood passed from father to son over many generations" (fuso daidai ni uketa chi) in the course of Japan's "two thousand year history," a chronological reference to Japan's "unbroken line" of Emperors beginning with the legendary Jimmu. The implication here is that the blood which flows in Tengu's veins is the same as that which flows in the veins of all Japanese, members of one great family. What is unique about Osaragi's version of the kazoku kokka doctrine is his egalitarianism: Tengu's declaration that "all are equal" includes no hierarchical provisions. While the passage above makes clear Tengu's devotion to the Emperor and to the Restorationist cause, it also implies his belief in the equality of all men, regardless of rank. The passage demonstrates how Osaragi couches liberalism within a nationalistic context.

Despite the implication of Tengu's rhetoric that the ends of revolution justify the means, and his tacit support of violence against the citizens of Edo, subsequent passages demonstrate that his anti-Bakufu activism is motivated by his belief that an Imperial Restoration will bring peace and progress to the nation. For example, in the following passage, Tengu pledges to the Yanagibashi geisha, Kumeji, that he will never use his sword unless it will benefit Japan and her people.

"It's not that I hate the Tokugawa. I don't. My efforts to topple the Bakufu are on behalf of the nation of Japan and
the Japanese people, in a word, to bring the rule of the Emperor to the entire realm. Edo is part of Japan, and the people of Edo are citizens of Japan. They are not to be detested or cursed. Kumeji, I, Kurama Tengu, swear to you by my sword. Unless it be for the sake of our country, for the sake of Japan, I will never stain my sword with blood!"

Remaining true to his oath, Tengu does not kill anyone in Goyôtô ibun. He even spares the life of Chikaranosuke after wounding him in their climactic sword fight. And during that scene, Osaragi reminds the reader repeatedly that the only reason Kurama Tengu raises his sword against Chikaranosuke is because he endangers the stability of Japan. "As long as this fellow remains alive, he will try to borrow five million ryō from Russia, thus ruining our nation's future. I must kill him."

Just as he is about to deliver the coup de grâce, Chikaranosuke's lover, Oryû, appears and begs for mercy. Tengu's compassion wins out. But he realizes that the conspiracy to have Russia finance the Bakufu's offensive against the Loyalists is a danger. He reluctantly determines to kill the intermediary, Saikokuya Monbei. "If Monbei is unreasonable in his determination to bring about this deal, then I'll have no alternative but to take his life. All the same, I truly hate shedding blood."

While Tengu is occupied with Chikaranosuke and Monbei, Munefusa encounters the Tokugawa retainer Katsu Awa. At first, Munefusa fears that Katsu will arrest him for supporting the Loyalist attack on Edo. He knows that Katsu is a highly placed official in the Tokugawa regime (the historical Katsu was Commissioner of warships and was a delegate in the Shogunate's mission to the United States in

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"Goyôtô ibun, OJJSZ, vol. 1, 289.
"Goyôtô ibun, OJJSZ, vol. 1, 300.
"Goyôtô ibun, OJJSZ, vol. 1, 319."
1860). However, Katsu turns out to be a clear-eyed patriot who recognizes that the Tokugawa have lost their political and moral authority to rule Japan. Echoing Tengu's words, Katsu acknowledges that it is "the forces of nature" which will restore power to the Imperial Court." At the same time, Katsu is a loyal retainer of the Tokugawa. He is willing to help in the transition from Shogunal rule to Imperial rule, but he refuses to be party to the ruin of the Tokugawa.

"The Bakufu has already collapsed," Katsu said flatly. "But the House of Tokugawa still stands. My family has served the Tokugawa for generations. Although I may regard the fall of the Bakufu as natural, I cannot regard as just or right the desire to totally annihilate the Tokugawa...."

"Among the Satsuma and Chōshū Imperialists, there are some who bitterly oppose the Tokugawa, seeing only their misdeeds and not their many contributions to society. Such men will not rest until they have sucked the very marrow from the bones of the Tokugawa...." "They have now drawn the Bakufu into open conflict, skillfully making it look as though the Tokugawa initiated the hostilities. It is a splendid strategy. But is it one the Emperor would advocate? After all, the Bakufu's retainers are also Japanese citizens. And if we regard the Emperor as the benevolent head of the one great family known as Japan, then the people of Satsuma and the people of Edo are equally members of that great family. If the father inquires into the mistakes of one of his children, and subsequently treats that child as a mere stepchild, is not the father then contributing to the delinquency of that child?"

Katsu's egalitarian nationalism and his humanity—he also spares the lives of a group of would-be assassins who fail in their attempts to kill him—make him a virtual carbon copy of Kurama Tengu; only their differing allegiances distinguish them. Katsu's articulation of kazoku kokka ideology is clearer than Tengu's and just as anachronistic. But Osaragi does not invoke kazoku kokka for the purpose of historical accuracy; instead he employs it to reinforce the patriotism

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55 Goyōtō ibun, OJJSZ, vol. 1, 286.
56 Goyōtō ibun, OJJSZ, vol. 1, 286-87.
of Katsu Awa, an important figure in the transition to Meiji rule and thus in the creation of modern Japan. For many readers in 1925, the Meiji Restoration was part of their living memory. The glorification of Restorationist heroes—Saigō Takamori, Masumitsu Kyūnosuke, and even Katsu Awa—legitimized the modern State as the progressive antithesis of the feudal and backward Tokugawa Bakufu and thus served to placate readers struggling with the challenges of modern life.

At the end of Goyōtō ibun, Munefusa and Tengu reunite and, with Katsu Awa’s backing, begin to hunt for Saikokuya Monbei. However, Monbei sets a trap for them and deceives Kumeji into putting them aboard a small river boat laden with gunpowder. As the boat glides along the Ō River, a sniper begins shooting at it from the shore. When they drop to the deck to avoid being shot, Tengu becomes aware of the explosives below deck. He shouts at Munefusa to get off the boat, but just as they are jumping overboard, the sniper hits his mark and a huge explosion blows the boat to pieces. Have Tengu and Munefusa been killed? Osaragi does not tell his audience until the next Kurama Tengu novel, Kotori o kau bushi (The warrior who raises birds; 1926) that both men miraculously survive the blast. Meanwhile, upon learning that she has been duped into sending her beloved Tengu to his “death,” Kumeji sneaks up on Monbei as he celebrates his victory and hacks him to death with a cleaver. She returns home, says a prayer before her Buddhist altar, and after bidding her apprentice a tearful farewell, she takes her own life. Her revenge and her suicide are in the proud tradition of the geisha of Yanagibashi.
Despite the obvious defects of Goyôtô ibun—narrow escapes, improbable coincidences, and predictable stereotypes—we should not underestimate the skill necessary to keep contending moral imperatives in conflict for the length of a long novel. Do revolutionary ends validate violent means? Is a rebel justified in showing compassion for the enemies of his cause? Is the establishment figure Katsu Awa admirable in spite of his allegiance with the wrong side of history? The appeal of the novel for many readers lies in Osaragi's resolution of these contradictions in favor of a progressive nationalism.

The notion of a "progressive" or "egalitarian" nationalism suggests the dialectical quality of the early installments of the Kurama Tengu series. Osaragi's incorporation of kazoku kokka rhetoric and his validation of the Emperor system reflect the dominant ideology of the Taishô and early Shôwa years. Popular culture, as Louis Althusser points out, is one of many apparatuses which disseminate State ideology, apparatuses which engender within individuals the recognition of their subjectivity to the central Absolute Subject, thereby reproducing the relations of production. Osaragi's Kurama Tengu series certainly achieved such result with its affirmation of the Emperor as Japan's political and cultural center. But at the same time, Osaragi used the character Kurama Tengu to introduce democratic values that were not part of the prevailing ideological discourse. Thus, the hero's humanism and egalitarianism are conspicuous even in early Kurama Tengu.

installments. Later in the series, as Osaragi gained confidence as a writer, his treatment of liberal themes expanded and spilled over into his other *jidai shōsetsu* in which he incorporated more trenchant social commentary.

The last installment of the *Kurama Tengu* series analyzed in this study is the 1927 novel *Kakubei jishi*, which Murakami Mitsuhiko asserts “constitutes the archetypical image of the hero *Kurama Tengu*.” Kakubei jishi was a departure from the installments which preceded it in several ways. Serialized in the youth magazine *Shōnen kurabu*, it was the first of Osaragi’s works to appear in a publication other than *Poketto*. It was also the first to specifically target a juvenile audience, as is indicated by Osaragi’s use of the more polite *desu/-masu* style, a style often employed in texts aimed at children. It was also the first installment in which Munefusa does not appear. In *Kakubei jishi* the character who acts as intermediary between the reader and *Kurama Tengu* is Sugisaku, a thirteen year old who earns a living by performing acrobatic stunts on the street while wearing a lion’s mask. In *Kakubei jishi*, Tengu’s goodness radiates to others, for it is the first installment in the *Kurama Tengu* series in which Kondō Isami is portrayed in a favorable light, though he remains Tengu’s archenemy.

*Kakubei jishi* also announces a clear theme of resistance to oppressive authority. In the various storylines which Osaragi weaves through the narrative, Tengu and Sugisaku rise up in rebellion against the tyrannical forces of oppression and ultimately triumph over them. Tengu articulates this theme in a scene in which he assures

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Sugisaku he will try to avoid being killed carrying out his loyalist activities. Despite his resolve to stay alive, he tells Sugisaku that he is always ready to throw away his life in the defense of liberty.

"Uncle Tengu," began Sugisaku, rather awkwardly, pulling at the blade of grass, "please...please don't die. You won't, will you?"

Kurama Tengu, sensing the sincerity that filled Sugisaku's heart, looked away from the moonlight shimmering on the surface of the river and turned to Sugisaku. Tears glistened in his eyes. For a while he was silent. But at length, he smiled cheerfully.

"Okay. I doubt I'll die this time. I definitely won't die in vain. Your Uncle Tengu likes people, and knows that it is best to go on living. Dying is hateful to me. But, when there is something at stake more important than your own life, and you have to sacrifice your life in order to defend it, at such times a fellow must die bravely. To feign ignorance and then attempt to save your own skin is cowardice. Don't you see? At such times, people must stand up [and fight] even if they know their lives are at risk."

This advice stays with Sugisaku throughout the novel as he risks his own life time after time in an effort to rescue Kurama Tengu from the Bakufu forces. Osaragi has hit on another sure-fire stereotype for appealing to readers: the spunky kid, a character that juvenile readers found particularly entertaining.

The narrative opens with Sugisaku walking back and forth on a Kyoto street on a cold winter afternoon. He and his young friend Shinkichi have lost the coin purse which contained their earnings from a day of street performances. They still have not found it as the sun begins to set. They know that if they return home without it, their employer, the foul tempered Chôshichi, will beat them and send them to bed hungry. Young Shinkichi begins to cry and Sugisaku, too, is on the verge of tears. Suddenly, a samurai appears with a

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77 Kakubei jishi, OJJSZ, vol. 2, 47.
young Buddhist acolyte and gently asks what is the matter. He offers to give them enough money to cover their loss. But the acolyte says, “Ah, Mr. Kurata, perhaps you shouldn’t. To accept what such people say is...well, the children may be honest, but there is probably some crafty adult who manipulates them.” Still, the samurai is open-hearted. “Even if I am being swindled, it is a piddling amount for me. But, if their story is true and these two boys are saved from grief by such a meager sum, well, what could be better?” Sugisaku is overwhelmed by gratitude for the samurai’s kindness. He will never forget “Mr. Kurata” or his generosity.

Sugisaku and Shinkichi arrive home moments before their employer, Chôshichi. Although Chôshichi has trained Sugisaku and the eight or nine other boys who live in his home to be street acrobats, he also works as a detective. He returns that evening from a meeting with Kondô Isami of the Shinsengumi, who has asked Chôshichi to track down the elusive Kurama Tengu. Chôshichi boasts that Kondô has asked him because he is the best detective in Kyoto. Surely he will catch Kurama Tengu even though no one else can. He then arrogantly demands the day’s earnings from the boys. “Anyone who has brought home less than 300 mon will receive a beating, a blow for each mon under 300.”

When Sugisaku hands over the earnings, Chôshichi scolds him. Rather than a pile of small change, Sugisaku has brought home two silver pieces. Chôshichi thinks he has stolen the money. But when Sugisaku fearfully relates that he received it from a samurai named Kurata, Chôshichi’s mood changes from

belligerence to jubilation. He recognizes "Kurata" as one of the assumed names of Kurama Tengu. He tells Sugisaku that they will go pay a visit to the temple where "Mr. Kurata" is staying the following day. Sugisaku is so upset that he cannot sleep. He realizes he is repaying Tengu's kindness by turning him over to the dreaded Shinsengumi. He tries to think of a way out of the predicament. "At this point, any resistance would be futile. Rather, it would provoke Chôshichi's temper and would result in beatings so painful that he and Shinkichi would not be able to stand up afterward. He had no choice but to go back to that temple.""

On the way to the temple, Chôshichi and Sugisaku encounter Kondô Isami, who has been summoned to identify the body of one of his men killed the night before by Kurama Tengu. Chôshichi immediately adopts a ridiculously obsequious manner toward Kondô, much to the surprise of Sugisaku, who knows Chôshichi only as a bullying tyrant. Upon learning that Chôshichi is on his way to nab Tengu, Kondô calls in seven members of the Shinsengumi to back him up. Sugisaku's desperation grows as he sees the murderous gleam in the eyes of these experienced killers.

At length, Chôshichi and Sugisaku call at the gate of the temple, while the seven thugs hide in and around the temple compound. Sugisaku has been warned that he will be severely beaten if he fouls things up. Then assuming an attitude of tearful gratitude, Chôshichi pretends to thank Tengu for helping the boy the night before. Tengu plays along, but senses that he is being trapped. When the Shinsengumi jump out of the bushes, he tries to flee, but his enemies surround him and cut off escape. In the ensuing sword

\[\text{Kakubei jishi, OJSZ, vol. 2, 14.} \]
fight, Tengu cuts down four of his opponents, but soon Kondō arrives with more men. Taking advantage of a momentary distraction, Tengu makes a mad dash for his life. Kondō draws a pistol and aims it at his fleeing enemy, but just as the gun is about to fire, Sugisaku grabs his arm and the bullet misses its mark.

Chōshichi is furious and starts pummeling Sugisaku. But even as he is being beaten to the ground, Sugisaku feels satisfied. Kondō rebukes Chōshichi and says, "Rather than beat him, why don't you find out why he did such a thing?! That's a better way to handle the matter!" After a lengthy interrogation in which Chōshichi menaces Sugisaku and Kondō derides Chōshichi's ineptitude, Sugisaku tearfully confesses his motivation.

"Won't talk, eh?!" Chōshichi glared at Sugisaku with a face so horrible it looked as though his eyeballs would pop out of their sockets. Gripping his detective's truncheon in his sinewy hand, he brandished it in the air. Sugisaku, weeping, timidly confessed that he had been unable to sit by silently while Kurama Tengu, the man who had shown him such kindness, was about to be killed.

Now, in terms of his devotion to his cause, Kondō Isami was naturally an enemy greatly feared by the Imperial Loyalists. But, in terms of his temperament, he was a very honest fellow with a tremendous purity of spirit. Thus, upon hearing Sugisaku's confession, he was deeply moved by the boy's nobility. He sat in silence for the longest time, absorbed in thought.

That he had let an enemy who had killed many of his comrades slip through his fingers naturally galled him. And because Sugisaku was, in essence, the accomplice of that hated enemy, Kondō's first thought was to take the boy back to the Shinsengumi compound and punish him there. But as he contemplated the boy's confession, he realized that Sugisaku, while still a child, had been ready to sacrifice his life to repay the small favor he had received. Kondō recognized such noble conduct, though of no benefit to his own cause, was a splendid thing.

"All right," said Kondō in a cheerful voice, "it's an unforgivable offense, but I'm going to forgive you all the same. The boy is innocent. The guilty one is Chōshichi, who

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81 Kakubei jishi, OJSZ, vol. 2, 22.
caused the boy to be so miserable in the first place." Kondô glared at Chôshichi with a penetrating stare.

"Chôshichi!" he roared.

"Y-yes, sir."

"You're a no-good-bully."

"N-no, no. It's not like that. The boy's talking nonsense! His story is absurd! Sugisaku, tell him! When did I ever mistreat you?"

"Shut up! Don't talk back to me!" yelled Kondô in a terrible voice. Chôshichi fell to the ground cowering.

"Chôshichi, I'm going to overlook today's incident. Take good care of this boy from now on."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. I will," replied Chôshichi looking thoroughly defeated. But that was only on the outside. On the inside, Chôshichi had begun to hate Sugisaku so intensely that even if he were to kill the boy, he would not be satisfied.

"You'd better prepare yourself boy! Because this episode won't just end when we get home!" Chôshichi thought.

In this scene, Osaragi portrays Kondô Isami rather differently than in previous novels. Kondô's willingness to forgive Sugisaku and his admonition to Chôshichi to "take good care of the boy" are unexpected for a character who "thinks no more about killing a man than he does about cutting open a melon." As he was writing for a juvenile audience, Osaragi varied his formula to impute compassion to even the hardened killer Kondô, who melts in sympathy before the innocence of the child-hero. Osaragi tailors his usual constructive social message to his specific audience.

As the narrative unfolds, Tengu rescues Sugisaku and his friends from Chôshichi's abuse and then takes the children to stay at the Kyoto garrison of the Satsuma forces. But he soon grows restless and leaves to engage in new activism, entrusting the children to his Loyalist comrade Saigô Kichinosuke. Posing as a Shinsengumi messenger, Tengu infiltrates Osaka Castle in an attempt to steal a secret

\[\text{Kakubei jishi, OJJSZ, vol. 2, 24-25.}\]

\[\text{Osaragi Jirô, Kotori o kau bushi (The warrior who raises birds), OJJSZ, vol. 1, 416.}\]
notebook containing the names and whereabouts of all Loyalists active in Kyoto. He delivers his bogus message to the castle warden, a brutal, yet ineffectual Bakufu bureaucrat. As the warden reads the message, Tengu silently evaluates him and his evaluation is an indictment of the feudal bureaucracy. It is also possible to read Tengu’s denunciation of the Bakufu bureaucracy as Osaragi’s criticism of the contemporary (i.e., early Shōwa) civil service system, in which individual talent is not as important as good connections. The advancement of inept, yet well-connected bureaucrats irritates the egalitarian Tengu.

Kurama Tengu regarded the castle warden as a man of no importance. He was fat, with a relatively narrow forehead, and his movements were restless. His large, bulging eyes darted about ceaselessly. Most likely he was another fellow born of a good family. He possessed no particular ability, to be sure, yet because of his father’s influence, or his important relatives, he had risen to a position of authority and had assumed an arrogant air. Kurama Tengu felt less regard for such people than he did for a booger [hanakuso]. Moreover, he considered the current social system a joke, and scorned the out-dated system which esteemed the son of a samurai higher than a townsman simply because of his birth, and that awarded high government posts to the sons of great daimyō solely on the basis of their lineage."

Osaragi developed a contempt for arrogant civil servants at a relatively early age, judging from comments he makes in his 1964 memoir. He writes that as he was entering high school, his father insisted he train for a career in government service. However, he found the tendency of government officials to “pompously look down on people” distasteful and balked at the idea of a government career."

While Osaragi did eventually take a job in the Foreign Ministry, he did not find the work fulfilling and quit after

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“Watakushi no rirekisho,” 324.

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two years. His critical comments about the corruption of entrenched upper-level bureaucrats who can blithely weather the vicissitudes of politics, unlike the minor civil servants who work for them, suggest that bureaucratic arrogance was not the only quality he found disturbing."

Murakami Mitsuhiko suggests that displeasure over the rash of political scandals in the first few years of the Shōwa era prompted Osaragi to write *Nēzumi Kozōjirōkichi* (1931-32)," a jidai shōsetsu in which the hero, the noble thief, Nēzumi Kōzō, must stop a yakuza boss from constructing a row of brothels that will displace poor residents of the Yamanote section of Edo. The yakuza boss receives the necessary building permit by bribing a corrupt finance official (*kanjō bugyō*), who coerces the local magistrate into issuing the document. Like Kurama Tengu, Nēzumi Kōzō has only contempt for arrogant and corrupt officials. He breaks into the official’s home one night and cuts off the man’s moustache as he lies sleeping. He eventually breaks up the brothel construction project with similar panache.

Following his interview with the castle warden, Tengu succeeds in stealing and destroying the secret notebook, but is captured by castle guards while attempting to escape. The warden places him in a dark, dank cell with no food, but Tengu survives by dint of his indomitable spirit. While Sugisaku attempts unsuccessfully to rescue his friend, the warden tries to have Tengu killed, but each of his attempts end in failure. After several days, he sends for Kondō Isami, Murakami Mitsuhiko, *Osaragi Jirō: sono seishin no bōken,* 45-46.
Murakami Mitsuhiko, *Osaragi Jirō: sono seishin no bōken,* 80. Murakami mentions specifically the incident involving the Keisei Railway Company and the Tokyo City Council in which 25 of the Council’s 88 members were implicated.
who arrives at the castle prepared for a contentious battle. However, upon seeing the weakened condition of his arch rival, Kondô releases Tengu, reasoning that “to fight with an enemy when he is in such a condition would be a stain on my honor as a warrior, even if I win.” Recognizing the nobility of Kondô’s act, Tengu tells Sugisaku, “Kondô Isami is a finer man than I ever imagined.... Because he is a fine warrior, he will allow me to regain my strength, so that we may settle our dispute like men in a splendid contest between equals. That’s the act of a great man.” Kondô and Tengu agree to meet for a duel to settle their dispute some day in the future. The novel ends with their grudge match. But unlike the climactic violence in previous Kurama Tengu installments, this time there is no bloodshed. When the appointed night arrives, Sugisaku secretly follows Kurama Tengu to the scene.

The two men drew their swords and glared at each other, each quietly sizing up his opponent. From this moment, the smiles which had lingering on their faces vanished, replaced by an expression of grim determination, the mere sight of which overwhelmed Sugisaku. Kurama Tengu and Kondô Isami stood facing each other silently like two stone statues, each man’s gaze focusing alternately on the eyes and the sword of his opponent. A faint breeze played about Kondô’s sleeve and gently ruffled Kurama Tengu’s beard. Otherwise, complete stillness enveloped the scene, as though the temple grounds had been covered by a lid. The clear night sky, against which rose the ink-black outline of the five storied pagoda, was awash with stars.

Suddenly, a fiery battlecry rose from deep within Kondô’s throat and burst forth from his mouth. The force of the cry was enough to rend the heavens, but Kurama Tengu remained unflustered and responded with a guttural grunt of his own.

The quick-tempered Kondô seemed impatient. It was said that once he drew his beloved sword, Kotetsu, he could kill an opponent with one blow. Thus, while he carefully regulated his breathing, his adrenalin began to flow in anticipation of striking first and delivering a decisive single blow. He certainly had the skill to decide the

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contest in one stroke.

Just as Kondô went to make a move, Kurama Tengu, who was trying not to be drawn in, noticed that the point of his own sword had begun to rise, as though being sucked upward. Once aware of it, he quickly checked his sword’s movement. He was just about to return to his original position, when Kondô struck.

Without so much as a word from its master, Kondô’s sword, Kotetsu, flashed brightly before Kurama Tengu’s face like the wing of some strange, white bird. In that moment, Sugisaku, his heart pounding as he watched from afar, unintentionally covered his eyes.

But in the next instant, there was the sound of ringing steel against the flagstones of the temple courtyard. At precisely the right moment, Kurama Tengu had swept his sword horizontally and countered his opponent’s blow, stripping Kotetsu from Kondô’s hands.

Kondô stood stock still, quietly resigning himself to his imminent death. However, Kurama Tengu promptly lowered his sword, then picked up Kotetsu from the ground and returned it to its master.

“Kondô, let’s stop here tonight. I’ve waited a long time for this duel, but tonight you seem to be in poor form. This won’t be our only opportunity to settle our dispute. We will surely meet again sometime, somewhere. I’d like to continue this noble contest some other time,” he said.

Kondô, shaking his head in disbelief, smiled wryly. “No, that won’t do. No matter what you say, the fact is I lost.”

“You mustn’t say that. Believe me, I had no intention whatsoever of sparing you tonight. You are the enemy of our cause and the man responsible for the deaths of several hundred of my comrades. I will take your head one day. But tonight is not the right time. Do you understand?”

“I see. You remember how I spared your life the other day. This is your way of repaying the favor, is it?”

“No, that’s not it at all. I’m merely thinking of that which we call a warrior’s duty. Nothing else. Well, Kondô, let’s meet again some day. Only next time, let’s do it without an appointment, leaving everything to fate. Feel free to hunt me down mercilessly, because I’m certainly going to be hunting you!”

The two men laughed cheerfully, as though they had completely forgotten everything that had just happened. Each sheathed his sword. And then this strange pair, these bitter rivals, began walking side by side, carrying on what seemed to be a pleasant conversation.

Utterly amazed, Sugisaku watched the two walk away.

What kind of men were they? In this great big world, there are probably many men who are more skillful in the art of the sword than these two. But Kondô Isami and Kurama Tengu are not merely “strong” men. There is something more
about them, something which has earned them the respect and admiration of many others.

"But just what is it?" Sugisaku asked himself."

Osaragi has spent the entire novel depicting the "something more" which has earned Kurama Tengu and Kondô Isami "the respect and admiration of many others." It is their nobility, their chivalry, and their "superheroism." Sugisaku also manifests heroism as demonstrated by his brave defiance of the tyrannical Chôshichi, and his willingness to risk his life to rescue Tengu from Osaka Castle. Because Kakubei jishi was written for younger readers, these heroic attributes are depicted more clearly and deliberately.

Tengu's goodness is also expressed in his compassion toward his enemies and in his egalitarianism. There is also an unmistakable undercurrent of nationalism in the affirmation of Tengu's and Kondô's Bushidô ethic: each speaks of "warrior's honor" and "warrior's duty." Thus, we see in Kakubei jishi, as in earlier installments, the conflation of bourgeois romanticism, democratic values, and nationalism. The fact that Murakami Mitsuhiko should single out Kakubei jishi as constituting "the archetypical image of Kurama Tengu" is perhaps due to the clarity with which Osaragi invests these various attributes in his hero in this work.

4.3 Critical response to the Kurama Tengu series

Osaragi's jidai shôsetsu drew virtually no critical response before 1929, and the criticism that appears after 1929 often contains no direct references to the Kurama Tengu installments published from 1924 to 1927. Rather, the work which attracted the attention of the literary establishment

is the 1927-28 novel Akō rōshi, Osaragi’s treatment of the famous incident in which the 47 retainers of the Lord of Akō avenge their master’s dishonorable death. What several writers, including Chikamatsu Shûkô, Sasaki Nobutsuna and Sakai Toshihiko, found compelling about Akō rōshi was its implication of class conflict. Critics perceived clear parallels between the despair of Japan’s unemployed, whose ranks swelled in the late 1920s, and Osaragi’s portrayal of the anger and frustration of the masterless retainers of the Akō daimyō who were left without honor or stipend when their lord was forced to commit suicide. This subtext was reinforced by Osaragi’s title for the work, which emphasizes the 47 retainers’ status as “masterless samurai” (rōnin) instead of following the conventional terminology of “faithful retainers” (gishi or chūshin).”

While the 47 masterless retainers were read as symbols of the unemployed, their enemy, Lord Kira Közukenosuke, was said to represent the political corruption of the early Shōwa period. As portrayed by Osaragi, Lord Kira has strong ties to the merchant class and uses his influence in the Shōgun’s court to benefit his friends in commerce. The revenge of the Akō rōnin was interpreted as an attack on the ruling class and was therefore hailed by left-leaning writers and critics for its progressive message. Such a reading of Akō rōshi was reinforced by the following passage in which the leader of the vendetta, Oishi Kuranosuke, addresses the other rōnin.

“ Our goal is not merely to take the graying head of one old man,” Kuranosuke said quietly. “ That is only the pretext; Közukenosuke is only the means to an end. We are the heirs of Lord Asano’s grudge.... Did he attack Közukenosuke with the intent of simply running the bastard

through? No. Lord Asano’s objective in slashing Kôzukenosuke within the Shôgun’s castle was to send a message, to air his grievance within the very seat of power.... As the heirs of our lord’s grudge, we have united around the cause which he, as an individual, endeavored to make known to the Shôgun. We have thrown all our energies into raising his protest....

“If we can carry out our plan like true warriors, following systematic procedure and exercising strict self-discipline, we will have achieved the better part of our objective, even if we only succeed in wounding Kôzukenosuke.... By inflicting harm on that bastard, we will make Lord Asano’s grudge clear to the Bakufu.... Thus, our entire reason for being is to protest, to rebel.”

Lord Asano’s “grudge” is with the Shôgun, Tsunayoshi (1680-1709). He objects to the way in which the Bakufu has allowed mercantile concerns and lavish lifestyles to replace the affirmation of martial values among the samurai class. He believes that Lord Kira Kôzukenosuke embodies the decadence and corruption pervasive among the nation’s ruling elite. His attack on Kôzukenosuke is his call for the reaffirmation of the Bushidô code. The nationalistic tone of such a theme is unmistakable. However, Osaragi’s treatment of the theme also allows for a progressive interpretation, in which the Akô rônin represent society’s disenfranchised rising up in protest against their corrupt rulers. Akô rôshi is another example of the way in which Osaragi presents progressive ideas in the framework of conservatism.

Although members of the literary establishment recognized the social relevance of Akô rôshi, few bothered to comment on Osaragi’s other jidai shôsetsu. One exception was Hayashi Fusao, who gave the earliest evaluation of Osaragi’s work in the 1929 essay “Taishû bungaku no risô to genjitsu” (Ideal and Reality in the People’s Literature). At the time, Hayashi was a member of the Proletarian Literary Movement and

was concerned with the problem of creating a literature that would entertain the masses while at the same time educating them about their political potential. Turning his attention to *jidai shôsetsu*, he observes that popular writers in the late 1920s approach popular historical fiction in very distinct ways. Some writers, namely Hasegawa Shin (1884-1963) and Naoki Sanjûgo, aim at undermining the received conventions of *jidai shôsetsu*. In their novels, the filial child and the faithful wife are not always vindicated, nor are the villains always vanquished. Hayashi believes such historical fiction appeals to narrowly to the antipathy of left-leaning intellectuals toward feudal values, and forsakes the majority of people who derive comfort from the formulas of *jidai shôsetsu*.

Hayashi identifies a second approach to *jidai shôsetsu* that incorporates violence, eroticism and grotesqueness, while at the same time following the established conventions in which pure-spirited warriors always triumphed. Writers of the second type of *jidai shôsetsu* include Yoshikawa Eiji and Maeda Shôzan (1871-1941). However, these authors are too conservative in their outlook, and do not incorporate anything which even suggests a negation of the relationship between the ruling class and the ruled, Hayashi observes. Instead, they appeal to their audience through “foot-licking obsenities” and “grotesque tricks,” to borrow Nakano Shigeharu’s terminology."

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"Hayashi Fusao, "Taishû bungaku no risô to genjitsu," 55.

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While the first group of *jidai shôsetsu* writers does not appeal to a wide enough audience and the second group does not dare to broach themes related to class conflict, there is a third group of writers, Hayashi suggests, who write historical fiction because it is an excellent forum for dealing with progressive themes. They produce *jidai shôsetsu,* "because the Bakumatsu period, which they generally take as their setting, is an age in which the new actually triumphed over the old." Among the authors belonging to this third group are Mikami Otokichi (1891-1944), Kunieda Shirô (1888-1943) and Osaragi Jirô. Hayashi praises them for their portrayal of anti-establishment "opposition groups" whose ranks include many "heroic nihilists," such as "noble thieves, juvenile delinquents and nihilistic revolutionaries." While Hayashi does not mention any *Kurama Tengu* novels per se, his comments call to mind a number of the characters from works ranging from *Gingiseru* to *Goyôtô ibun* to *Kakuei jishi.* Moreover, his comments regarding Osaragi's 1926 novel *Teru hi kumoru hi* broadly apply to the early *Kurama Tengu* installments as well.

Osaragi Jirô's *Teru hi kumoru hi* and such works are typical (of this third group of historical fictions). In these, secret societies of both the pro-Bakufu activists and the anti-Bakufu activists appear, but it is the author's depiction of latter group which stands out. He represents their revolutionary spirit very fairly. Osaragi depicts the romantic life of the anti-Bakufu faction with great care and sympathy, and at some length—from the gradual development of their movement amidst many hardships and bitter attacks by their enemies to their ultimate victory. Of the works I have read, Osaragi's are the most engaging in this respect."

95 "Taishû bungaku no risô to genjitsu," 56.
96 "Taishû bungaku no risô to genjitsu," 56.
97 "Taishû bungaku no risô to genjitsu," 56.
Hayashi's evaluation implies that he too discerns the blending of bourgeois romanticism and progressive themes in Osaragi's *jidai shōsetsu*. He even suggests elsewhere that Proletarian writers would do well to study and emulate Osaragi's work. His comments indicate that he regarded the sort of historical fiction Osaragi, Kunieda and Mikami wrote as a model for an entertaining literature which would awaken the class consciousness of the masses.

In 1926, in the midst of serializing *Teru hi kumoru hi*, Osaragi was visited by Naoki Sanjūgo. Naoki, who was older and more established as a writer, stopped by Osaragi's home to offer encouragement to the young writer. The two quickly formed a friendship that endured until Naoki's premature death in 1934. In 1931, Naoki included a brief critique of Osaragi's historical fiction in his essay "Taishū bungaku sakka sōhyō" (A general commentary on popular writers). While not as substantial a critique, nor as insightful as Hayashi Fusao's remarks, Naoki's comments reflect his discernment of the bourgeois urbanity of Osaragi's *jidai shōsetsu*. Naoki finds this quality inappropriate for historical fiction, a genre which he feels should depict the savagery of the distant past.

Osaragi Jirō is taller than I. I stand five and a half feet, but he is taller and heavier. He is also quite a handsome fellow with large, gentle eyes like those of a deer. What is more, his breadth of reading, his ideas and his compositions are all as impressive as his physical presence. In literary matters, he surpasses all his contemporaries. And he devotes himself fully to each composition in an effort to make it better than the last. However, take any one of his representative historical fictions, and we find that the characters all possess his

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Hayashi Fusao, "Puroretaria taishū bungaku no monda" (The problem of a proletarian literature for the people) *Senki* (October 1928), reprinted in *Kindai bungaku hyōron taiseki*, vol. 6, 144. 255
point of view, to a greater or lesser extent. They all share his intelligent, delicate and sensitive way of looking at things.... This is both a strength and a weakness. To put it bluntly, he cannot portray a barbarian convincingly. His portrayal of boldness in his heroes, their swagger and impudence, is weak at best, as is his depiction of the milieu of the Warring States period.... He is sufficiently able to portray Kuranosuke [the hero of Akō rōahi] and loyalists from Satsuma, but his depiction of the rough warriors of the Edo period, whose savage characteristics are a carry over from the turbulent Warring States period, is unsatisfactory.

I am one who firmly believes that an author must not interpret historical characters according to modern standards. I believe that to portray a historical figure’s lack of contemporaneity is to be faithful to history in fiction. That I say this is because of my earnest hope for his future success. His refinement sets him apart from all other writers of mass fiction."

While Naoki clearly respects Osaragi's sensitivity and intelligence, his criticism shows how readily some critics invoked the rhetoric of “history as it is” (rekishi sono mama) when evaluating jidai shōsetsu. It is well to be “faithful” to source materials in writing jidai shōsetsu. But jidai shōsetsu is not a genre primarily concerned with the reconstruction of history. Rather, jidai shōsetsu portrays contemporary themes using the people, events and traditions of the past as a backdrop. Moreover, the conventional wisdom about the “savagery” of periods in history or certain historical figures is not always accurate. In the case of some figures, the received tradition—perpetuated by popular culture and folklore—differs significantly from the historical reality.

Consider the example of the Shinsengumi leader, Kondō Isami. As portrayed in many Taishō and early Shōwa jidai shōsetsu, including the Kurama Tengu series before Kakubei

Naoki Sanjūgo. "Taishō bungaku sakka sōhyō" (A general commentary on writers of mass literature), January 1931, excerpted in OJJSZ, vol. 24, 335. Aside from the date and title of Naoki’s essay, no other bibliographical information is given.
jishi, Kondô is the archetype of a ruthless killer. We might well expect Naoki to criticize Osaragi’s depiction of Kondô in *Kakubei jishi* as a noble, compassionate warrior for being “too sensitive” and not brutal enough. In fact, Kondô was not as utterly ruthless as popular culture paints him. The popular writer Shimozawa Kan (a.k.a. Umetani Matsutarô, 1892-1973) carefully investigated Kondô’s background in his carefully researched work, *Shinsengumi shimatsuki* (The complete chronicle of the Shinsengumi, 1928). Drawing on interviews with the surviving children of Shinsengumi members and scholars of the Bakumatsu period, Shimozawa portrayed Kondô as an inspiring leader, a fierce patriot and a kind-hearted man who always had a smile for the children playing around the Shinsengumi’s Mibu headquarters.

Osaragi understood, as did a number of critics reading his early works in the 1950s and 1960s, that *jidai shōsetsu* is about the present, not the past. The postwar critics thus read the early installments of *Kurama Tengu* in light of the social environment of the late Taishô and early Shōwa. For example, Tsurumi Shunsuke has high praise for the liberal values in *Goyōtō ibun* as well as a later installment, *Edo nikki* (The Edo diary, 1934). The latter depicts Kurama Tengu’s activities in uncovering the conspiracy that involves a corrupt Bakufu bureaucrat, the Lord of Tango, and the secret vigilante group he sponsors. It is easy to believe that it is the sort of plot that parallels the activities of the ultrarightist groups of the 1930s. The young vigilantes of *Edo nikki* attempt to remedy Japan’s social and political ills through assassination and terror, not unlike the

*KetsumeI Dan* (Blood Pledge Corps) which murdered members of

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Japan’s financial establishment in 1932, or the group of young military officers who attempted a coup d’état on May 15, 1932. “What is really being portrayed through the character of the Lord of Tango character and his young subordinates,” writes Tsurumi in 1958, “is Japanese fascism, which was in its formative stage between 1931 and 1938.”

The young vigilantes in *Edo niki* do not suspect, however, that their sponsor is manipulating them. He helps plan their terrorist attacks, then sells information about the attacks before they occur to opportunistic merchants. When Kurama Tengu finally uncovers the truth behind the Lord of Tango’s duplicity, he marshals an extremely diverse group to strike down the evil bureaucrat, a group which includes the progressive Tokugawa retainer and high-ranking official Katsu Kaishū, the minor bureaucrat Kasugai Ukyō, the noble thieves Kashio Tōzō and “Nobusama”, women from the pleasure quarter Oyuki and Oyoshi, and even members of the vigilante group angry about being deceived by their sponsor. Tsurumi suggests rather vaguely that “one can see in the fact that civilian government officials play a large role in the force that ultimately brings down the conspiracy, the considerable hope that many held” that Japan’s fledgling parliamentary democracy might be able to overcome the fascist elements coming to the fore in the mid 1930s. Tsurumi supports his anti-Fascist reading of *Edo niki* by citing anti-militarist themes in other works, specifically *Dorefyus jiken* and *Buuranje taishō no higeki*. Tsurumi interprets these works, in which Osaragi treats the French military’s high-handed conduct in the Dreyfus Affair and the attempted coup of the

101 Tsurumi Shunsuke, 79.
102 Tsurumi Shunsuke, 79.
populist General Boulanger, as cautionary tales intended to alert readers to the threat posed by a powerful military unregulated by parliamentary controls.\footnote{103}

Tsurumi and Murakami Mitsuhiko both discuss the social relevancy of Osaragi's 1929 *jidai shôsetsu Yui Shôsetsu* which deals with Yui Shôsetsu's (1605-51) abortive attempt to lead dispossessed rônin in a rebellion against the Tokugawa Bakufu. In the first half of the book Osaragi depicts the Shimabara Rebellion and its brutal suppression by Tokugawa forces led by Matsudaira Nobutsuna (1596-1662). Surveying the aftermath of the rebellion, in which 37,000 peasant and rônin rebels were slaughtered, Nobutsuna mused:

A new faith always poses a threat to the nation's rulers. That is particularly the case when the doctrine is new and its adherents still possess an ardent purity of spirit.... The Shimabara Rebellion has been put down. But we have done nothing more than smother the flames at the surface. Like the embers which smolder beneath the ashes, the Christian faith yet glows in the heart of the peasants. As a Bakufu administrator, I must completely extinguish those embers in order that the flame does not rekindle and spread. We must not have another Shimabara! New doctrines and new ideas are always the enemy of the ruling class.\footnote{104}

The "new doctrine" which posed such a threat to the ruling class in early Shôwa Japan was communism. And like Nobutsuna, government administrators felt the need to "completely extinguish" it. The mass arrests of leftists on March 15, 1928, marked the beginning of the government's campaign to eradicate communism, socialism and all other leftwing doctrines. Tsurumi and Murakami regard *Yui Shôsetsu* as Osaragi's commentary on the government's suppression of leftist political activism.\footnote{105}
Although Tsurumi discusses the progressive themes of the early installments of the _Kurama Tengu_ series and Osaragi's gradual expansion of his treatment of liberal ideas in other _jidai shôsetsu_, he fails to address the bourgeois romanticism and the nationalistic affirmation of the Emperor system in works like _Goyôtô ibun_ and _Kakubei jishi_. However, these elements were as important in making the _Kurama Tengu_ series appealing to readers as were the progressive messages. To ignore the conventionality or the nationalism of the early installments of the series is to overlook Osaragi's sensitivity to the tastes of his audience and his awareness of the social and political trends of his age. Thanks to the critical attention of Tsurumi, Murakami, Komatsu Shinroku, Kata Kôji and other critics writing in the decades after the war, Osaragi's depiction of liberal values came to be recognized as the hallmark of the _Kurama Tengu_ series and his other _jidai shôsetsu_. But it is his ability to portray democratic values within the boundaries of conservative genre that distinguishes Osaragi as a skilled popular writer.
Chapter 5

Yoshikawa Eiji’s Miyamoto Musashi: Confident Hero for an Anxious Age

When I write a novel, as a rule I try to make it hopeful and positive. I do so because I believe that hope and faith are the qualities most lacking among the readers of popular literature today, the so-called “masses.”

Yoshikawa Eiji

I have overcome my difficulties. It’s nothing you can’t do, too.

Yoshikawa’s Miyamoto Musashi

The life and adventures of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645) had served as the kernel for kōdan, kabuki, puppet plays and novels long before Yoshikawa Eiji (a.k.a. Hidetsugu, 1892-1962) began serializing his fictional account of the legendary swordsman’s life in 1935. As early as 1746, Miyamoto Musashi was portrayed in popular culture as a master swordsman unrivaled in strength, skill and determination. The historical materials concerning his life support this interpretation, depicting Musashi as a fierce swordsman who fought some sixty bouts by the time he was 29 years old without ever having lost. In one bout, for example, he was said to have prevailed singlehandedly over scores of

1 Okada Kazuo, Katô Hiroshi, eds., Miyamoto Musashi no subete (All about Miyamoto Musashi) (Tokyo: Shinjinbutsu Ōraisha, 1983), 12, 236. The 1746 puppet play Hanaikada Ganryūjima (Fallen flower on Ganryū Island 花筏巟流島) deals with the famous bout between Miyamoto Musashi and Sasaki Kojirō.

swordsmen from the Yoshioka fencing school without suffering so much as a scratch.' The hyperbole of such historical accounts nurtured the folklore surrounding Musashi, and popular representations of him as a hero of mythic proportions proliferated.

However, Yoshikawa's conception differs significantly from the received tradition. There is no question that Yoshikawa portrays him as a swordsman of superlative skill and determination. Yet in his interpretation, he emphasizes Musashi's path to greatness more than his unbroken string of victories. Yoshikawa conceives of Musashi as an ordinary man who, through extraordinary diligence and the determination of self-discipline, is able to overcome great hardships. Musashi's example, as Yoshikawa relates in the 1936 essay "Taishū bungaku zuisō" (Miscellaneous thoughts on popular literature), is meant to inspire readers suffering from anxiety and despair in the early, troubled years of the Shōwa era.

As to why I chose the character Miyamoto Musashi, about whom I am presently writing, I offer the following thoughts. When I consider the currents of thought today, it occurs to me that the nihilism and liberalism prevalent these days are biases at opposite ends of the spectrum. Between these two extremes is a growing tide of utter apathy.

Before I begin planning a novel, I always ponder what is most lacking among the people today. And as I said earlier, I feel that what is most lacking is conviction. Faith--of the sort which enables people to believe in themselves, to believe in others, to believe in their work, to believe in their present way of life--is exceedingly weak today.

There are, however, conflicting accounts of Musashi's encounter with the Yoshioka school. While the record attributable to Musashi's disciples describes his stunning victory over dozens of Yoshioka men who waited to ambush him, the record composed by Yoshioka disciples shows Musashi failing to appear for the bout in question. Due to Musashi's failure to appear, the Yoshioka man (one rather than several dozen) won the match by default. See Miyamoto Musashi no subete, 166-70; Hiroaki Sato, Legends of the Samurai (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1995), 256.
It occurs to me that there is also [a lack of] hope, as well as a tendency for people today to be too intellectual. What we need more of today, I feel, is the strength and tenacity of spirit possessed by those in our distant past, that vital force which enabled [our forebears] to face each day with more determination and hope than they possessed the day before. While these qualities were abundant in days of old, today they are quite rare.

Thus, having reflected on our culture today, I felt that if I could present a historical character possessed of the tenacious spirit which we have forgotten, then it would rouse our spirits. In so doing, I might achieve both an appealing novel and a work with significance to the lives of my readers. With this objective in mind, I selected Miyamoto Musashi as my protagonist, believing him to be the ideal person.

Two themes are noteworthy here. The first is a mildly reactionary nationalism which locates the answers to the problems of contemporary (i.e., early Showa) society in the wisdom and morality of Japan’s past. The second is the conviction that popular literature— and by extension, all popular art— is not merely escapist entertainment, but it also has the power to benefit society. These two themes reinforce each other, since the popular writer who believes he can create “work[s] with significance to the lives of readers” searches the past for a figure whose example will best meet the needs of the present. Elsewhere in this essay, Yoshikawa points out that for some years now popular artists—writers, yoseba performers, film makers, etc.— have been summoning the spirits of dead heroes from history to meet the specific needs of modern society.

I believe that the figures from our history, the heroes of old, never die. When a cry goes up summoning them in response to circumstances in contemporary society, they return from the land of the dead and lend a helping hand to Japanese culture. To give a simple example, when the cabinet of Prime Minister Hamaguchi [Osachi] inaugurated its policy of retrenchment [in 1930], Ninomiya Sontoku again rose up

‘Yoshikawa Eiji, “Taishô bungaku no zuisô,” Yoshikawa Eiji zenshû, vol. 52, 143. The Yoshikawa Eiji zenshû will hereafter be listed as YEZ.
among the people, becoming the hero of story and song. Or again, any time devotion to Western culture advances a little too far and it becomes necessary for us to remember our own indigenous culture, Kusunoki Masashige, or some such figure who embodies the Japanese spirit, is drawn from the pages of history and put before the public eye....

It seems that almost every year some figure from our past is summoned forth in response to current social conditions. Historical figures become the heroes of serials, of movies, and of books. These are then disseminated among the people.... The spirit which is influenced by the example of these heroes works on behalf of contemporary culture. Therefore, I believe that the force of these historical figures is indirectly at work in our progressive culture.

Popular agrarianist Ninomiya Sontoku (1787-1856), whose doctrine of hôtoku (repaying virtue) emphasized diligence, thrift, and sacrifice for the common good, was the perfect hero to encourage the Japanese public during the Hamaguchi cabinet’s austerity program instigated after the collapse of world economic markets in 1929. And if ever the lure of Western culture grew too strong for the average Japanese, what better figure to remind them of their spiritual heritage than Kusunoki Masashige, the loyalist general who steadfastly supported Emperor Godaigo during the short-lived Kemmu Restoration (1334-1336). The account of Kusunoki’s devotion to the loyalist cause told in the fourteenth-century chronicle Taiheiki formed the basis for numerous kabuki and puppet plays, novels and songs from the Edo period to the early years of Shōwa. In fact, Yoshikawa may be referring obliquely here to Naoki Sanjūgo’s 1931 serial novel, Kusunoki Masashige. Even in elementary school ethics textbooks produced as early as 1910 Kusunoki was portrayed as a “shining example of patriotic virtue and Bushido ethic.”


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If these historical figures inspired average Japanese to self-sacrifice and patriotism, how would Miyamoto Musashi’s example assist them in coping with the stresses of modern life? When Yoshikawa began serializing Miyamoto Musashi in 1935, Japan had experienced nearly two decades of economic hardship, as well as several years of social and political instability, demonstrations, assassinations of government and business leaders and the failed coup of May 15, 1932. And only months before Yoshikawa composed the essay quoted above, a second attempted coup on February 26, 1936, was put down and martial law imposed. If Yoshikawa sensed despair among “the people,” it was not without reason. In an effort to ameliorate matters, Yoshikawa proposes to awaken the “tenacious spirit” latent in modern readers through his novel. The question arises, however, as to why Yoshikawa felt Miyamoto Musashi was the “ideal” figure to respond to the social crises of 1935–36. Japanese history has any number of master swordsmen who achieved greatness through diligent training and self-discipline. Yoshikawa may just as easily have chosen Ono Tadaaki, Itô Ittôsai or Yagyû Muneyoshi, all famous swordsmen who, like Musashi, persevered through the vicissitudes of the late Sengoku (Warring States) and early Edo periods. What sets Musashi apart?

One aspect which appealed to Yoshikawa was Musashi’s ability to rise from difficult personal circumstances. According to the historical sources Yoshikawa researched in preparation for writing the novel, Musashi suffered an
unhappy childhood.' Apparently a cantankerous old fellow, his father sent Musashi's mother packing when the boy was but three years old. She returned to her parents' home with Musashi in tow, but soon married again. Musashi lived in his stepfather's home for a time, but presently went back to live with his father. Then, when Musashi was seven years old, his father died. How Musashi survived after that is unclear. Apparently there was an elder sister, but there is no record of her caring for her brother. One source has Musashi entrusted to the care of a maternal uncle. The important point is that Yoshikawa regards Musashi's future achievements as all the more remarkable when considered against the disadvantages of an unhappy childhood. As he wrote in 1939, Yoshikawa felt that the absence of a loving family environment fostered Musashi's innate tendency toward violence and cruelty, thus making Musashi's ultimate conquest over his brutal disposition all the more difficult.

Musashi's brutal grimness vis à vis his enemies and the savageness which sometimes revealed itself even in his old age—aspects of Musashi's character which Naoki Sanjūgo found most detestable—were traits he possessed no doubt from birth. However, did not the coldness of his family life nurture these characteristics in the young Musashi? He was unable to develop strong bonds with either of his parents. What is more, he was unable to truly enjoy his youth, never experiencing the love of a woman. Nor did he ever have any close friends even up until the time of his death in Kumamoto....

Among the sources Yoshikawa researched were Gorin no sho, the book of military strategy attributed to Miyamoto Musashi, Nitenki (The Chronicle of Niten), a chronicle of Musashi's life composed some 100 years after his death by disciples of his Niten fencing school, the Kokura Hibun, a monolith engraved with an epitaph to Musashi that was erected by Musashi's adopted son Iori in 1654 on the grounds of the Enmei Temple in Kokura (also known as the Shunsan Hibun because the epitaph was composed by the priest Shunsan), and Dokkôdô (The solitary path), another book of teachings attributed to Musashi. Yoshikawa discusses his findings and their impact upon him in the series of essays entitled "Zuihitsu Miyamoto Musashi" (Miscellaneous jottings on Miyamoto Musashi). See YEZ, vol. 18, 251-52, 309-11. An exhaustive listing of historical sources and recent research relating to Miyamoto Musashi may be found in Miyamoto Musashi no subete, 236-53.
The fact is, I attach great importance to Musashi's family life during his childhood. Naoki may hold up the facts about Musashi's adult life and enumerate in disgust Musashi's utter cruelty, unbending severity, and ruthless savagery toward his enemies. But on the contrary, I quite sympathize with Musashi, and find his life very interesting. Moreover, I appreciate all the more his efforts toward human perfection.

Musashi's cruelty and severity are apparent in the historical sources relating to his life. They are also discernible in Gorin no sho (The Book of Five Rings, 1645), the book of military strategy attributed to him. In these source materials Musashi and his chroniclers describe a variety of tactics intended to put the enemy off balance and secure a swift and decisive victory. Yoshikawa incorporates a great deal of the cruel violence from these sources in his novel, but, as I will discuss in this chapter, he also takes pains to tone down Musashi's savagery as the narrative progresses. Yoshikawa conceives of Musashi's life not in terms of strategy or victories, but rather in terms of the man's progress as a human being. Thus, the brutality exhibited by the violent and insecure youth Takezô (Musashi's boyhood name) diminishes as he develops into a self-possessed swordsman. This transformation occurs, however, only through Musashi's assiduous effort. It requires tenacity and perseverance for the hero to overcome his lonely childhood, his innate brutality, and his overarching ambition to become a famous swordsman. By the end of the novel, Musashi's diligence has paid off. He has reached a state of semi-

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YEZ, vol. 18, 310-11. Yoshikawa's references to Naoki Sanjûgo relate to a debate which took place between Naoki and Kikuchi Kan in 1932 in the pages of Kikuchi's literary magazine Bungei Shunjû. At issue was whether Miyamoto Musashi deserved a reputation as Japan's preeminent swordsman. Naoki argued there were more chivalrous warriors just as skillful as Musashi. Kikuchi responded by suggesting that the stories of Musashi's brutality were probably the result of the backbiting of his rivals. Whether slander or truth, Kikuchi concludes, it must be remembered that the early Edo was a violent age. Swordsmen survived through cruelty as much as skill.
enlightenment in which he is able to defeat his more technically skilled rival, Sasaki Kojirô, by relying not on his physical strength or technique, but rather on “the sword of the spirit” (seishin no ken)." The novel’s general framework has led literary historian Ozaki Hotsuki to call Miyamoto Musashi a bildungsroman. 10

Yoshikawa finds Musashi appealing precisely because of his flaws, not in spite of them. He sees him as a rather ordinary human being, not a superman. Rather than perpetuating Musashi’s image as mystical kensei, or “Sage of the Sword,” he portrays Musashi as a practical role model, a character whose example should encourage readers to discipline themselves and cultivate the same “tenacious spirit.” Even characters in the novel emulate Musashi: from his young pupils Jōtarō and Iori, to his love interest Otsū, to the burly, staff wielding Muso Gunnosuke. And Musashi’s reprobate friend, Hon’iden Matahachi, spends the entire novel comparing himself to Musashi, looking to him for guidance in overcoming his own personal shortcomings. Musashi’s advice to Matahachi late in the novel is indicative of his advice to every other character, and of Yoshikawa’s message to his readers, namely, that overcoming adversity is possible, but it requires discipline and persistence. “I have overcome my difficulties. It’s nothing you cannot do too,” Musashi tells Matahachi, but clearly the comment is directed towards the

9Yoshikawa Eiji, Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1971), 463. This “sword of the spirit” analysis does not, however, reflect the fact that Musashi relied on cheap stratagems even in Yoshikawa’s version of the famous duel on Ganryū Island. In order to put his enemy off balance, Musashi arrives a full two hours late for the bout, thus whipping Kojirô into a frenzy of irritation. When he finally arrives at the island, Musashi exacerbates Kojirô’s irritation by taunting him about tossing aside his scabbard at the beginning of the bout. “Kojirô, you’ve already lost!... If you were going to win, you wouldn’t have thrown your scabbard away. In throwing your scabbard away, you’ve thrown away your life!” (vol. 6, 455).

10Ozaki Hotsuki, Taishû bungaku no rekishi, vol. 1, 218.
While this “bootstraps” theme smacks of bourgeois ideology, there is also an anti-capitalist, or at least an anti-individualist undercurrent that flows through Miyamoto Musashi. Self-interest and egoism are portrayed in distinctly negative terms. When Musashi embarks on the path of self-discipline and martial training at the beginning of the novel, his objective is to win fame and fortune as a great swordsman. In the course of his journey, however, he becomes correspondingly less interested in achieving notoriety and decidedly more concerned with becoming a better human being and helping others through his mastery of the sword. Yoshikawa highlights Musashi’s humanistic development by contrasting it with the self-serving opportunism of Sasaki Kojirō, whose ambition is matched only by his arrogance. In the end, Musashi, the symbol of perseverance, self-sacrifice and, by extension, Japanism, triumphs over Kojirō, the symbol of selfish individualism and Western capitalism.

In using the value-laden term “Japanism,” it is not my intent to suggest that Yoshikawa was an ultranationalist. Certainly Yoshikawa did not consider himself a rightist, despite his involvement with fascist literary group Itsu- kai (Society of the Fifth) and the right-leaning Bungei konwa-kai (Literary Chat Club). However, passages throughout

11 Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 6, 192.
12 Yoshikawa was one of the original members of both the Itsuka-kai (founded in 1932) and the Bungei konwa-kai (founded in 1934), both rightist literary groups, whose members included authors like Naoki Sanjūgo and Mikami Otokichi who had publicly avowed their support of Japanese fascism. Nevertheless, in Sōshidō zuihitsu (Essays from Sōshidō, 1935), Yoshikawa writes “I am neither a left or a rightist. I feel no need to formally declare myself a fascist....I imagine that among contemporary Japanese, who have experienced considerable agitation of thought, the majority of people feel as I do. We align ourselves with neither the left or the right. If forced to declare a position, we will take the middle.” YEZ, vol. 52, 119. For information about the Itsuka-kai, see Enomoto Takashi, “Bunka no taishûka mondai to kokkashugîteki henkô,” Shakai kagaku tōkyô, 40: 1-32.
Miyamoto Musashi which clearly echo the rhetoric of 1930s Japanism: images which glorify the Japanese as descendants of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess; platitudes about the Way of the Sword being the means by which "the swordsman, rather than taking life, is able to help others to live"; \(^3\) and the depiction of an agrarian ideal in which Musashi improves the lives of rural villagers through helping them cultivate wild land and improve irrigation techniques.

In this chapter I will examine specific passages in order to demonstrate that through the course of the narrative Musashi comes to embody "the Japanese spirit" \((\text{Nihon no seishin})\), and that his ultimate victory over the egoistic individualist Kojirō represents Yoshikawa’s valorization of Japanese groupism over Western individualism. Rather than using this reading to attribute a particular ideological tendency to Yoshikawa, I argue the novel Miyamoto Musashi reflects Yoshikawa’s sensitivity to the social currents of the mid- to late 1930s and is therefore another example of a \(\text{jidai shôsetsu}\) writer’s projection of the present onto the past.

5.1 Yoshikawa Eiji’s background

Yoshikawa’s memoir, \(\text{Wasure-nokori no ki}\) \((\text{A chronicle of forgotten remnants})\), was published serially in 1955-56 in the magazine \(\text{Bungei shunjû}\). In this memoir Yoshikawa relates the details of his life from his birth in Yokohama in 1892 until the death of his mother in 1921. With the 1992 publication of Edwin McClellan’s translation of this memoir \((\text{entitled \text{Fragments of a Past: A Memoir}})\), an account of this period of Yoshikawa’s life is available in English. Thus, I will not

\(^3\) \text{Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 4, 302.}
discuss Yoshikawa’s childhood at length in this chapter. I merely point out that one possible reason for Yoshikawa’s sympathy with Miyamoto Musashi’s unfortunate childhood was that Yoshikawa himself endured a great deal of hardship as a child.

In *Wasure-nokori no ki* Yoshikawa depicts his father as a hard-drinking, obstinate, and somewhat arbitrary man who frequently raged at Yoshikawa’s long suffering mother and made life difficult for his son and the five younger children. When Yoshikawa was nearly eleven, his father’s intransigence in a dispute with a business partner gave rise to a lawsuit that resulted in the family’s financial ruin. Thoroughly humiliated, the father fell sick and was unable to earn a living. As the eldest son Yoshikawa was forced to forgo middle school and find work to support the family. During the next eight years he worked in a variety of capacities: office boy, apprentice, street peddler, construction worker, and dock worker. Despite doing his best under grueling conditions, his meager wages were insufficient to lift the family out of poverty.

After a nearly fatal accident in a Yokohama dry dock in 1910, Yoshikawa determined to complete his education and find more rewarding work. To that end, he moved to Tokyo at the age of eighteen. But he soon came to regret leaving his mother alone to support his bed-ridden father and her younger children. In 1911, he apprenticed himself to an artisan who made damascened wares—bracelets, tiepins, cigarette cases, hairpins, earrings, etc.—for export, a trade which promised to provide a good living. After two years as an apprentice,
Yoshikawa set himself up in business. By 1914 he was earning enough money to move the family into a four room rental in Eikyû-chô in Asakusa. His mother had moved the family from Yokohama to Tokyo in 1912, settling into two rooms of a house just outside the Yoshiwara pleasure quarter, where she supported the family by mending garments for the prostitutes of the quarter. After the move Eikyû-chô she was able to give up that work.

In moving to Tokyo Yoshikawa became interested in senryû, the comic verse form of haiku that originated in the Edo period and was quite popular during the late Meiji era. Yoshikawa enjoyed composing haiku from an early age, and showed talent for it, even having his haiku published in a local newspaper when he was sixteen. In Tokyo, however, his interest turned to the more comic genre of senryû, due in part to his exposure to the working class people of the Asakusa neighborhood where he lived and worked. As he writes in Wasure-nokori no ki, the “vestiges of old Edo” which he found on the backstreets of Asakusa fascinated him and kindled his interest in the “popular” (shominteki) aspects of Edo culture.

In due course, I got to know the differences in style between the Yokohama working class and its equivalent in downtown Tokyo, and the manners and personalities described by Meiji-period Tokyo writers like [Hisuichi] Ichiyo and their Edo predecessors began to have rather more reality for me. Once again, I started reading Edo literature in earnest. Now, though, I found myself more drawn to people like [Ryûtei] Rijô than to the relatively highbrow [Ueda] Akinari and [Ihara] Saikaku.

Looking about me, I realized that there were still, in fact, many people in the streets of downtown Tokyo who could well have been models for characters in Rijô’s or

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*"According to Yoshida Seiichi, the revival of senryû (せんりゅ) began around 1903 and reached its zenith in the Taishô era. During the Greater East Asian War, senryû poets satirized the policies of the military government and were suppressed. Yoshida Seiichi, "Senryû," in Shinchô Nihon bungaku jiten (The Shinchô dictionary of Japanese literature) (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1988), 731.
[Jippensha] Ikku’s works. But being a freshly arrived and impressionable bumpkin, I was only too ready to marvel at what seemed to be thriving vestiges of old Edo, when in fact they were being steadily overwhelmed by the sprawl of a modern capital city.

I gave up haiku and began writing senryû.”

Because of the popularity of senryû during the late Meiji era many magazines sponsored senryû contests and solicited reader contributions. Yoshikawa too began submitting senryû to various magazines and newspapers, including Kôdan kurabu and Nihon shinbun. Eventually this led to his association with the noted senryû poet Inoue Kenkabô, (a.k.a. Kôichi, 1870-1934) who judged senryû submissions for several magazines and was also a contributing editor for Nihon shinbun. One day in 1912, Kenkabô visited Yoshikawa at his shop and offered the young poet encouragement. Yoshikawa began attending Kenkabô’s poetry meetings on days off; soon he became a member of the coterie which produced the magazine Shinsenryû (New senryû).” Many of Yoshikawa’s fellow members were, like him, young men from the working class neighborhoods of Shitaya and Asakusa. Ozaki Hotsuki suggests that the “popular quality” (taishûsei) of Yoshikawa’s later literary endeavors derives from his early associations with Kenkabô and these shitamachi senryû poets. Kuwabara Takeo echoes this view, finding it “interesting” that Yoshikawa’s first literary output was senryû written under the influence of Kenkabô, whose social commentary was published in Nihon shinbun. Kuwabara suggests that Yoshikawa’s decision to write

popular novels clearly indicates the influence of both Kenkabô’s socialistic political views and his own experiences among the working class in Yokohama and Shitaya.\textsuperscript{17}

These vague critical comments appear to suggest that Yoshikawa’s associations with Kenkabô and the senryû group awakened his class consciousness, an awareness reinforced by the memory of his boyhood experiences among the working class in Yokohama. Furthermore, this class consciousness inspired him to write literature for the masses, whose struggles he understood from personal experience. I believe it is a mistake, however, to attribute a socialist bent to Yoshikawa’s fiction. Certainly he was well aware of the challenges faced by poor working class families, and this awareness manifests itself in his works. McClellan suggests, for example, that Yoshikawa’s novels reflect his affection for “those who live in the mean streets,” adding that “some of the most memorable scenes are those peopleed by the humble and the poor. I think he identified with them, without condescension or sentimentality, and that may be one reason why he has been so widely read.”\textsuperscript{18} I take issue with Kuwabara’s suggestion, however, that the novels Yoshikawa wrote from the early 1920s until 1931 manifest his socialistic sympathy with the struggles of the working class.\textsuperscript{19} At least two historical novels Yoshikawa wrote during the period, Kennan jonan (Sword trouble, woman

\textsuperscript{17} Yoshikawa Eiji: hito to bungaku, 19-20; Kuwabara Takeo, “Miyamoto Musashi” to Nihonjin (Miyamoto Musashi and the Japanese) (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1964), 149-50.
\textsuperscript{18} Fragments of a Past, x.
\textsuperscript{19} I concede Kuwabara’s point that Yoshikawa’s novel Kankan mushi wa utau (The dock workers sing, 1930)—a story set in the late Meiji era which pits a ragtag group of laborers, geisha and petty thieves against captains of industry and Diet members—may be read as a socialistic tale of class conflict. However, his suggestion that Yoshikawa’s fiction until 1931 exhibits a leftist perspective is untenable.
trouble, 1925-26) and Naruto hichō (The secrets of Naruto, 1926-27), "representative works" that I will discuss, do not manifest progressive themes." Yoshikawa may have been writing literature for the masses, but his novels do not go so far as to exhibit an identifiable socialist agenda. Rather than being political or activist in nature, his "popular" novels are more concerned with his rejection of the elitism which he and other prominent writers of popular literature—including Kikuchi Kan, Shirai Kyōji, Naoki Sanjūgo and Mikami Otokichi—attributed to the literary establishment's "pure" writers and their autobiographical novels. Populism is manifest in an essay he wrote in 1935.

If someone were to ask me whether there is any really insightful criticism of popular literature being offered today, I would declare flatly that there is none.

If by chance there are articles which appear to offer some evaluation of popular literature, and of late there have been many, they amount to nothing more than conceptual backbiting or mean-spirited nitpicking.

What is worse, the critic often has not read much of the work he is critiquing. A critic who has not read the book has the nerve to write a review! Moreover, some who style themselves belletrists will idly revile a popular novel on the basis of a perverted standard or some narrowly defined literary acme....

I have my own theory about art and its interpretation. I believe that there are two types of art: art for the individual and art for the masses—the lesser vehicle and

29 Ozaki Hotsuki suggests that these works are "representative of Yoshikawa's early literature." Taishū bungaku no rekishi, vol. 1, 169; Denki Yoshikawa Eiji, 236.

21 Kikuchi Kan suggested in 1920 that "The aristocratic government of the literary arts—in which a talented minority monopolizes the rights of literary production—is a thing of the past.... This is an age in which ordinary people may diligently portray their ordinary fantasies, fantasies which, though ordinary, are shared by tens of thousands of ordinary people." In 1925, Shirai Kyōji organized a coterie of popular writers which published the monthly journal Taishū bungei. Discussing the group's conception of popular literature, Shirai wrote, "Popular literature, as we conceive of it, is founded on the need for a literature for those who do not care for our present 'pure' literature.... Who is to say that the thoughts and feelings of those readers who do not enjoy or cannot appreciate pure literature are not the thoughts and feelings of real human beings? Only popular writers possess the breadth of character to instinctively care about such readers." For the quote by Kikuchi, see Inagaki Tatsuruō and Shimomura Fujio, eds., Nihon bungaku no rekishi, vol. 11, 416; for the quote by Shirai, see Ozaki Hotsuki, Taishū bungaku, 36-37. Similar declarations by Naoki and Mikami were introduced in the first chapter of this dissertation.
the greater vehicle. There are only these two paths....

The art of a narrowly defined literary movement, the type which targets only those within its limited sphere, whether one hundred or one thousand readers, that is individual.

Yet, that which passes for pure literature today is not "pure" and is not truly individual. "Pure" authors are trying to sell their work and have it read. Thus their literature meanders between the individual and the masses.

Why won’t these writers leave behind their narrow and outmoded literary pretensions and strive to produce literature for the masses?

"The masses are beneath us," they sneer. I, on the contrary, believe that the masses possess great wisdom."

Yoshikawa uses of the Buddhist terms "lesser vehicle" (shōjō) and "greater vehicle" (daijō) to describe the "art of the individual" and the "art of the masses," respectively. "Lesser vehicle" connotes Hinayana or Theravāda Buddhism, in which individual salvation is attained through the individual struggle to achieve enlightenment. "Greater vehicle" refers to Mahayana Buddhism, in which the emphasis is on universal salvation. Through the benevolent intervention of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, all may achieve enlightenment, and sometimes salvation comes in a sudden, single moment." Yoshikawa’s implication is that while "individual" art brings fulfillment to the artist who labors to give birth to his or her creation, "mass" art benefits (i.e., entertains and edifies) greater numbers of people simply by their taking time to read the work. It is the popular writer who appreciates the potential of the masses, whose "great wisdom" enables them to discern the value of popular literature.

While such rhetoric may appear to be a populist pose taken at a time when the growth of popular literature

threatened to displace “pure” literature from its ascendency in the literary establishment, there are grounds to believe that Yoshikawa did, in fact, perceive himself as a man of the people. In an interview in 1951, he describes himself as a writer who gets out and associates directly with “the people” in order to understand their thoughts and aspirations. Contrasting his own style to that of Nakazato Kaizan, he claims that whereas Kaizan assumes a didactic attitude in his fiction that is “one step above the people” and maintains a posture toward his readers “resembling that of a teacher toward his pupils,” his own practice is to “set up my desk in the midst of the masses, mingle with them and then write according to their feelings.” He also often repeats the mantra “the masses possess great wisdom” (or more literally, “the masses are great wisdom,” *taishū to wa daichishiki da*) throughout his career, suggesting that, although the masses do not possess the level of intellect or breadth of knowledge of critics, they are acutely perceptive nonetheless. If a popular author’s fictionalization of the past proves to be irrelevant to them, they flatly reject the work. They are not impressed by artifice but seek characters and themes to which they can relate. Certainly Yoshikawa’s stated goal of inspiring hope in readers through his fiction reflects his sympathy for the average man in the street. The self-promotional quality of his rhetoric notwithstanding, I would

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argue that his populism is not entirely an opportunistic pose. Rather, it reflects his identification with and concern for “the people.”

While earning his living by producing damascened wares, Yoshikawa continued to dabble with his writing. In 1914, he entered a fiction writing contest sponsored by the magazine Kōdan kurabu and won first prize. His manuscript, Enoshima monogatari (An Enoshima tale) was printed in the magazine and he received a cash award of ten yen. Seventh Between 1915 and 1916, he had several senryû and articles published in Taishō senryû. In 1918, he participated in the publication of a small literary magazine called Shigarami (The weir) that folded after four issues. Then in 1920, demand for his damascened wares dropped precipitously. In an effort to find avenues for exporting his product, Yoshikawa went to Talien, Manchuria in the autumn. But he was unsuccessful. Early that winter, he came across a notice advertising several fiction writing contests sponsored by the Kōdansha publishing company. Emboldened by the fact that he had won six years earlier, he entered three manuscripts: a children’s story to Shônen kurabu; a comic story to Omoshiro kurabu; and a piece of historical fiction to Kōdan kurabu. The first won first prize, and the last placed third."

27 Yoshikawa Eiji: hito to bungaku, 20; Denki Yoshikawa Eiji, 158-61. Note that this contest was held shortly after the boycott of Kōdan kurabu by kōdan shi in late 1913. To make up for the lack of sokki-kōdan manuscripts, Kōdansha scouted out new writers by sponsoring such fiction contests.

28 Jihitsu nenpu, 129. Yoshikawa Eiji: hito to bungaku, 20-21; Denki Yoshikawa Eiji, 168-87. Yoshikawa used the prize money (700 yen) from the Kōdansha contests to pay medical expenses and funeral costs for his mother, who died from intestinal tuberculosis in June 1921, shortly after his return from Talien.
Returning to Japan in the spring of 1921, Yoshikawa abandoned the damascene trade and went to work writing advertisements for a patent medicine company. He left the job after six months, however, and through a friend from his senryû group, he was hired by Maiyû Shinbunsha, the publisher of Tokyo maiyû shinbun, a small Tokyo daily founded in 1898. Yoshikawa was assigned to the company’s Family Division (katei-bu) and wrote a variety of feature articles, including children’s stories and interviews with famous women. He was also called upon to write a serial novel based on the life of the Buddhist priest Shinran (1173-1262), *Shinran ki* (Shinran chronicle, 1922) which was issued in book form in 1923. His budding career as a journalist was interrupted, however, by the Kanto earthquake of September 1923. The conflagration that ensued completely destroyed the offices of the newspaper, but Yoshikawa and his coworkers managed to escape in time. When the newspaper folded, many of his colleagues found work at other newspapers. Perhaps it was his brush with death, but Yoshikawa reevaluated his life as a newspaper journalist. By February 1924, he had decided to make a living as a professional writer.

Because Yoshikawa was contacted regularly by the editorial staff of *Omoshiro kurabu* to submit manuscripts after winning the fiction writing contests in 1921, he naturally turned to *Omoshiro kurabu* when he finally resolved to earn a living writing fiction. His first manuscript as a professional writer appeared in the March 1924 issue. Three more short stories were published in April, along with one in the April issue of *Shônen kurabu*. Soon he began cranking out manuscripts written under a variety of pen names for other

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"Jihitu nenpu, 131; Denki Yoshikawa Eji, 195-204; Yoshikawa Eji: hito to bungaku, 303."
Kôdansha magazines that included Shôjo kurabu, Kôdan kurabu, Fujin kurabu, Yûben and Gendai. Then, in January 1925, he was asked to write a serial for the new Kôdansha magazine King, which was being launched amid great fanfare. King would become one of the leading popular magazines of late Taishô and early Shôwa. The new magazine, and Yoshikawa’s serial novel, Kennan jonan, were both very well received by the public. It was the event that catapulted Yoshikawa into the limelight.

As there was a great variety of serial novels and feature articles carried in the early issues of King, it is difficult to determine the extent to which Kennan jonan contributed to its success. But critics and literary historians suggest that the popular reception of Kennan jonan launched Yoshikawa’s career as a professional writer. Ozaki Hotsuki states, for example, that Kennan jonan—the first work for which Yoshikawa used the pen name Yoshikawa Eiji—was instrumental in making his name widely known among the public. Momose Akiji refers to Kennan jonan as “the work which established Yoshikawa’s career” in terms earning him

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50 Among the pen names Yoshikawa used: Yoshikawa Shiranami; Yoshikawa Ryôhei; Yoshikawa Kijirô; Tachibana Hachirô; Sugimura Teitei; Sugita Genpachi; Chôza Rishi; Setsuya Konnosuke; Fugo Sentei; Chôjô Sentarô; and Mochizuki Jûsanzhichi. Ozaki Hotsuki suggests that the only other popular writer to use quite as many pen names was Osaragi Jirô.

51 Other novels in carried in the inaugural issue of King included Murakami Namiroku’s Ningen mi (Flavor of humanity), Nakamura Murao’s Shojo (The virgin), Maeda Shozan’s Shu Chusan (Jiu Zhongxian), Shimomura Etsuo’s Higan senningiri (A righteous victory), and Watanabe Kalei’s Shishi-ou (The lion-hearted king). While Murakami, Nakamura, Maeda, and Watanabe were all established writers of popular literature, Shimomura was, like Yoshikawa, a young writer struggling to make a living. The immediate success of King was a boon to his career, as it was to Yoshikawa’s. The first issue sold 740,000 copies. By the end of 1925, circulation reached 1,000,000. At its height in 1928, circulation reached 1,400,000 copies. Taishô bungaku no rekishi, vol. 1, 128; Nihon bungaku no rekishi, vol. 11, 364, 417-18; Wada Hirofumi, “Masumedia to modanizumu” (Mass media and modernism), in Iwanami kôza Nihon bungakushi, vol. 13, 332. Taishô bungaku no rekishi, vol. 1, 128.
notoriety.” Similarly, Kiyohara Yasumasa claims that Yoshikawa “rose to stardom in a single bound” on account of this one novel.” Sasamoto Tora suggests the extent to which the success of Kennan jonan impacted Yoshikawa’s career is to be seen in the dramatic change in his lifestyle over the next four years. Yoshikawa went from living in a modest rental in Umabashi in 1924, to custom-building a “luxurious mansion” in Kami-ochiai in 1928."

While such anecdotal evidence speaks of the power of the media’s emergent techniques of mass marketing, it tells us little about how Kennan jonan was received by readers. However, we can insights into its reception from such writings as an essay by the postwar writer Niwa Fumio (1904–) who records his reaction to it. As a youth, he was fond of popular literature. He was especially drawn to Yoshikawa’s novels.

I came into contact with Mr. Yoshikawa’s works well before I ever met him. The work I found most enjoyable was Kennan jonan. I was captivated by the uninhibited development of its plot.... I have read many of Mr. Yoshikawa’s novels, but in terms of sheer appeal, none is better.... Its attraction lies in the fact that it is always fresh [kesshite furuku nai]. Certainly that should be the intrinsic appeal of any novel. But in Kennan jonan, that freshness reveals itself openly and artlessly."

If the appeal of Kennan jonan is its “freshness,” it relies on familiar formulas nevertheless. The plot revolves around a vendetta (actually two); and it includes love

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35 Momose Akiji, “Kennan jonan no tabi” (Travel in Kennan jonan), an insert in YEZ, vol. 1.
35 Quoted in “Omoshiroso no enerugi,” 418. Sasamoto points out that because Yoshikawa’s financial situation was still somewhat precarious in 1924 when he and his wife moved into their Umabashi home, he saved on moving expenses by hauling their belongings himself.
rivalries, fights with mountain bandits, feuding yakuza, and a variety of stock characters: superhuman samurai, cruel villains, a beautiful maiden, and manipulative “poison women” (dokufu). There are sword fights, narrow escapes, improbable coincidences and of violence and more eroticism than is found in the novels of some of his peers. Manabe Motoyuki argues that the important role violence and sex play in this novel is obvious even from the choice of a title: “Remembering that the constant themes of escapist fiction are love and swordplay, I am struck again and again by just how perfect this title is.” For all of its conventionality Kennan jonan has one strikingly unconventional element, namely, a theme of androgyny. Perhaps it is the blurring of gender roles which made the work “fresh” for Niwa and other late Taishō readers.

The blurring of gender distinctions was prevalent in the popular urban culture of 1920s Japan. The “moga” (modern girl), who bobbed her hair and sometimes wore men’s clothing, and “mobo” (modern boy), who wore his hair long and sometimes applied rouge to his cheeks, were a common sight in Tokyo’s fashionable Ginza district. Manifestations of popular androgyny could also be found in the male- impersonators (dan’yaku) of the all-girl Takarazuka theater and in the Rudolf Valentino-style weak male lead (nimai-me) of Taishō cinema.” Donald Roden discusses the origins of the “flexible

37 Manabe Motoyuki, Taishō bungaku jiten, 96.
38 The first performance of the Takarazuka troupe was staged in 1914 to great popular acclaim. In 1924, a massive new theater was built and stage productions became more elaborate. Largely female audiences flocked to the new productions which closely resembled the revues of Paris and Berlin. As for the weak willed and indecisive nimai-me, he proved to be the perfect foil for the domineering actresses of 1920s Japanese cinema. Donald Roden, “Taishō Culture and the Problem of Gender Ambivalence,” in J. Thomas Fimer, ed., Culture and Identity: Japanese Intellectuals during the Interwar Years (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 47-48; Satō Tadao, Nimai-me no kenkyū (A study of the weak male lead), (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1984), 20-21.
attitude toward gender identity among intellectuals" which became pervasive during the Taishō and early Shōwa eras. He writes,

[A]fter the turn of the century and especially during the 1920s, the expression and representation of gender ambivalence captured the imagination of a cross section of the literate urban populace in a manner that was simply unthinkable in the heyday of "civilization and enlightenment."... The "anguished youth" in the early 1900s, and the naturalist writers who served as their literary voice...embellished a new image of manhood fraught with anxiety, indecision, nervousness, and a susceptibility to falling in love, all of which challenged the ideology of the male as household head and stalwart provider. Conversely, Yosano Akiko's celebration of the power of feminine sensuality contributed to the conceptualization of a "new woman" (atarashiki onna) that emerged from the early issues of the literary feminist magazine Seitō. If the "new man" of the late Meiji was sensitized to the point of emotional dependence, the "new woman" exuded what Itō Noe called in 1913 "a firm self-confidence" (kakko taru jishin) and an emotional independence from the patriarchal family."

Yoshikawa's portrayal of two prominent characters in Kennan jonan clearly shows the influence of image of the sensitive "new man" and the assertive "new woman."

Kennen jonan is set in 1652. The hero is a handsome, if somewhat effeminate young samurai named Kasuga Shinkurō. He lives in the small domain of Fukuchiyama within the province of Tanba (today Hyōgo Prefecture) with his elder brother, Jūzō, a masterless samurai who runs a fencing school. As both parents are both dead, Jūzō is head of the family. He is a brave and accomplished swordsman who trains daily to hone his martial skills. Shinkurō, on the other hand, despises the martial arts; the mere sound of bamboo practice swords from his brother's fencing school makes him shudder. He much prefers painting, the flute and gardening. Although already

56 Donald Roden, 43.
nineteen, officially Shinkurô has not become an adult; he still wears robes with long, flowing sleeves left unsewn (furisode) as did boys and girls who have not yet come of age. Shinkurô’s unshaven forelocks (maegami) also distinguish him as a youth (wakashu)." However, during the Edo period, the coming of age rite (genbuku)--in which a samurai boy shaved his forelocks, put on adult robes and took a new, adult name--usually took place between the ages of 11 and 18." By prolonging his boyhood, Shinkurô exhibits his reluctance to become a man and learn the art of the sword. At the same time, his appearance also carries homoerotic implications. Pederasty with wakashu was quite common in the Edo period, both among the samurai and the merchant classes. The catamite (referred to as kagema, butai-ko, iroko or wakashu) was particularly popular among kabuki patrons and in the teahouses and brothels of the pleasure quarter." In Edo literature, particularly that of Ihara Saikaku, a wakashu’s unshaven forelocks and furisode robes often signal his

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"YEZ" vol. 1, 18.

41 Greg Pflugfelder points out that the genbuku (or genpuku) ceremony "did not have a fixed date, instead varying widely according to class, locality, and household or individual circumstance." According to the Heibonsha daihyakka jiten, most youths from samurai families came of age at 15, but occasionally they would wait until 17 or 18. Köjien dictionary states that the genbuku ceremony could take place any time between the ages of 11 and 17. Paul Schalow says there were three steps in a boy’s progression towards adulthood: shaving the crown, but leaving the forelocks at age 11 or 12; shaving the temples at right angles, but leaving the forelocks at age 14 or 15; and finally shaving the pate and removing the forelocks at 18 or 19. While the coming of age ceremony did not occur at a fixed age historically speaking, for the purposes of his narrative, Yoshikawa makes it clear that 19 year old Shinkurô is beyond the age of dressing like a wakashu. For discussion of the genbuku ceremony, see Greg Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1800-1950 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 33; Hirayama Kazuhiko, “ichininmae” (Coming of age), Heibonsha daihyakka jiten, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1985), 1059; Shinmura Izuru, ed. Köjien 4th ed. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1991), 837; Ihara Saikaku, The Great Mirror of Male Love, Paul Gordon Schalow, trans. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 28-29.

availability as the passive partner in homosexual activity. Yoshikawa’s depiction of the meek and submissive Shinkurô wearing furisode robes and forelocks makes his hero’s sexual identity ambiguous."

Jûzô indulges his younger brother; nevertheless, he finds Shinkurô’s lack of martial aptitude exasperating. His embarrassment is reflected in a scene early in the novel in which Jûzô and Shinkurô encounter an elderly warrior and a girl being menaced by a group of tough samurai. The elderly samurai is the domain official Masaki Sakuzaeemon, and the girl, his beautiful daughter Chinami. They have been set upon by Ôtsuki Genba, an upstart from the rival domain of Miyazu, and his thugs. Frustrated in his efforts to win Chinami’s affection, Genba has resorted to intimidation and violence. Jûzô boldly rushes to the aid of Sakuzaeemon and Chinami, while Shinkurô cowers in the shadows, terrified. After driving away Genba and his cohorts, Jûzô introduces himself and his cowardly brother.

"I am the masterless samurai Kasuga Jûzô. I run the fencing school at Yanagibata, below Lord Matsudaira’s castle. I am very glad you weren’t seriously injured....

"This is my younger brother Shinkurô. He is by nature something of a coward. On top of that, though I’m ashamed to admit it, he hates martial arts and doesn’t know the first thing about handling a sword. Therefore, at times like this, he won’t join his elder brother in a fray. As you can see, he turns white and hides in the shadows...."

"You have my sympathy," Sakuzaeemon chuckled."

Sakuzaeemon’s daughter Chinami falls in love with the handsome younger brother, nonetheless; and Shinkurô is drawn to Chinami. But before he can declare his love, tragedy befalls Jûzô. Recommended by Sakuzaeemon, Jûzô is chosen to

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YEZ, vol. 1, 14.

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represent the Fukuchiyama domain in a sword match against the rival Miyazu. Jûzô’s opponent is the legendary master swordsman Kanemaki Jisai, who owes a favor to the Lord of Miyazu. Each swordsman recognizes the strength of the other; it is clear the contest could end in one man’s death. They exchange several thrusts, and finally Jisai lands a crushing blow to Jûzô’s right hip. Although the injury is not life-threatening, Jûzô will never walk freely again. His career as a swordsman is over.

It is now Shinkurô’s duty to avenge his brother and restore honor to the Kasuga name by defeating Jisai. Shinkurô knows this is an impossible task, however, given his aversion to the martial arts. Jûzô berates him for his timidity.

“If you were a woman, it wouldn’t matter. But you are the young son of a fine warrior family. What are people going to say if you continue to parade about in flamboyant robes and long sleeves at a time like this? Think of your father’s name! Do what your elder brother would do! Oh, Shinkurô! Why weren’t you born a woman?”

Shinkurô sat with his hands folded in his lap, meekly hanging his head. His drooping form resembled that of a puppet separated from its master’s hands. He was so submissive he did not even respond to Jûzô’s words of condemnation. His attitude invariably caused Jûzô to resign himself to the fact that he’d never be able to rely on his younger brother.

But Jûzô was terribly agitated today.

“The two of us have become the laughing stock of the whole town: a samurai almost twenty years old who doesn’t even know how to hold a bamboo practice sword, and his crippled elder brother! We’re quite a pair! Shinkurô, I implore you. Show a sense of honor. Commit suicide!”

Shinkurô shuddered in disbelief, and tried to withdraw from his brother’s bedside, but Jûzô reached out and caught hold of the hem of Shinkurô’s robe.

“Don’t get excited! Being born into a warrior family was your misfortune, but what honor is there to live in shame? Kill yourself, I beg you.”

“But Jûzô, I...”

“What’s that? Why you miserable bastard!” Jûzô reached for the short sword lying by his pillow. Shinkurô blanched. In the next instant, he dashed for the front door and was
out of the house."

Shinkurô seeks out Chinami, but she refuses to see him. She will not answer his letters either. When finally Shinkurô confronts her, she tells him she has been avoiding him for his own sake. She prays for the awakening of his "warrior spirit" and tells him to forget any thought of her until he has succeeded in defeating Kanemaki Jisai and restoring Jûzô's honor. As they are talking, Ôtsuki Genba appears and tries again to kidnap Chinami. Shinkurô and Chinami manage to flee to the banks of the Otonase River and then throw themselves in. When the half-drowned Shinkurô is fished out of the river the next morning, Chinami is not with him. Convinced that Chinami has died, Shinkurô resolves to do honor her last wish. In order to defeat Jisai and avenge Jûzô, Shinkurô resolves to wander about the country disciplining himself and training himself in the art of the sword.

The remaining three-fourths of the novel follows Shinkurô on his spiritual quest. He encounters bandits, yakuza, evil masterless samurai, and beautiful women. In fact, each brush with death is followed by an encounter with a beautiful, but dangerous woman. Eventually it is revealed that Shinkurô is fated to have both "sword trouble" and "women trouble." When he was still a boy, his mother took him to a fortune teller who stated that Shinkurô would not only die violently by the sword, he was even more likely to suffer on account of a woman. Terrified by this prediction, Shinkurô's mother constantly admonished him to beware of swords and women. It was as a result of his mother's

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YEZ, vol. 1, 39.
incessant warnings that Shinkurô had grown timid. When at last he begins his martial training, he finds the fortune teller’s prediction has come true. He becomes entangled with a beguiling noblewoman in Edo named Onkata, who distracts him from his training and corrupts him with torrid sex. Soon Shinkurô forgets his goal of avenging Jûzô. He degenerates into an Edo tough, spending his days fornicating, drinking heavily, gambling, brawling and keeping company with yakuza.

If the timid and sensitive Shinkurô reflects the “new man,” then Onkata exhibits all the qualities of the confident “new woman.” She is told she must enter a convent when she scandalizes her aristocratic parents with such unladylike behavior as practicing fencing with a group of daring young samurai in a crowded Kyoto market place. However, she defies them and flees to Edo and with the help of her sister, a consort of the Shôgun, she secures an appointment as mistress of the Shôgun’s boat house. In Edo, Onkata enjoys complete freedom from parental control, takes lovers as she pleases and even wears her hair cut short. She is a seventeenth-century version of the Taishô “modern girl,” down to her advocacy of free love and her bobbed hair. She also wields a sword with skill and composure. When she and Shinkurô are ambushed by a gang of masterless samurai, she cuts down almost as many opponents as he does.

Onkata’s sexual hunger is described in the following passage. “As she gazed at Shinkurô, the flame of a fiery passion, a burning lust, blazed in her eyes. Though a grown man, Shinkurô could not return her gaze. At that moment, Onkata appeared in every respect to be a woman seething with desire, writhing with the longing to have this man sink his teeth into her flesh, to ravish her, to torture her. She was starving for it.” Onkata is the one who initiates sexual relations with Shinkurô. YEZ, vol. 1, 109.

YEZ, vol. 1, 108, 153-54, 187-89. Gary Leupp points out that the image of a sexually assertive woman was not uncommon in Edo culture (Male Colors, 187-91). However, Yoshikawa’s Onkata, with her bobbed hair, freedom from patriarchal authority and powerful sensuality presents unambiguously the image of the Taishô “new woman.”
Shinkurô is awakened from his debauched stupor by the sudden appearance of Chinami and Jûzô, who have come to Edo in search of Ōtsuki Genba, who has killed Chinami’s father, Sakuzaemon. Chinami and Jûzô convince Shinkurô to resume his training and fight Kanemaki Jisai. Jûzô even commits suicide in an effort to strengthen his younger brother’s resolve. After avenging Sakuzaemon by taking Genba’s head, Shinkurô withdraws to the mountains in Kiso to train with a Shinto priest. At length, he meets Kanemaki Jisai for the climactic sword match and finally defeats his rival. At the end of the novel, Jûzô’s honor is restored, Shinkurô receives a small stipend from the lord of Fukuchiyama, and he and Chinami are united. As for Onkata, she graciously blesses their union and tearfully departs to enter a nunnery.

Yoshikawa fills Kennan jonan with an interesting mix of convention and innovation. He applies formulas of plot and characterization, and he also trots out conventional morality. Honor and sacrifice are portrayed as righteous virtues, while selfish egoism and lust are depicted in negative terms. Such morality may be expected in a novel set during Japan’s feudal period. However, in light of Yoshikawa’s comments in 1935 concerning his desire to awaken the “tenacious spirit” of modern Japanese, it is noteworthy that he repudiates Shinkurô’s self-centered timidity in the novel. In the course of the narrative, the ambiguously gendered characters of Shinkurô and Onkata are “reformed” and begin to act according to conventional morality: he/the “modern boy” overcomes his timidity and restores honor to his family; she/the “modern girl” overcomes her egoistic sensuality and, yielding to the virtuous Chinami, she hides
herself in a nunnery. At the same time, the prominence of two such androgynous characters is remarkable among the *jidai shôsetsu* produced in 1925. The erotic effect Yoshikawa achieves through reversing normal gender expectations and portraying Shinkurô as meek and effeminate, and Onkata as sexually assertive and independent, is undeniable.

If, on the one hand, Yoshikawa's depiction of Shinkurô and Onkata appealed to urban consumers' taste for androgyny during the late Taishô, on the other hand, the fact that both Shinkurô and Onkata are "reformed" by the end of the novel reveals a recurrent conservatism which was probably more agreeable to Yoshikawa's less cosmopolitan readers. His ability to discern sometimes divergent trends in contemporary culture and to incorporate themes and characters which reflect them, and to do so in a way which attracts a broad spectrum of readers, testifies to Yoshikawa's skill as a writer of mass literature. Even as a maiden work, *Kennan jonan* demonstrates his ability to recognize and accommodate the diversity of popular tastes and morals. At the same time, the novel reveals his understanding of the paradoxical function of popular literature. On the one hand, it allows readers to vicariously defy the established social order. On the other hand, it invariably validates conventional morality. His titillating portrayal of heterodox sexual identities gives way at the end of the novel to the restoration and affirmation of orthodox gender roles.

Following the success of *Kennan jonan*, Yoshikawa was approached by *Osaka Mainichi shinbun* to write a novel. He responded to their request with *Naruto hichô* (The secrets of
Naruto, 1926-27). It was Yoshikawa’s first newspaper novel since Shinran ki, and was also the first work commissioned by a publisher other than Kôdansha. Isogai Katsutarô calls Naruto hichô a work “representative of Yoshikawa’s literature” which was not only “praised as a great success among the popular novels of its day,” but has also since become “a monumental work of popular literature.”** Ozaki Hotsuki uses similarly grand language in referring to Naruto hichô, calling it “an epoch-making work in the history of popular literature,” whose “influence in establishing popular literature [as a legitimate genre] is immeasurable.”**

Osaka Mainichi had a circulation in excess of 1,000,000 by 1926, and therefore the potential readership for Naruto hichô was comparable to Kennan jonan. In order to appeal to his Kansai audience, Yoshikawa set the action of the story mainly in western Japan. The narrative shifts back and forth between Osaka, Aizu, Kyoto and the province of Awa (today known as Tokushima Prefecture on the island of Shikoku), drifting only once into Edo. Despite being pitched to Kansai audiences, Naruto hichô gained readers in all of Japan.

Even before serialization was completed, the novel was chosen for inclusion in the sixty volume Gendai taishū bungaku zenshû (Anthology of contemporary popular literature, 1927-32), Heibonsha’s entry into the “enpon” (one yen book)

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**Denki Yoshihara Eiji, 236.
wars of the late Taishō and early Shōwa eras. Subscribers to *Gendai taishū bungaku zenshū* received a new volume each month, with each installment containing a long, illustrated serial novel by a popular author. As each volume ran to 1,000 pages, Heibonsha’s promoters stressed the value to potential subscribers of “one thousand pages for one yen.” In the first subscription drive, Heibonsha used Shirai Kyōji’s novel *Shinsengumi* (The Shinsengumi death squad, 1924-25) to promote the series. The campaign was a great success, garnering some 330,000 subscribers. In a second campaign launched in 1928, Heibonsha promoted the anthology using Yoshikawa’s *Naruto hichō*, which ran to 1,216 pages, thereby demonstrating ever more clearly the “value” of the *enpon* anthology. As a result of this second campaign, subscriptions reached the 400,000 mark. Yoshikawa reports that royalties from the publication of *Naruto hichō* financed the construction of his new home in Kami-ochiai.

*Naruto hichō* resembles *Kennan jonan* in that Yoshikawa relies again on a mixture of convention and innovation in weaving his narrative. There are a number of conventional characters: the handsome and noble swordsman; the beautiful maiden; a variety of villains, some are well-placed retainers to the Lord of Awa, others are masterless samurai. The hero

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50 From 1926 to 1934, publishers competed for readers by issuing anthologies, each volume of which cost one yen. The books were referred to as *enpon* and were only made available to series subscribers. Each month subscribers received a new volume. *Enpon* anthologies offered the literature of leading authors in Japan and the West, as well as works of philosophy. The *enpon* campaigns were extremely successful, and they restored the flagging finances of not a few publishers. Jay Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals*, 246-47; *Nihon bungaku no rekishi*, vol. 11, 364-65.

51 *Nihon bungaku no rekishi*, vol. 11, 425-26; *Denki Yoshikawa Eiji*, 237-38; *Taishū bungaku no rekishi*, vol. 1, 134-36.

is aided in his quest by a sagacious samurai, an insightful detective and a variety of townsmen, both artisans and merchants. In addition to these stereotypical characters, there are two more original characters: the beautiful female pick pocket, Otsuna, and the nihilistic masterless samurai, Ojûya Magobei. At first Otsuna exhibits the assertive egoism of a “poison woman.” She is manipulative, picks pockets to finance a lavish lifestyle, and mingles freely with thieves and cutthroats. As the story advances, however, she becomes more noble, heroic and “ladylike.” She is a more compelling character than even the ostensible hero, the noble swordsman; indeed, much of the plot revolves around her. On the other hand, her male counterpart, the nihilistic Magobei, is a thoroughly evil character. The reason for his nihilism remains shrouded beneath the kerchief (ojûya zukin) which he wears continually, even when asleep or making love.

In terms of plot development, Yoshikawa follows familiar formula—the quest to restore the honor of a samurai family. It involves traveling great distances, overcoming tremendous obstacles, fighting superior forces, etc. At every turn in the road, when villains seem to gain the upper hand, one of the hero’s allies comes miraculously to the rescue. Yoshikawa incorporates swordplay, unrequited love, love rivalries and eroticism. However, what makes the story interesting is the way he embellishes historical facts to create a plausible narrative.

The background for Naruto hichô is the so-called Hôreki Incident of 1758 (the eighth year of the Hôreki era). The historical incident involved the Shinto scholar Takenouchi Shikibu and several court nobles. In the early 1750s,
Takenouchi began educating court nobles on Shinto, Confucianism and military arts from a pro-Imperial perspective. The nobles were receptive to his ideas because they resented the Tokugawa Bakufu's domineering attitude toward the Imperial Court. They even conveyed Takenouchi's ideas to the Emperor himself and began to practice martial arts. When the Bakufu authorities in Kyoto finally got wind of these events in 1758, they placed several nobles under house arrest and banished Takenouchi from Kyoto. Yoshikawa's hypothesis is that Takenouchi and the Imperialist nobles had the backing of a powerful daimyō from Western Japan, Hachisuka Shigeyoshi, the tenth Lord of Awa. Working behind the scenes, Lord Shigeyoshi encouraged Takenouchi to spread Imperialist ideas and instigated the martial training of the court nobles in an effort to build support within the Imperial Court for a rebellion against the Tokugawa Bakufu. However, Lord Shigeyoshi's involvement was not discovered and he escaped punishment.

The official investigating on behalf of the Bakufu, Tsuneki Kōsan, believes that a "wire puller" has manipulated Takenouchi and the court nobles, and he suspects it is a powerful daimyō, perhaps even Shigeyoshi. But when he reports his suspicions to his superiors, he is ridiculed as an alarmist. When he tries to uncover evidence to support his suspicion, he is reprimanded for continuing an investigation which has been officially closed. The Bakufu, however, decides to secretly investigate Shigeyoshi, and it dispatches the undercover agent (onmitsu) Kōga Yoami. Yoami stealthfully crosses into Awa and begins his investigation. Eventually he is exposed as a spy and imprisoned in a desolate cell on the

*Tahara Shirō, "Hōreki jiken" (The Hōreki incident), Heibonsha hyakka jiten, vol. 13, 915.
highest mountain in Awa. There he passes nine miserable years.

Back in Edo, his daughter, Ochie, has blossomed into a beautiful young woman. As her mother died long ago, Ochie's only companion during her father's long absence is her nursemaid, Otami. Ochie is concerned about her father's welfare, but she also worries that if he does not return soon, they will lose their home, stipend, and good name. According to a "secret rule" governing members of the Bakufu's spy corps, an agent's stipend is revoked and all relations with his family are terminated if he goes missing for ten years. The Kôga house is close to coming to an end and Ochie being set adrift in the world. She might be saved from this fate through a timely marriage, but another "secret rule" governing the Bakufu's undercover agents permits marriage only between families within the spy corps. Naturally, Ochie has fallen in love with someone outside the spy corps, a dashing samurai named Norizuki Gennojō, the son of a direct vassal of the Tokugawas. Her forbidden love and her father's long absence have placed her in a very helpless position.

Ochie's nursemaid, Otami, volunteers to send her elder brother, Gingorō, to Awa to track down Yoami. Gingorō and Otami feel they are somewhat responsible for Ochie's predicament, because they were the ones who acted as intermediaries in Ochie's love affair with Gennojō. Carrying Ochie's letter to her father, Gingorō and his apprentice, Ta'ichi, set out for Awa. They get as far as Osaka, when Ta'ichi has his pocket picked, thereby losing the all important letter from Ochie, not to mention all their
traveling money. Gingorô sends Ta'ichi back to Edo to obtain another letter from Ochie, but before Ta'ichi can depart Osaka, he encounters a masked assailant who slashes him and leaves him for dead. A young waitress from a nearby restaurant comes to his aid, dressing his wounds and then sending for Gingorô. When Gingorô arrives at the restaurant, he comforts Ta'ichi, reassuring him that eventually they will succeed in crossing into Awa and finding Yoami. Little does Gingorô realize that three samurai from Awa are drinking at that same restaurant and, overhearing him, have become suspicious. Ever since Yoami’s secret mission was uncovered, Awa has been closed to outsiders by order of Lord Shigeyoshi. Thus, anyone who speaks of breaching her borders is considered a threat. The three samurai menace Gingorô and Ta'ichi, but a lone itinerant priest comes to their rescue. Deftly wielding his bamboo flute like a sword, he drives away the Awa samurai.

Ta'ichi’s pocket is picked by Otsuna, the nubile cutpurse from Edo. She is in Osaka on a “working holiday,” lifting purses one day, then lavishly spending her ill-gotten earnings the next. Because travelers rank among her favorite victims, she had been stalking Ta'ichi and Gingorô. Ta'ichi and Gingorô are also being stalked by Ojûya Magobei, the masterless samurai turned highwayman who wears a kerchief that covers his head and much of his face. It is Magobei who cuts down Ta'ichi only to find that someone has already stolen Ta'ichi’s purse. He suspects Otsuna has beaten him to the punch, because he knew she was also targeting the two travelers. Heartless as he is, Magobei bears Otsuna no ill will, however, for he is in love with her. When he later runs
into her at a teahouse, he shares some sake with her and begins to importune her with talk of "a partnership." But she is too shrewd to be taken in and too self-reliant to need a partner in crime. Besides, she does not return Magobei's affection, because she has secretly pledged her heart to another. To extricate herself from Magobei's clutches, she slips a drug into his drink and escapes when he falls unconscious.

Who is it who has stolen the heart of Otsuna, the chic and plucky Edoite who feels only disdain for men? It is the itinerant priest who rescued Gingorō and Ta'ichi from the three Awa samurai at the restaurant. Otsuna also happened to be at the same establishment when the incident with the Awa samurai occurred. She was captivated immediately by the bravery, strength and skill of the handsome young priest. From that night on, it only takes the sound of a priest's bamboo flute to send her into ecstasy.

She has no way of knowing that the priest is actually Norizuki Gennojō, the young samurai who loves Ochie. When Gennojō learned that his love for Ochie was forbidden, he forsook his home and began wandering throughout the country rather than scandalize his family and soil its good name. He pines for Ochie and consoles his broken heart with the melancholy sound of his flute. Quite by coincidence he happens to be nearby when Gingorō and Ta'ichi are menaced by the Awa samurai. Gingorō implores Gennojō to help him save Ochie, but Gennojō is reluctant to become involved for fear he will shame his father. He agrees to stay with Gingorō until Ta'ichi has recovered from his wounds. When Gennojō goes out one evening, however, Gingorō and Ta'ichi are
attacked again by the Awa samurai. Gennojō, who has been chatting amiably with a love-struck Otsuna, returns to find Ta'ichi dead and Gingorō mortally wounded. As he holds the dying Gingorō in his arms, he promises to go to Awa, find Yoami and bring him back to Ochie.

The remaining three-fourths of the novel portrays Gennojō’s quest to rescue Yoami and bring him back to Ochie. He is aided by Tsuneki Kōsan, who is still trying to prove Lord Shigeyoshi’s involvement in the Hōreki Incident, and Kōsan’s trusted assistant, the Osaka detective, Mankichi. Otsuna also allies herself with Gennojō, but not simply out of love. As she confesses to Mankichi, she feels duty bound to help, since by picking Ta'ichi’s pocket she has set the current chain of events in motion. Her resolve is strengthened when she learns that she is no other than the illegitimate daughter of Yoami. Thus, the quest becomes for her a matter of being restored to the family she has never known and stepping out of the shadows—giving up being a “twisted woman” (ki no nejita anna), “washing her hands of doing evil” (akuji no ashi o warau tsumori)—and “becoming a respectable woman” (hitonami na onna ni naritai).” The obstacles and dangers that face her are many: Ojūya Magobei, miscellaneous Awa samurai, the notorious whirlpools of Naruto which make the crossing to Awa perilous for all but the most seasoned sailors, the heightened security along Awa’s borders, and the imminent launch of an armada from Awa against the Bakufu’s forces in Edo.

In addition to this intricate plot, Yoshikawa incorporates the two “constant themes” of popular fiction, violence and sex, at times even combining the two. The combination of sex and violence is most apparent in the sadistic eroticism characteristic of the passages describing Magobei’s lust for Otsuna. For example, after being drugged by Otsuna, Magobei tracks her down, intent on killing her for humiliating him. When he finds her lying on a grassy knoll idly listening to the distant sound of a bamboo flute, he Sneaks up behind and prepares to draw his sword. But as he glares at her voluptuous form, he decides there is a better way to get even with her.

Magobei’s clenched teeth and wild eyes gave his face a horrible, demonic appearance. Reaching for the handle of his sword, he fixed his murderous gaze on the ivory white nape of Otsuna’s neck. If he were to draw his sword and strike, in an instant Otsuna’s slender neck, or even her shapely torso would be cleanly severed.

Usually very attentive, Otsuna should have been alert to imminent danger by slightest rustle of the spring grasses. But today she was completely absorbed in listening to the sound of a bamboo flute. Her every thought was captivated by the vision of the wandering priest.

Was it reality? Or merely his imagination? Magobei could not tell. But Otsuna’s charms were more evident and alluring than usual: from the seductive grace of the nape of her neck, to the soft, supple lines of her shoulders and legs, to the fullness of her breasts as they pressed gently against the grasses. Her beautiful image served to only fuel Magobei’s anger, until at last he came to feel that merely cutting her in two would not be sufficient retribution. In that moment of hesitation, Magobei’s thirst for blood was transformed into raging animal desire and his eyes began to scorch Otsuna’s charming form.

“All right, Otsuna. Get ready,” he thought. “I’m going to show you just how ferocious a man can be. I’m going to tear you apart, ravaging those feminine charms of yours. I’m going to make you miserable. My repayment for what you did to me the other night will haunt you the rest of your life like a curse. It will keep you in tears until the end of your days.”

This passage is representative of the sadistically erotic role that Yoshikawa assigns to Magobei. Although Magobei says he loves Otsuna, admitting at one point that he cannot kill her despite the way she has humiliated him, he tries to rape her each time he comes near her. And when Otsuna struggles desperately to resist, Magobei becomes more aroused. "Otsuna tried to twist free of his grasp, but Magobei held her tightly and forced her down. Her kicking and writhing intoxicated him. 'Go on! Scream! Struggle all you want!' he laughed.... 'There's just the two of us here. Why don't you just give in, Otsuna!?'" His attitude toward other women is similarly sadistic, as is demonstrated in a scene in which Magobei watches two Awa samurai manhandle Mankichi's wife during an interrogation. Although the grilling yields no information, it succeeds in arousing Magobei, who admits to his cohorts: "She may be a bit past her prime, but I wouldn't mind making love to Mankichi's wife. The way she looked after Tendô slapped her, as she was holding back her tears, seemed somehow coquettish to me." Yoshikawa also highlights Magobei's sadism by contrasting it with the purity of Gennojô's love for Ochie. Even Otsuna's desire for Gennojô stands in stark contrast to Magobei's eroticism, for although she is a saucy pleasure-seeker accustomed to revelry in the gay quarter, she is like a maiden, easily flustered and reticent whenever Gennojô is about. As Yoshikawa puts it, the chic and savvy Otsuna "lacks spunk in matters of love" (koi ni ikiji no nai)." When Otsuna finally confesses her love to Gennojô, she meekly concedes to her "rival" Ochie.

53 *Naruto hichô*, vol. 1, 295.
57 *Naruto hichô*, vol. 1, 299
54 *Naruto hichô*, vol. 2, 315.
56 *Naruto hichô*, vol. 1, 102-04, 156-57.
requesting only that she be allowed to briefly enjoy her “fleeting love” (hakanai koi) until the mission in Awa is accomplished."

The cause of Magobei’s nihilistic sadism is alluded to, although never fully revealed until the end of the novel. He is tormented by the conflict between his pathological need to engage in illicit behavior and his devotion to the memory of his deceased mother, who was a devout Christian." The symbol of his conflicted nature is the kerchief with which he perpetually covers his face and head. Yoshikawa cultivates a morbid curiosity among his readers with titillating reminders throughout the novel that no one has ever seen the face beneath the kerchief. In fact, when Magobei is killed, the first thing Otsuna does is to suggest that they look beneath the kerchief to learn his secret. But before anyone can remove the kerchief, a mysterious dwarf appears and relates the facts behind the secret. Yoshikawa’s introduction of a dwarf to tell Magobei’s story may be viewed as a ploy to heighten the grotesqueness of the tale.

Originally Magobei was a samurai from Awa. His mother, Isabel, was descended from Spanish missionaries who arrived in Nagasaki around 1614, when official persecution of Christians was beginning to intensify. Isabel’s grandmother was present at the famous Shimabara Rebellion (1637-38), but she managed to escape the slaughter in the company of several masterless samurai, who fled to Awa and were granted asylum by the third Lord of Awa, Hachisuka Yoshishige. The fugitives kept their Christian faith alive across the generations, passing to each new generation their secret

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See, for example, Naruto hichô, vol. 3, 230-31.
traditions and heirlooms. Isabel possessed one such heirloom, a comb bearing a porcelain image of the Virgin Mary. She intended to pass it on to Magobei.

Magobei showed no inclination toward Christianity, however. He was rather profligate in his ways, given to drunkenness, whoring, and gambling. Isabel was deeply troubled by her son's life of debauchery. Her anxiety eventually led to illness. As she lay dying, surrounded by the descendents of the crypto-Christians, she called on Magobei to give up his dissipation and embrace Christianity. When he declared that he could not, Isabel had several men hold him down as she carved a cross deep into his forehead. Then she placed the Virgin Mary comb in his hair and made him swear that he would not remove it nor let his bangs grow out to cover the crucifix in his forehead until he had abandoned his debauchery and embraced a Christian life. She also made the other men swear to kill Magobei if he ever broke his pledge. From that day forward, Magobei kept his promise to his mother, but out of fear of being persecuted as a crypto-Christian, he kept his head and face covered with a kerchief. It had been the dwarf's duty to insure that Magobei honored his pledge. Because Magobei has been killed by Gennojō, the dwarf requests permission to take Magobei's head back to Awa as proof that his duty has ended. Permission granted, he lops off Magobei's head—with the Virgin Mary comb still in place—and departs for Awa."

I wish to point out two implications to this passage. First, it adds an element of grotesquery to the novel which complements its eroticism. Eroticism, grotesqueness and nonsense, referred to with the catch-phrase of the day, ero--

\[\text{Naruto hichō, vol. 3, 390-97.}\]
guro-nansensu, were vital elements in the popular culture of the Taishô and early Shôwa years, and Yoshikawa demonstrates through *Naruto hichô* that he is as adept as his contemporaries at responding to the public's taste. Second, it demonstrates his skill at embellishing fact while keeping his narrative plausible. Although records indicate that all 37,000 of the insurgents at Shimabara (including women and children) were killed by forces loyal to the Tokugawa, Yoshikawa's suggestion that some Christians managed to escape to Awa is intriguing. It is recorded that Hachisuka Iemasa, Yoshishige's father, was a Christian for a brief period. It is quite plausible that Yoshishige would have been sympathetic to the plight of Christian rebels fleeing Shimabara and would offer refuge. The problem is, however, that Yoshishige died in 1620, some 17 years before the rebellion even took place. There is a fair amount of this kind of historical embellishment and license in *Naruto hichô*. In fact, Yoshikawa's basic premise for the novel—that Hachisuka Shigeyoshi's fierce opposition of the Tokugawa Bakufu prompted him to instigate the Imperialist activism among court nobles in the 1750s and to plan a grand military assault on Edo in 1766—is pure fiction. However, the historical fact that Shigeyoshi spent some forty-two years under house arrest (from 1766 until his death in 1818) lends credibility to that premise, especially since the exact reason for Shigeyoshi's confinement has not been recorded.

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84 See Yoshikawa's comments about the historical sources he used in preparation for writing *Naruto hichô* in the 1935 essay, "Shisho yoroku" (Chronicles and historical documents), *YEZ*, vol. 52, 91-92.
Kennan jonan and Naruto hichô richly demonstrate Yoshikawa's particular talent for writing popular fiction: he was keenly sensitive to current cultural trends and adept at incorporating them into his novels; and he had a knack for creating historical narratives which, while largely fictional, had the ring of truth. Naruto hichô exhibits this latter trait to a greater extent than Kennan jonan, whose one historical character, Kanemaki Jisai, is merely the stereotype of the enlightened, albeit enigmatic, master swordsman. Nevertheless, the "feudal" morality of both novels--the emphasis on honor, duty, and sacrifice for the good of others--is fully in keeping with the period depicted. The ultimate triumph of these values over the independence and individualism of Onkata and Otsuna, on the one hand, and the self-absorbed sensitivity and self-pity of Shinkurô and Gennojô, on the other, points to Yoshikawa's conservatism.

As he became more established as a writer, Yoshikawa became more assertive in expressing his conservative values, believing that the answer to the confused liberalism and effete intellectualism of early Shôwa lay in the "spiritual toughness" of the past. His goal in portraying the past was to encourage readers to reflect on Japanese cultural identity in the present. "Popular literature must be a literature of reflection; this is its true objective," he wrote in 1936. "Culture does not advance by simply moving ahead without any sense of self-awareness. True progress must always be accompanied by proper reflection. 'Proper reflection' [tadashii hansei] consists of our perpetually looking at the culture of our past, and then infusing our lives with a fresh and healthy awareness of who we are."**


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Yoshikawa noted that his principle of progress-through-reflection drew criticism from liberal critics in the literary establishment, who denigrated his "severe conservatism." "I am definitely no conservative," he responded. "It's just that I have realized popular literature is a literature of reflection. If there is no reflection, and we merely regard frivolity—the idle exercise of being up-to-the-minute—as all there is, then Japan's literature has become crippled, and is well on its way to becoming an extremely unhealthy, irrelevant endeavor. It is with this conviction that I am writing *Miyamoto Musashi.*" Concluding this 1936 essay with a righteous denunciation of the avantgardism of pure literature, Yoshikawa unambiguously declares his faith in the utility and the promise of popular literature. His statements make clear, moreover, his intention to express the best of Japan's spiritual and cultural heritage in the character of Miyamoto Musashi.

5.2 *Miyamoto Musashi*

If Yoshikawa conceives of Miyamoto Musashi as an ideal character who embodies "Japanese" virtues, he also conceives of him as an ordinary, flawed human being. "I don't regard Musashi as a sage who had achieved greatness by the time he was twenty," he writes in 1939. "Rather, judging from the fact that he was an exceptionally strong-willed man, prone to exercising his formidable brute strength, I imagine it is more accurate to view him as someone who had his share of faults and shortcomings. People who devote themselves in earnest to a particular discipline are apt to be stubborn, inflexible, and uncompromising in their dealings with..."
Musashi’s uncompromising nature may not have won him friends, but it was only through diligence and self-discipline that he was able to attain greatness. This is the main theme of the novel *Miyamoto Musashi*: only through toughness, persistent discipline and self-sacrifice can the common man achieve success in his chosen field of endeavor. Yoshikawa illustrates it through Musashi’s spiritual journey from defeat on the battlefield of Sekigahara to triumph at Ganryū Island. The theme is reinforced, moreover, by the example of several other characters. Consider the following passage from late in the novel in which two of Musashi’s acquaintances discuss his pending bout with the renowned swordsman, Sasaki Kojirō (a.k.a. Ganryū). The two men are known to history for their accomplishments—the calligrapher and painter Hon’ami Kōetsu (1558-1637), and the rural samurai Muso Gonnosuke, founder of the Muso school of cudgel warfare. The passage implies that, like Musashi, their achievements were the result of assiduous effort.

“From what I hear,” offered Gonnosuke, “this Sasaki Ganryū seems to possess quite a rare talent....”

“It’s a contest that will decide who is the stronger: an arrogant genius or an ordinary man who has diligently polished his skills,” Kōetsu replied.

“Musashi is not really ‘an ordinary man.’”

“But he is. He’s definitely no genius. He’s not the type to rely merely on the skills he possesses. He constantly strives to hone them because he recognizes that he is ordinary. He trains more rigorously than anyone imagines. And yet, when the gleam of his highly polished skill comes shining through, people are too quick to call it ‘natural ability.’ It is the men who don’t apply themselves that say such things, taking comfort in their own laziness.”

“Thank you for those words....” said Gonnosuke, for he felt as though Kōetsu’s praise was also directed at him. Then, gazing at the profile of Kōetsu’s tranquil face, he thought, “This fellow, too, knows the meaning of diligence.”


*Miyamoto Musashi*, vol. 6, 314-15.
The contrast between the ordinariness of these three extraordinarily accomplished men and the natural ability of the “arrogant genius,” Sasaki Kojirō, underlies another of the novel’s themes: the distinction between diligent self-discipline and self-serving egoism. While the goal of Musashi’s assiduous training is “human perfection,” Kojirō’s objective is to become the most famous swordsman in Japan and to secure an appointment as fencing instructor to a prominent daimyō, if not the Shōgun himself. It is an ambition worthy of a master swordsman, even if it is less noble than Musashi’s goal. But Yoshikawa degrades Kojirō’s ambitiousness through his portrayal of the ignoble means that Kojirō employs to realize his goal. Unlike Musashi, Kojirō does not train rigorously. Rather he relies on spectacular demonstrations of his superior technical skill. An indolent opportunist, Kojirō provokes opponents whom he can easily outmatch. When they challenge him, he cuts them down with sadistic glee. When it suits his self-interest, he does not hesitate to slander his rivals, including Musashi. At the same time, he paints himself in the best possible light.

Kojirō’s overweening ambition remains a constant until the climactic sword fight with Musashi at the end of the novel. Musashi, on the other hand, grows as a human being through the course of this bildungsroman. At the beginning, Musashi’s goals in life do not differ substantially from Kojirō’s. At the age of seventeen, he leaves his native village of Miyamoto in the province of Mimasaka (today part of Okayama Prefecture) to win fame fighting in the battle of Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 4, 302.

Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 4, 255.

See, for example, Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 4, 230-33, 238-39.

See, for example, Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 3, 579-84.
Sekigahara. But he joins the losing side and ends up a fugitive. Eventually he is captured by Tokugawa forces, but he avoids execution through the intervention of a wise Zen Buddhist priest, Takuan Sōhō (1573–1645). His sentence is commuted to confinement in Himeji Castle. During three years of imprisonment, he begins to train by reading books on military strategy and Zen Buddhism. Upon release, he sets out to supplement his learning with practical martial training. Placing his hand on his sword, he muses, “I have only my sword to rely on now. I will live by it and regard it as my soul. Training with it daily, I will strive to perfect myself as a human being. Takuan takes Zen as his path to perfection. I will take the sword as mine. I must become better than him.”

Despite his intention of becoming a better human being, Musashi suffers from excessive ambition. He challenges opponents rashly, but he always manages to win by dint of his extraordinary strength and violent temperament. At one point, an aged priest with many years of martial training tells him, “You are too strong.... You must control your strength; you must become weaker.” Musashi fails to heed his advice, and he continues to wander about Japan boldly challenging swordsmen and other martial experts. Despite his recklessness, he wins every match and leaves his opponents dead or crippled. Arriving in Kyoto, he issues a challenge to the head of the famous Yoshioka fencing school, Yoshioka Seijūrō. When the two finally meet for battle, Musashi quickly discerns that Seijūrō is no match for him.

Nevertheless he fights Seijūrō, defeating him with a single

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73 Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 1, 232.
74 Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 1, 386.
blow. After the bout, Musashi’s initial euphoria quickly dissolves into regret.

“I won!” Musashi sang to himself. “I defeated Yoshioka Seijūrô! I brought down the head of the famous Yoshioka school, the bastion of the Kyoto Style since the Muromachi era!” However, he did not feel truly happy about his victory. He walked along the plain, his eyes downcast.

Depression following a victory is a sentiment common among the nobility, but it is not generally associated with warriors engaged in martial training. Nevertheless, Musashi was enveloped by an unbearable desolation as he walked aimlessly across the plain.

He turned abruptly and looked back across the plain toward the Rendai Temple. He could see the slender pine trees surrounding the hillock where he had met Seijūrô. “I only hit him once,” he thought. “And it’s not as though his injury was life-threatening.” Suddenly he was very concerned about the condition of the enemy he had so callously struck down a short while earlier. He looked again at the blade of the wooden sword he had used in the bout. Sure enough, there was no trace of blood on it.

Seijūrô was a very different man than Musashi had imagined him to be. When he met him on the hillock, Musashi had wondered, “Can this be the son of the great Yoshioka Kenpō?” Seijūrô looked nothing like a fierce champion in the Kyoto Style. Rather, he had the delicate features and urbane bearing of a young nobleman. The moment they squared off, Musashi regretted issuing the challenge. “This bout should not be taking place,” he had thought.

Musashi had decided it would be best for both of them if he came up with a pretext for calling off the bout. But in the end, he did not have the chance. “It’s a regrettable thing I’ve done,” he reflected to himself.

Looking once more towards the knoll surrounded by its tall, slender pines, he offered a silent prayer on Seijūrô’s behalf: “May the wound I’ve inflicted heal quickly.”

In this passage Yoshikawa provides the first concrete example of the evolution of Musashi’s humanity and nobility. Like those of august bearing (kashikoi hitotachi), Musashi feels dismay following his victory, especially since he recognizes that he outclassed his opponent. His regret seems sincere, and his concern for Seijūrô unaffected. His attitude stands in marked contrast to Kojirō’s self-serving behavior.
in a similar situation. In the passage relating Kojirō’s audience with the prominent daimyō Hosokawa Tadatoshi, Kojirō must face one of Lord Hosokawa’s retainers in a match. Although he knows that his victory will determine whether he receives an appointment, nevertheless he remains cool and confident. He even acts arrogantly towards his opponent. The contest is essentially a formality, but Kojirō attacks his adversary savagely, crushing the man’s left hip with his wooden sword. Several days after the bout, there is still no word from Lord Hosokawa. Kojirō begins to fear that perhaps his brutality has affected his candidacy adversely. But then he hits on a plan. He pays an unannounced visit to his victim and wishes him well.

Kojirō grew increasingly irritated. A few days later, as though he had suddenly remembered something, he abruptly announced, “I’m going to call on Okatani Gorôji,” and went out....

As the injured Gorôji was still in too much pain to sit up, he received Kojirō’s unexpected but courteous visit from his bed.

“A bout between warriors is a contest of skill. While I may lament my own lack of skill, I bear you no grudge,” said Gorôji with a faint smile. “It is very kind of you to call on me. Thank you.” Gorôji’s eyes grew misty.

After Kojirō took his leave, Gorôji confided in a friend who remained by his bedside, “That fellow is an admirable samurai. At first I thought him an insolent bastard, but on the contrary, now I see that he’s actually quite warm-hearted and well-mannered.”

Kojirō had been counting on just such a response. His plan had worked exactly the way he wanted. The other well-wisher by Gorôji’s bedside had heard the injured man himself sing Kojirō’s praises unsolicited. Kojirō called on Gorôji four more times, stopping by every two or three days."

Kojirō’s shrewdly calculated solicitude for his bedridden adversary contrasts sharply with Musashi’s heartfelt prayer for his fallen opponent. Throughout the narrative, Yoshikawa develops the tension between Kojirō and

Musashi. Musashi's thoughts and actions illustrate his increasing concern with the welfare of his fellow man, while Kojirō's self-absorbed arrogance, libelous rumor-mongering, and insatiable sadism reinforce the image of him as a wicked man. At one point, Yoshikawa describes Kojirō as "a perverse monster who derives pleasure from standing by and watching the suffering and adversity of others, rather than rejoicing in their good fortune. Is not such a villain more wicked than an embezzler, and more to be feared than a robber?"

Kojirō's sadism rivals that of Ojûya Magobei; at times it is as erotic." In fact, Kojirō combines the "undesirable" traits of several of Yoshikawa's earlier characters: the sadism of Magobei; the androgyny of Shinkurō because Kojirō also wears forlocks and bright wakashu clothing well beyond his nineteenth year;" the unbridled ambition of Lord Hachisuka Shigeyoshi; and the swaggering egoism of any number of villains from Ôtsuki Genba to Onkata to the Awa samurai Tendō Ikkaku. In short, Kojirō embodies all the "harmful influences" plaguing early Shôwa culture. Yoshikawa's comments in his 1936 essay "Taishû bungaku zuisô," suggest that he traced these influences to Japan's indiscriminate borrowing--i.e., borrowing without "proper reflection"--of the Western concepts of individualism, capitalism, and nihilism. He had repudiated some Western influences in earlier novels through his depiction of the triumph of "traditional" Japanese values. Yet the novel Miyamoto Musashi appears to be the vehicle for Yoshikawa's vilification of all the unhealthful trends in early Shôwa society. Thus, the

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"Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 3, 40.
See "Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 2, 99; 400-06."
contrast set up between Musashi and Kojirō is Yoshikawa's projection of the tension in modern society between Western ideas and Japan's cultural heritage. As Musashi's ultimate victory over Kojirō results from his trust in "the sword of the spirit," likewise Japan's cultural battle with insidious Westernism can be won only through reliance on the spiritual values manifest in the heroes of her past.

Read in this way, *Miyamoto Musashi* becomes Yoshikawa's contribution to the cultural debate (*Nihon bunkaron* or *Nihonjinron*) waged in Japan since the latter half of the nineteenth-century. "Such an interpretation is readily justified by the text. Indeed, the unremittingly negative portrayal of Kojirō's un-Japanese character traits validates traditional values embodied by Musashi. But in addition to the tension between the two main antagonists, Yoshikawa loads the novel with images that imply the spiritual superiority of Japanese culture and evoke the nationalistic rhetoric of Japanism. The images I will discuss here relate to three themes: agrarian idealism, the Japanese people's spiritual superiority as descendants of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu Ōmikami, and importance of loyalty to the Emperor.

After his bouts in Kyoto with the Yoshioka school, Musashi wanders eastward along the Nakasen Highway, encountering by turns mountain bandits, the cudgel master Muso Gonnosuke, and a samurai from Sendai who professes to be

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10 Harumi Befu points out that the *Nihonjinron* can be traced to the writings of Motoori Norimasa (1730-1801) and other *kokugaku* (national learning) scholars. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, China was "the Other" in Japan's cultural debate. However, with the advent of the "gunboat diplomacy" of the US and European powers in the 1850s, Japan began to identify itself in relation to the West. The *Nihonjinron* discourse since that time has focused on the cultural differences between Japan and the West. Harumi Befu, "Nationalism and *Nihonjinron,*" in Harumi Befu, ed., *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1993), 121-25.
in love with him. After a brief stay in Edo, he continues eastward until he arrives at the barren plain of Hōtengahara in the province of Shimousa (today, a part of Chiba Prefecture). He meets a peasant boy, Iori, who has recently become an orphan. Iori’s grandfather was a samurai who took up farming after the death of his lord. When he meets Musashi, Iori confesses his dream of becoming a samurai like his grandfather and he asks Musashi to take him as his disciple. Impressed by the boy’s determination and self-discipline, Musashi agrees. But rather than taking to the road again, Musashi resolves to continue his training through tilling the soil in the barren fields of the inhospitable Hōtengahara.

“I’ll set aside my sword for a while and take up the hoe!” Musashi decided. After all, there were many avenues for honing one’s swordsmanship—practicing Zen, studying ancient texts, practicing the tea ceremony, painting, carving Buddhist statues. Certainly using a hoe would contribute to his training. This vast expanse of land, just waiting for someone to cultivate it, would be a splendid training ground. Moreover, in opening this land, he would be unlocking its bounty for untold generations, taming a wilderness that would nourish men and women for hundreds of years.

Musashi reckoned that the warrior who wanders the countryside training himself is, in principle, a beggar. He is able to continue his study only through the charity of others, who provide him with food and shelter.... However, only when a man has planted, tended and harvested a field with his own hands can he fully understand the value of each grain of rice, or the preciousness of each vegetable. Like the priest who does not practice what he preaches, the wandering warrior who persists in living off the kindness of others will never learn how to govern the people, for even though he may perfect his swordsmanship, he’ll know nothing about economy and responsibility. Rather, he’ll end up, naturally enough, an eccentric lout, out of touch with society....

Musashi was not taking up agriculture out of necessity. Rather, he sought spiritual sustenance. He wanted to learn how to live eating the fruits of his own labors, instead of living as a beggar. Moreover, he hoped to plant his ideas among the local peasants, who viewed the
natural world around them with resignation, giving in to the storms and floods which regularly inundated the plain, to the weeds and briers which grew in tangled profusion. Musashi wanted to open the eyes of these farmers, who seemed unaware of the potential of their land, and who were content to bequeath to successive generations nothing more than the miseries of their hand-to-mouth existence.

Yoshikawa presents in this passage a number of ideas espoused by advocates of Japanese agrarianism (nôhonshugi), e.g., the priority of agriculture in cultivating civic (and spiritual) virtues, an emphasis on rural communalism, and the importance of practical improvements in increasing the production of farmland. Yoshikawa has even incorporated the “duties” enunciated in Ninomiya Sontoku’s Hôtoku (repaying virtue) philosophy: hard work, thrift, and transmission of something of value to others. As Ninomiya did not articulate his Hôtoku principles until some 150 years after Musashi died, the depiction of these ideals is clearly Yoshikawa’s backward projection of early Shôwa agrarianism—which derived to an extent from Ninomiya’s teachings—onto early seventeenth-century society. Musashi’s noble desire to cultivate the barren land of Hôtengahara on behalf of the people of the village, so that they might derive sustenance from it “for hundreds of years,” reflects the spirit of communalism which such popular agrarianists as Gondô Seikyô (1868-1937) and Tachibana Kôzaburô (1893-1974) attributed to premodern village society. Tachibana decried the baneful effect of the “materialistic civilization of modern capitalism” on rural society. Gondô too denounced the

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81 Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 4, 298-99.
83 Sources of Japanese Tradition, 583.
84 Farm and Nation in Modern Japan, 255.
selfishness of capitalism, specifically the capitalist system of private property rights." Both men advocated fraternalistic self-rule for rural communities as a means of achieving economic and social reform. It is a romantic view of communalism that is manifest in Musashi’s experiences with the villagers at Hôtengahara.

By helping the villagers to unite and defend themselves against a marauding band of mountain bandits (a subplot which foreshadows Kurosawa Akira’s classic film *Seven Samurai*), Musashi gains the confidence of the peasants at Hôtengahara. They gratefully volunteer to help him with the land development project that they had previously viewed with skepticism.

Even those who had once mocked and scorned him [for trying to cultivate the barren plain] now came forward and said, “Please let me help you.”

Musashi responded to each person in like manner. “Anyone who’s come wanting to help is welcome. We can use the help. If you want to make this land bountiful, come and join us. Any bird or wild beast can go through life eating enough to survive until the next day. But if you feel like working for the sake of your children, your grandchildren, and generations yet unborn, then come and lend a hand.”

The people responded immediately.

“I’ll help.”

“Me, too.”

Every day forty or fifty people assembled on the plain ready to work. During the winter months, well over a hundred would come. Working together with one accord, they cleared that inhospitable land. In autumn they stopped the flooding which had regularly washed out the plain. In winter, they plowed the soil. In spring, they planted rice seedlings in the flooded paddies. By early summer sturdy green stalks rustled in the wind, and the barley and hemp they had planted were already a foot high.

The villagers felt more at ease and became more productive since the bandits no longer came. Soon wives and the elderly began worshipping Musashi like a god. When they had harvested their spring rice and early vegetables, they offered the firstfruits to Musashi.

*Farm and Nation in Modern Japan*, 205.
"Next year both our paddles and our fields will yield double this year's crop! The year after that, we'll triple our yield!" the villagers gushed. Driving out the bandits and restoring peace to the village had given them hope. Cultivating the infertile plain had filled them with confidence....

Musashi said to them, "You achieved all this as a result of your own efforts, not my assistance. I merely showed you the power that you all possess."

As though relating a parable to demonstrate the efficacy of agrarian principles, Yoshikawa depicts the spiritual as well as material benefits of pooling the Hôtengahara peasants' energies and resources. Through communalism they win freedom from the exploitation of bandits, cultivate previously unarable land, and thereby increase village productivity. But, most importantly, the villagers gain confidence and optimism as a result of Musashi's inspiring example. But in the face of their adulation, Musashi demurs. Yoshikawa once again tears down the image of Musashi as a god, emphasizing instead that with diligence, self-sacrifice and hard work, 'you, too, dear reader can achieve great things, as Musashi has done.'

After helping the villagers at Hôtengahara, Musashi decides to resume his journey. He and Iori travel to Edo, then move to Kashiwagi, a village in the province of Kai (Yamanashi Prefecture today) where they settle for an extended period. When autumn arrives, Iori convinces Musashi to take him to the Mitsumine Shrine Festival in Chichibu (today part of Saitama Prefecture). At dawn on the morning the festival is to begin, Musashi and Iori climb the mountain towards the shrine compound. The passage in which they watch the sunrise contains nationalistic references to the Sun Goddess, and it implies the spiritual superiority of the

\[\text{Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 4, 368-70.}\]
Japanese people as her descendants.

"Master," said Iori, "although it's getting light, I can't see the sun. Why is that?"
"It's probably because the direction you're looking is west," Musashi grinned.
"Oh, right." Rather than the sun, Iori located the dim moon, just now dropping below the peaks in the distance.
"Iori," said Musashi playfully, "you certainly have a lot of friends living on this mountain."
"Friends? Where?"
"They're right over there!" Musashi laughed, pointing to a tree in the adjacent ravine. A group of baby monkeys, huddled around some adults, clung to the branches.
"Very funny," Iori smiled. Then he added pensively, "But you know, I envy those little monkeys."
"Why?"
"They have parents."
Musashi said nothing and continued up the steep path....

They followed the winding path up the mountain. Presently they came to a plateau that faced eastward. Suddenly Iori stopped and pointed toward the horizon. "The sun is coming up!" he cried, looking back at Musashi. Bathed in the crimson light of the rising sun, Musashi, too, stopped to marvel at the beauty of the dawn....
Iori stood perfectly still, gazing with rapt attention at the glowing orb. The powerful emotions sweeping over him in that moment caused him to fall silent. Had been able to speak, he would not have known what to say.

Iori began to feel as though the blood circulating through his body and the sun's crimson rays were one and the same. "I'm a child of the sun," he thought. It seems his intellect and his emotions were not yet in sync. He remained silent, enraptured by the dawn. Suddenly, he cried out, "It's Amaterasu Ōmikami! Isn't that right, Master?"
"That's right," replied Musashi simply.

Holding both hands high above his head, Iori examined each finger illuminated by the streams of sunlight. "The sun's blood and my blood are the same color!" he exclaimed. He reverently clapped his hands twice, then bowed his head in worship. "The monkeys have parents. But I have none. Yet, the monkeys have no divine forebears, while I have Amaterasu Ōmikami." Filled with joy by this quiet conviction, Iori wept freely.

Iori is a boy of fourteen who has grown up in a rural village in Shimousa Province. But in the short time he has

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"Miyamoto Musashi, vol. 5, 215-18."

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lived and studied with Musashi, he has managed to internalize the nationalist mythology surrounding Amaterasu Ômikami and has come to recognize and revere her as the “divine forebear” (Ômioya 大神祖) of the Japanese people. While Japan’s earliest records (e.g., the Kojiki and the Nihongi) relate the mythology of the descent of the Imperial line from Amaterasu, the notion that the Japanese people themselves were also descended from the Sun Goddess—as members of the extended “national family” (kazoku kokka 家族国家) of which the Emperor was patriarch—did not come into existence until the modern era. Takashi Fujitani points out that historically the shomin during the Edo period had no notion of the Emperor as the legitimate ruler of Japan, nor of themselves as Imperial subjects, let alone members of the extended “national family.” Instead, the sense of modern nationalism, the recognition of one’s identity as the subject of a central Absolute Subject had to be instilled in the people. And it was only after the beginning of the Meiji era that this sense of political and cultural subjectivity was cultivated among the people through the creation of a national folklore centered on the Emperor." This process of education continued through the Taishô and Shôwa eras, during which State ideology reinforced the cultural and spiritual centrality of the Emperor, likening him to a father who loved and protected the Japanese people, his children. The rhetoric of a “national family” was first propogated officially in elementary school textbooks produced by the Ministry of Education in 1910 in an effort to nurture “patriotic Emperor-

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See Takashi Fujitani, "Inventing, Forgetting, Remembering: Toward a Historical Ethnography of the Nation-State," in Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity, 77-106. 318
loyalty" (chûkun aikoku 忠君愛國) among the citizens." This ideology became increasingly prominent during the late 1930s and especially during Japan’s mobilization for total war with China. Kazoku kokka and the rhetoric of Emperor-loyalty feature conspicuously in the 1937 Ministry of Education publication Kokutai no hongi (Fundamentals of our national polity). Yoshikawa’s incorporation of this ideology in Miyamoto Musashi demonstrates again his projection of his view of the contemporary milieu onto the past.

A nationalistic, anti-Western, perspective is also evident in the symbolism of this scene. Iori looks for the rising sun, the symbol of Japan, whose emergence as the new power in Asia is portended in the gathering light. However, when he looks to the West for the source of this brightness, he discovers he is looking in the wrong direction ("West" here may also be read as a symbol for Nationalist China). What he sees to the West is the dim light of the declining moon, the symbol of yin (darkness) in contrast to Japan’s yang (light). When finally Iori encounters the rising sun, he is filled with awe. Basking in the radiant glory of the rising sun, even Musashi cannot help but be moved. Iori is so overcome that he begins to imagine himself as “a child of the sun” (taiyô no ko). But when “his intellect and his emotions” coalesce, he recognizes the shining orb as Amaterasu Ômikami, the progenitor of the Imperial family. Nevertheless, as a Japanese, Iori has divine blood flowing through his veins. His heritage distinguishes him from the monkeys and other beasts as well as from the hairy barbarians of the West.

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68 Matsumoto Sannosuke, "Kokka shugi to ‘ie’ ideorogii," in Köza kazoku, vol. 8, Kazokukan no keitu, 55-57; Ishida Takeshi, Meiji seiji shishōshi kenkyû, 7; Wilbur M. Fridell, "Government Ethics Textbooks in Late Meiji Japan," 829-32.
While the foregoing passage does not contribute significantly to the development of the novel’s plot, it is important in terms of character development. It illustrates Musashi’s positive influence on Iori’s development as “a human being,” or more precisely, as a subject of the Japanese empire. The passage reflects favorably on both characters. Musashi’s virtue is implicit in the spiritual values he instills in his pupil, and Iori’s morality is manifest in his ready response to Musashi’s guidance. The following passage reflects similarly on Musashi and Iori, and it sets forth a third nationalistic theme, the importance of loyalty to the Emperor.

On their way from Kashiwagi to Chichibu to see the Mitsumine Shrine Festival, Musashi and Iori encounter a group of farmers repairing an earthen bridge spanning the Iruma River, raging and swollen by torrential autumn rains. In excavating rock and earth to repair the bridge, the farmers have uncovered relics from an ancient battle. Idling away the time until the bridge is repaired, Iori collects arrowheads, metal fragments from broken swords, and helmets. Finding a human bone, Iori recoils in horror. Musashi admonishes him to pick up the bones and rebury them off the beaten path. Reluctantly but obediently, Iori complies.

First, Iori dug a hole. Then he took the arrowheads and old metal fragments he had collected and buried them with the bones. When he had finished he looked up at Musashi. “Will this do?”

“How place some stones on top.... That’s fine. Now it’s a fitting memorial,” said Musashi.

“Master, when was the battle fought here?” asked Iori.

“Have you forgotten? I’m sure you’ve read about it in your studies.”

“I don’t remember.”

“In the Taiheiki there is the tale of two desperate battles fought in a place called Kotesashigahara in 1333 and 1332.
1352. In those battles, the generals of the Nitta family—
Yoshisada, Yoshimune and Yoshioki—led the forces loyal to
the Southern Court against the vast armies of Ashikaga
Takauji. That battleground is right around here."

"So this is where the Battles of Kotesashigahara took
place? In that case, I know the stories well, for you've
gone over them with me many times," replied Iori.

"Well then," began Musashi, preparing to test Iori's
grasp of the material he had studied. "It is written,
'Prince Munenaga was quite surprised when the Emperor
bestowed on him the rank of Shogun-in-Charge-of-Subduing-
Eastern-Provinces [征東將軍], even though he had long lived
in the eastern provinces and concerned himself with military
matters.' Do you remember the poem that Prince Munenaga
composed on that occasion?"

"I do," Iori responded promptly. Then, looking up at
bird gliding through the sapphire sky, he recited the verse.
"'Dared I ever dream / that the bow which as a youth I never
touched / would yet become so familiar in my hands?'"

Musashi smiled. "Very good. And do you remember the
verse which that same prince composed as he rode into battle
at Kotesashigahara on the Plain of Musashi?"

Iori fell silent.
"Have you forgotten?"
"Wait a minute...," Iori began, unwilling to admit
defeat. Then, remembering fragments of the poem, he recited
again, this time filling in the gaps with phrases of his
own. "What need have I for regret / if I have fulfilled my
life in sacrificing it / for our Emperor and for our
Nation?"

"And what does it mean?" inquired Musashi.
"Oh, I know what it means," replied Iori.
"Do you?"
"If a person doesn't understand that poem without
having it explained, then he's not Japanese, even if he is a
warrior."
"That's true. But tell me, Iori," Musashi went on,
"why were you squeamish about handling those dry bones
earlier? You acted as though touching the bones of fallen
warriors would make your hands dirty."
"But Master, do you enjoy handling the bones of the
dead?"

"The bones that lie beneath this old battleground are
the remains of warriors who wept upon hearing Prince
Munenaga's poem, men who died fighting valiantly for Emperor
and Nation, just as that poem describes. Though hidden from
view there beneath the soil, the bones of those noble
warriors are the very foundation upon which rest our
Nation's hopes for peace and prosperity."

"I see what you mean."
"From time to time war erupts in our country, but it
is not any different from the typhoon that blew through the
night before last. War and calamity come and go without bringing dramatic change to our land. And although the warriors and generals of today exercise considerable power, we must never forget the warriors of the past whose bones lie below the surface of this plain, nor the great debt we owe them....

“Master,” said Iori somewhat hesitantly, “if, as you’ve said, the dry bones which lie beneath this field are truly the remains of warriors loyal to the Emperor, it’s proper that we honor them. But if they’re the bones of warriors from Ashikaga Takauji’s army, then they’re not worthy of any memorial. I’d hate to be paying my respects to such traitors....”

Musashi was at a loss for a response.

There is a clear distinction made in this passage between the warriors of the past who have contributed to Japan’s progress and thus deserve glorification, and those who do not. Ironically, the Ashikaga fall into the latter category despite the political and cultural developments Japan experienced under their rule. It is rather the Imperial Loyalists of the fourteenth-century who are celebrated as the foundation of progress, men like Nitta Yoshisada, Prince Munenaga or even Kusunoki Masashige who willingly sacrificed themselves in support of Emperor Godaigo’s ill-fated Kemmu Restoration. Yoshikawa employs the metaphor of the bones of patriots to suggest that Japan’s prospects for peace and prosperity are based on the people’s unfailing devotion to Emperor and Nation, a rhetorical position resonant with the nationalist ideology propagated by the Japanese state during the 1930s. For example, the Ministry of Education’s widely circulated Kokutai no hongi (Fundamentals of national polity, 1937) describes loyalty to the Emperor in terms of “implicit obedience” and “casting ourselves aside and serving the Emperor intently.” Loyalty to the Emperor is defined as “the sole way in which we subjects may live.” Thus, sacrificing

*Miyamoto Musashi*, vol. 5, 177-80.

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one’s life in the service of the Emperor brings fulfillment to the individual subject and enhances the lives of the people of the State."

To be sure, Yoshikawa’s glorification of Nitta Yoshisada and the other Imperial Loyalists was not unprecedented, nor was his vilification of Ashikaga Takauji. As Ivan Morris points out, from the sixteenth-century to 1945 writers and ideologues lionized Yoshisada and Masashige for their pure and unwavering loyalty while at the same time reviling the self-serving treachery of Takauji. And particularly in the context of the ultranationalism of the late 1930s, valorization of Emperor-loyalty “reached new heights.” Yoshikawa does not develop the larger plot through this scene at the Iruma River on Kotesashigahara, with its allusion to the imperialism of the Taiheiki. However, he does use it further define Musashi as the personification of Japanese virtues. Musashi demonstrates his patriotism through his persistent efforts to nurture imperial loyalism in his pupil Iori, for as Iori himself suggests, Emperor-loyalty is a quality necessary to being truly Japanese. In striving to help Iori to achieve a fuller sense of his Japaneseness, or a more complete humanity, Musashi shows his own progress toward human perfection. He concerns himself not only with Iori’s martial training but with his spiritual cultivation as well.

Robert King Hall and John Owen Guantlett, trans., Kokutai no hongi: Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949) excerpted in Sources of Japanese Tradition, 787. More than two million copies of Kokutai no hongi were sold between 1937 and 1945. Ivan Morris suggests that one reason for the wide circulation of the text was that it “gave official sanction to many theories about ‘Japanism’ that until then had been propagated largely by independent nationalist extremists.” Ivan Morris, ed., Japan 1931-1945: Militarism, Fascism, Japanism? (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1963), 46.

Ivan Morris, The Nobility of Failure, 137-42.
This scene, like those involving the villagers at Hôtengahara and the sunrise near the Mitsumine Shrine, illustrates Musashi’s spiritual maturation. No longer concerned with merely gaining fame through defeating renowned swordsmen, Musashi is now committed to helping others. These passages show his growing understanding of a “new ideal of the sword” which he had perceived only faintly earlier in the narrative. “If there truly is a way of the sword, it must lie in the cultivation of a deeper sense of morality, by means of which the swordsman, rather than taking life, is able to help others to live.” In contrast to Sasaki Kojirô—whose sole motivation throughout the novel is to achieve fame and fortune as “the best swordsman of all”—Musashi emerges as a selfless patriot, dedicated to the progress and welfare of his fellow Japanese.

If Musashi could make such a spiritual transformation, certainly others could too. Yoshikawa stresses this point by portraying the progress of other characters influenced by Musashi’s example. For example, Iori becomes the ward of a senior retainer of the Hosokawa clan who is impressed by the boy’s composure. Ensconced in that prestigious house, Iori continues his study and martial training. And Matahachi, when he learns that Akemi has borne his child, finally follows Musashi’s advice and assumes responsibility as the father. Despite having spent much of the novel looking for an easy road to success, Matahachi settles down with Akemi and takes a job as a candy vendor. Reflecting on his past misdeeds, he

*Miyamoto Musashi*, vol. 4, 302. Note that this “new ideal of the sword” is also evocative of the nationalistic, Japanistic rhetoric of *Kokutai no hongi*, which states, “Our martial spirit (shôbu no seishin) does not have for its objective the killing of men, but the giving of life to men.” *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 790.

*Miyamoto Musashi*, vol. 4, 255.
muses, "Even a blockhead like me can change for the better, provided he comes to his senses and works every day to improve." Other characters—Jōtarō, his father, even Matahachi's cantankerous old mother, Osugi—also repent of their mistaken ways and face life with new hope at the close of the novel.

Yoshikawa constructs Miyamoto Musashi in such a way as to inspire readers with confidence in themselves and in their culture. His protagonist, a hero from Japan's past who embodies "traditional" values, nevertheless remains firmly grounded in the present. Many of Musashi's salient characteristics derive from the nationalistic rhetoric of Yoshikawa's contemporary historical moment. "I cherished the desire to create a Musashi who would be in concert with the sentiments of most people today," writes Yoshikawa in 1936. "At the same time, I hoped to revive for the people today...the tenacious spirit, the dreams, even the fervent passion for life which our forefathers possessed in ages past." As Yoshikawa conceives of him, Musashi is an amalgam of old-fashioned perseverance and newly minted nationalism. Combining cultural virtues old and new, Musashi is the perfect hero for popular literature, the "literature of reflection" which inspires readers with "a new and healthy awareness" of what it means to be Japanese.

5.3 Critical and popular reaction to Miyamoto Musashi

From the time it began serialization in the Asahi shinbun in August 1935, Miyamoto Musashi was well received by

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*Miyamoto Musashi*, vol. 6, 381.

*Miyamoto Musashi*, vol. 1, 8-9. This is from the preface to the first book edition published 1936-39.
the public. The novel was acclaimed by its publishers with hyperbole typical of the mass media as "the nation's must-read novel!" (国民必読の書)." Popular reception of the novel was quite favorable and rival publisher Kōdansha quickly bought the rights to publish the novel in book form, issuing the first volume in May 1936, less than one year after serialization began. Initial sales proved disappointing in comparison with the popular reception of the newspaper serial. The first volume sold only 20,000 copies, the second only 15,000 and the third only 8,000. It was not until 1939 that Kōdansha saw the kinds of sales originally anticipated. With the publication of a cheap, paper bound edition, sales soared. The first volume alone sold 100,000 copies in its first printing and another 74,000 copies in its second." The Naturalist writer and literary critic Masamune Hakuchō, who reviewed Miyamoto Musashi for the magazine Chûô kôron in August 1939, reports that he was motivated to read the novel as a result of "recently hearing people everywhere talk about reading Miyamoto Musashi." And it was not just the average man on the street whom he overheard, but "even scholars and intellectuals."

Despite the novel's popular acclaim, there is a dearth of contemporary criticism. The reason for this is suggested in comments Masamune makes in his Chûô kôron review. He writes:

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There are some who will admit sheepishly, “Yes, I read that trash.” But what’s the harm in enjoying an escapist novel? Only an idiot would mindlessly skim through some famous work of Heian court literature when he is bored, sleepy or troubled by a headache, and then grumble that it’s not interesting. If a person finds Miyamoto Musashi or [Shimozawa Kan’s 1932 novel] Kunisada Chûji entertaining, he need not be embarrassed about reading it.

As for me, I haven’t experienced any special pleasure in reading Miyamoto Musashi. (Though I’ve read five of the novel’s six volumes,) I probably could have quit reading after the first volume. And I don’t especially want to read the final volume. Yet, even if a dozen volumes of Miyamoto Musashi were to unexpectedly pile up on my desk, I’d probably read them all in my spare time. My reading habits have become rather lax of late, and I generally content myself in reading whatever is close to hand. However, I don’t recall ever regarding Miyamoto Musashi as a “must-read novel.”

People read Miyamoto Musashi for pleasure or just to idle away the time. The novel was not considered great (or even good) literature by intellectuals or members of the literary establishment. Thus, although they may have enjoyed reading the novel, there were few critics who deemed it worthy of review. The contemptuous tone with which Masamune discusses Miyamoto Musashi only reinforces this point. Anyone who would review the novel favorably would be letting himself in for the scorn of the literary establishment. Indeed, the remainder of Masamune’s critique is also unfavorable.

One aspect of Miyamoto Musashi which Masamune finds most troubling is the deception. The superhuman feats of strength and the cartoonish violence contained in the novel are clearly throwbacks to the fantastic romances of writers like Takizawa Bakin. But it is precisely this violence which appeals to readers. More to the point, it is Musashi’s ability to kill and maim without fear of prosecution which readers enjoy. Clearly such independence of action would not

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100 Masamune Hakuchô, “Miyamoto Musashi dokugokan,” 452.
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be tolerated in the oppressive milieu of 1939 Japan.

Discipline by means of Zen and hardship, but chiefly through martial training, is much to the tastes of the Japanese, and even the intellectuals who read this novel probably regard such self-discipline as more or less virtuous. However, it is not the portrayal of Musashi’s self-discipline which readers find truly interesting. Rather, it is his repeated exhibitions of animal courage and his overpowering of opponents which appeals to them.

People in every age have longed for superhuman strength. As a lad, I too was deeply impressed by the valor of [Takizawa Bakin’s] Eight Dog-warriors and thrilled to the miraculous feats of strength by the heroes of the Water Margin. But I was not moved by the boldness of Miyamoto Musashi in this novel. As I am a modern writer, it may be that a style of writing which is unconcerned about the effects of perpetuating the absurdities of old-style romance lacks the power to attract me into its dream world.

What I find most unappealing is the fact that when Musashi cuts down an opponent, whittling away at him without concern and receiving no punishment from provincial authorities, it evokes an unmistakably pleasant feeling in the reader. Thinking of the compromises of our daily existence as a reflection of the humiliations [of our present moment], any reader, including me, may feel a momentary, demented pleasure in Musashi’s exploits. Musashi thus becomes something of a strange idealist. But for me, it’s all a trick, a fake, made of paper mâché. Accordingly, Musashi’s superhuman strength and martial skill hold no fascination for me.”

The humiliating “compromises of daily existence” under the militarist government were no doubt keenly felt by a liberal-minded writer like Masamune who had been a proponent of press freedoms since the late Meiji era. In order to have anything published in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Masamune had to mute his once vocal opposition to government censorship, a compromise he must have found galling. However, he takes no comforted in seeing Musashi flout authority. Although Musashi kills with impugnity, Masamune

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102 For discussion of Masamune’s response to government censorship, see Jay Rubin, 186-88, and 252-53. For details of Masamune’s limited publishing activities during the war years (that is, 1937-45), see Robert Rolf, Masamune Hakuchô (Boston: Twayne Publishers, a division of G.K.Hall, Co., 1979), 30-32; Jay Rubin, 262.
realizes that the nihilistic violence is a sham, a device intended to placate those like himself who are mortified by the "compromises of daily existence." Thus, in addition to being put off by the conventionality and the lack of realism in *Miyamoto Musashi*, Masamune is offended by the manipulative nature of the work. His critique of the work is insightful and at times scathing.

The popularity of *Miyamoto Musashi* did not wane following the end of the war. In fact, a new edition of the novel published by Rokkyô Shuppansha was one of Japan's top ten best sellers in both 1949 and 1950. Noting the popularity of the Rokkyô Shuppansha edition, as well as the many films and radio broadcasts inspired by Yoshikawa's version of Musashi's life, Kuwabara Takeo's Taishû Bungaku Kenkyû Gurupu (Popular Literature Research Group) selected *Miyamoto Musashi* as the focus of its research between 1949 and 1957. Kuwabara and his group conducted interviews with average readers from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds (farmers, factory workers, geisha, white collar workers) and a variety of age groups (early 20s to mid 50s) in order to

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163 Shiozawa Minobu, 265.
164 The first radio broadcast based on *Miyamoto Musashi* was produced by NHK beginning in August 1939 and was performed by Tokugawa Musei. The first film version of Yoshikawa's Musashi was produced in 1936 and starred Arai Kanjûrô as Musashi. Perhaps the most famous film version is the 1954–56 Tôhô Studios trilogy directed by Inagaki Hiroshi and starring Mifune Toshirô as Musashi. According to Tsuru Yôichi and Ishii Fujiya, all film and print versions of Musashi's life subsequent to Yoshikawa's *Miyamoto Musashi* were more greatly influenced by Yoshikawa's conception of the famous swordsman than by previous popular representations or the historical record of his life. Tsuru Yôichi, "Eizô no naka no Miyamoto Musashi" (Inside the image of Miyamoto Musashi), *Miyamoto Musashi no subete*, 100-22; Ishii Fujiya, "Shôsetsu ni egakareta Musashi" (The Musashi portrayed in novels), *Miyamoto Musashi no subete*, 124-34.
165 Members of the group included Kuwabara, Umesao Tadao, Tsurumi Shunsuke, Higuchi Kin'ichi, Tada Michitarô and Fujoka Yoshinaru. At the time of their study, Tsurumi was affiliated with Doshisha University and Umesao with Osaka City College. All the others were affiliated with Kyoto University.
determine the reason for the novel’s broad appeal in particular, and popular literature in general. They claim their research on Miyamoto Musashi proves “quantifiably” that a significant reason for the popularity of taishū bungaku is the correspondence of popular morality with the ideology contained in popular literature. "The concepts incorporated in Miyamoto Musashi...are fundamental concepts shared by virtually all Japan’s people," writes Kuwabara. "Almost without exception, the people manifest sympathy with the ideals" Yoshikawa incorporated in his novel.107

Despite the enduring popular appeal of Miyamoto Musashi after the war and the interest of scholars like Kuwabara, Tsurumi Shunsuke, and Ozaki Hotsuki in the work, critics during the 1940s and 1950s continued to avoid it. Exploring the causes for the reluctance of professional critics to discuss Yoshikawa’s work, the eminent scholar of Chinese literature and culture, Takeuchi Yoshimi, suggests one reason may be the literary establishment’s persistent disregard for popular literature. Writing in the 1954, Takeuchi argues that the artificial distinction between “pure” literature and “popular” literature maintained by literary critics has precluded analysis of the artistic merits of taishū bungaku, and of Yoshikawa’s novels in particular. Takeuchi takes issue with the “guild” mentality of the literary establishment, a mindset that likens “pure” literature to an artifact produced by a small number of specialized craftsmen for the sole enjoyment of the members of their “guild.” He suggests that professional critics who make their living evaluating “pure” literature are, in effect, sponging off the literary “guild”

106 "Miyamoto Musashi " to Nihonjin, 105.
107 "Miyamoto Musashi " to Nihonjin, 49.
(girudo ni kishoku shite iru). Due to their parasitic relationship with the literary establishment, Takeuchi asserts righteously, these critics are unmotivated, if not altogether unable, to discern the artistic worth of popular literature.\textsuperscript{10}

He suggests that a literary work’s artistic worth should rather be judged according to criterion of the average reader: if a work is appealing, then it has merit. Moreover, he states that a work’s artistic value is inversely proportional to the extent to which it curries favor with readers. According to this reasoning, literature (and criticism) written by members of the literary “guild” merely flatters those within its limited sphere. “Consequently, Japan’s ‘pure’ literature is, generally speaking, more vulgar than even vulgar fiction.”\textsuperscript{100}

After his reductionist denunciation of the literary establishment, Takeuchi turns his attention to Yoshikawa’s literature. Noting that during the war, “popular literature was an important weapon in the arsenal of fascist propaganda,” he acknowledges Yoshikawa’s reputation as “the biggest ideologue of all,” an assessment with which he disagrees, however. To describe Yoshikawa as a fascist ideologue implies that he curried favor with rightists. Takeuchi suggests that the fascist ideology discernible in Yoshikawa’s fiction is an integral part of the man’s art and was not included merely for the sake of flattering ultranationalist government authorities.

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10} Takeuchi Yoshimi, “Yoshikawa Eiji ron” (On Yoshikawa Eiji), \textit{Shisō no kagaku} (Science of ideas) (October 1954), 9.
\item \textsuperscript{100} Takeuchi Yoshimi, 10. The term I have translated as “vulgar fiction” is 通俗小説.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotes}
the war while at the same time submitting to it. By contrast, Yoshikawa contributed to the formation of fascism. His progress as a writer paralleled the development of the fascist movement, and he hit his stride with the success of *Miyamoto Musashi*. An agrarianist base comes through consistently and powerfully in his ideology. However, it is not something he has borrowed from somewhere.... People censure him for his conduct during the war and accuse him of opportunism. But I don’t believe he was an opportunist. Yoshikawa did not curry favor with the rightists. Rather, the rightists knelt at his feet....

For me, the chief attraction of Yoshikawa’s fiction is that it provides an opportunity to observe in the work of one artist the process by which the ideology of Japanese fascism was formed.... His novels are an invaluable resource insofar as they demonstrate convincingly that fascism derives from the self-assertion of the middle-class...."*" Takeuchi claims that the main characters in Yoshikawa’s novels generally come from among “the people” (*shomin*) and rise above the poverty and misery of their circumstances through diligent effort. Although they rebel against “the oppression of authority” as they travel on the path of life, eventually there comes a time when they reach a compromise with authority, and in compromising, they finally submit to authority. According to Takeuchi, this formula occurs regularly in Yoshikawa’s literature and demonstrates his philosophy that true freedom comes only through submission to absolute authority. Within this philosophy lay the seeds of fascism."" Although Takeuchi fails to support his reading of Yoshikawa’s literature with concrete examples, it would not be difficult to do so. Both Shinkurô and Onkata ultimately submit to the authority of feudal morality in *Kennan jonan*, as does *Naruto hichô*’s Otsuna, who is more truly a *shominteki* protagonist. And Matahachi yields to Takuan’s moral authority near the end of *Miyamoto Musashi*.

""Takeuchi Yoshimi, 14-15.

""""Takeuchi Yoshimi, 15.

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Subsequent criticism *Miyamoto Musashi* addresses the question of Yoshikawa’s fascism somewhat differently. In contrast to Takeuchi’s claim that Yoshikawa participated in the development of State ideology in the early Shōwa era, Ozaki Hotsuki suggests that Yoshikawa experienced the “conversion syndrome” (*tenkō genshō*) which plagued virtually all Japanese during the late 1930s. “His tendency to conform to the Establishment, in keeping with the conversion syndrome of the masses, was distinctive in its lack of self-consciousness,” writes Ozaki in 1965. “Up until *Miyamoto Musashi*, Yoshikawa Eiji was a representative player [on the playing field of popular literature] who, through the free and unrestrained power of his imagination, provided readers with dreams of liberation [from the oppression of daily life]. But in his later works, which possess a more didactic quality, traces of his wild imagination disappeared completely.” Despite Takeuchi’s claim that Yoshikawa was not and opportunist, Ozaki presents an image of Yoshikawa who did indeed take advantage of the *Zeitgeist* of the late 1930s, namely, “conversion.” Not only did Yoshikawa artlessly “convert” from escapist novels like *Kennan jonan* to more “didactic” fiction like *Miyamoto Musashi*, he also embraced and propagated fascist ideology.

Matsumura Tomomi echoes Ozaki’s evaluation of *Miyamoto Musashi*, however, he suggests that it is inappropriate to single out Yoshikawa for rebuke as an opportunistic turncoat. The fact is that all popular writers (and many serious writers) experienced the “conversion syndrome.” *Miyamoto Musashi* is merely the clearest example of this phenomenon.

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and coincidentally, the clearest illustration of the tendency of the masses to comply with State ideology. As Matsumura puts it, "Precisely because Yoshikawa was keenly aware of the tendencies of the people, the change [in his approach to popular fiction] must be regarded as most accurately capturing the larger current of the age."¹¹¹

The extent to which Yoshikawa incorporates nationalistic, Japanistic rhetoric in Miyamoto Musashi is indeed unparalleled in his earlier fiction. This marked change implies that the novel does in fact reflect the spirit of the age, since during the 1930s, progressives of every stripe were "converting," i.e., renouncing their liberalism and embracing the "traditional" Japanese values of Emperor-loyalty and stoic self-sacrifice. At the same time, Yoshikawa's conservatism is readily discernible even in his earlier, "wildly imaginative" fiction, as I have demonstrated in my discussion of Kennan Jonan and Naruto hichō. Perhaps, like many Japanese, Yoshikawa had become disillusioned with the perceived inapplicability of Western ideas to the modern Japanese social context. During the Taishō and early Shōwa years, many scholars, intellectuals and activists well-versed in Western thought, including the agrarian nationalist Tachibana Kosaburō (1893-1974), the nationalist scholar Ōkawa Shūmei (1886-1957), the culturalist Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960), and the philosopher Miki Kiyoshi (1897-1945), turned away from the West in favor of Asianist solutions to the

¹¹¹ Matsumura Tomomi, 188.
problems of modernity."

Writers and literary critics, including the members of the Nihon roman-ha (Japan Romantic School), Kobayashi Hideo, and Takeuchi Yoshimi, were also involved in the debate on "overcoming the modern." Donald Keene discusses the work of many early Shôwa writers in terms of their "return to Japan" (Nihon e no kaiki), that is, their turn away from Western artistic principles back to the aesthetics of "traditional" literature. Keene borrows this term from a book by the poet Hagiwara Sakutarô (1886-1942), a member of the Nihon roman-ha who went from writing experimental "new-style verse" (shintaiishi) using modern, colloquial language to employing dense Chinese compounds and classical diction in his poetry. A line from Sakutarô's Nihon e no kaiki demonstrates why the work is an apt metaphor for the spirit of the age. Sakutarô writes: "Having searched all the corners of the world, we have finally found that there is no other true home where we can live than our fatherland, Japan." Perhaps Yoshikawa's assertion that modern Japanese should look to their own past for the solutions to present problems was not simply a

114 Tetsuo Najita and H.D. Harootunian, "Japan's Revolt against the West," in Modern Japanese Thought, 207-47; Farm and Nation in Modern Japan, 234-47. It should be pointed out that Meiji scholars and intellectuals such as Miyake Setsurei (1860-1945) and Okakura Tenshin (1862-1913) also rejected the wholesale adoption of Western culture, symbolized by the Meiji government's bunmei kaika (civilization and enlightenment) policy, in favor of a cultural discourse which embraced Asian art and philosophy.

115 Tetsuo Najita and H.D. Harootunian, 252-72.


populist pose, but his expression of the early Shōwa impulse to "return to Japan." The conservative themes discernible in his *jidai shōsetsu* reflect his consciousness of a general dissatisfaction with Westernism among the masses, a dissatisfaction which paralleled the discontent experienced by the intellectual elite.
EPILOGUE

Although the focus of this study has been *jidai shôsetsu* written between 1913 and 1939, the generic characteristics I discuss are equally discernible in popular historical fiction written in the postwar period. Authors writing *jidai shôsetsu* after the war continue to rely on the same conventional character types and formulaic plots that their predecessors employed, and, of course, they continue to incorporate the two "constant themes of escapist fiction," sex and violence (specifically, swordplay). Postwar writers also take advantage of the innovations of the earlier generation of popular authors, specifically, the nihilistic anti-hero, who by the 1950s has become more of a stock character than an innovation. Despite the recycling of familiar characters and plot conventions, postwar *jidai shôsetsu* also manifest the freshness and contemporaneity evident in popular historical novels from 1913 to 1939. Just as Nakazato Kaizan, Osaragi Jirô and Yoshikawa Eiji project their consciousness of the social and intellectual currents of the Taishô and early Shôwa years in their constructions of Edo era Japan, likewise popular writers in the 1950s, 60s and 70s privilege the past as a text that speaks to the present.

In the years immediately following the end of the Greater East Asian War, popular historical fiction was not published. This was due primarily to the censorship of the Allied forces occupying Japan, who considered the themes of
loyalty, duty and self-sacrifice typically found in *jidai shōsetsu* from the 1930s and early 40s too feudal and militaristic. Thus, depictions of samurai swords and topknots, “the standard iconography of popular history” as Carol Gluck described them, were discouraged by the Occupation. It even banned briefly productions of the perennial kabuki favorite *Kanadehon Chûshingura* because of the feudalism inherent in a tale of forty-seven masterless samurai avenging their lord’s death.1 When popular historical novels began to appear again in the late 1940s, the emphasis on loyalty and self-sacrifice was conspicuously absent. One finds in its place a variety of themes more relevant to existence in postwar Japan, from ruminations on the destructiveness of war and the desirability of peace, to the valorization of pursuing personal gratification. The critic Saitô Takashi, suggests that the pursuit of self-interests, which he refers to as “the affirmation of desire,” (*yokubô no kôtei*) derived from the priority placed on pleasure by Tamura Tajirô in his “literature of the flesh” (*nikutai bungaku*). Saitô also attributes the postwar pursuit of self-interests to the iconoclastic emphasis on getting in touch with one’s natural desires and impulses characteristic of the work of writers from the so-called Libertine School (*Burai-ha*).2 Such affirmation of desire stands in stark contrast to the communalistic stoicism advocated by Yoshikawa Eiji and other wartime historical novelists. It also suggests that the changing themes in postwar *jidai shōsetsu*, rather than merely exhibiting the affects of Occupation censorship, reflect the

1 Carol Gluck, “The Past in the Present,” 69.
2 Saitô Takashi, “Sengo jidai shōsetsu no shisô” (Ideas in postwar popular historical fiction) in *Shisô to kagaku*, no. 67 (October 1976), 11.

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shifting currents of popular thought.

Of the *jidai shôsetsu* which incorporated “pacifist” themes, Yamaoka Sôhachi’s (1907-78) long-running novel *Tokugawa Ieyasu* is one of the most famous. A fictional account of the life of the founder of the Tokugawa Bakufu, *Tokugawa Ieyasu* was serialized simultaneously in three newspapers from 1950 to 1967, a period during which many in Japan feared the outbreak of another devastating war, one between the communist East and the democratic West, with Japan caught in the middle. Alert to this anxiety among the people, Yamaoka responded with a novel in which he likened the situation faced by Tokugawa Ieyasu’s domain of Mikawa to that confronting postwar Japan, since both were sandwiched between two antagonistic powers. “I compared the situation in which Japan found herself after the war to that of Ieyasu’s small and weak domain of Mikawa, which was caught between two superpowers: the House of Imagawa in Suruga and the House of Oda in Owari. I modeled the Oda, the newly risen superpower, on the Soviet Union; the Imagawa, who longed for the refinement of the capital, on America; and the small, weak domain of Mikawa on Japan.”

According to Yamaoka, the parallels between postwar Japan and the late Warring States Period were unmistakable. Although hostilities had ended in 1945, the Cold War convinced Yamaoka, and many of his countrymen, that renewed fighting was a distinct possibility that might well result in

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the destruction of Japan. Yamaoka conceived of Tokugawa Ieyasu as a skilled diplomat who avoided embroiling his domain in the bloodshed of the late sixteenth-century through astute maneuvering and alliance building. Moreover, following his victory at Battle of Sekigahara, Ieyasu laid the groundwork for the "great peace" of the Edo era. Surely Ieyasu was a character whose example might well help Japan negotiate her way to lasting peace, as Yamaoka writes in 1953.

For about a year [after the end of the war], I set aside the pen by which I had made my living, and passed my days gaping at the occupation forces and taking note of their myriad policies and ever changing manners. Mostly I spent my time idly fishing in the bay near Shinagawa. But suddenly one day, an extremely simple, yet brutal, truth dawned on my thought: though the fighting had ended, not the slightest hint of "peace" was apparent anywhere in the land. What we were experiencing was not the end of the war, but merely the horrible interval preceding the next development....

It occurred to me that this interval was no different from the lulls in fighting during the Warring States Period, when the people constantly steeled themselves for the imminent resumption of hostilities, even as they cried themselves hoarse demanding a peace they knew would not come. With this in mind, I reconsidered the civilization that was now governing my country. I looked closely at the phenomena of daily existence under the Occupation. A helpless anxiety began to stir inside me.

I abandoned my fishing pole, returned to my writing desk and confronted the desperation raging within me. The first thing I wrote was a short piece entitled Atom Bomb. Right after that, I began preparations for Tokugawa Ieyasu. I chose Tokugawa Ieyasu not out of a desire to research one man's life. Rather, I wanted to find out how Ieyasu had managed, in the midst of the political currents swirling around him, to put a stop to the warfare that had ravaged the country since the Onin War. I hoped my readers would contemplate this, as well....

Is peace, which all people on this planet continually seek, in the end really possible? And supposing that it is possible, what are the conditions under which it may be achieved? More importantly, to what extent is it possible to identify that which inhibits peace, and having identified it, to then expel it from human society? These are the
questions I wanted to explore.

If the potential for enduring peace was an issue that weighed on the minds of many war-weary Japanese, others reveled in the relative freedom of expression of the postwar and concerned themselves with eliminating vestiges of the morality propagated during the 1930s and early 1940s, with its use of tradition to emphasize loyalty, communalism and self-sacrifice. Writers, including Sakaguchi Ango, Oda Sakunosuke, Dazai Osamu and Ishikawa Jun, gained fame in the immediate postwar years for boldly challenging traditional social and artistic conventions. The critic Saitô Takashi suggests that the iconoclasm of these Burai-ha writers, as well as that of Tamura Tajirô's "literature of the flesh," eventually influenced even jidai shôsetsu, the stronghold of conservative values, and that as early as 1947, there are indications that "the affirmation of personal desire has begun to develop as a positive value" even in popular historical fiction. One example is Murakami Genzô's (b.1910) 1949 novel Sasaki Kojirô, which takes as its protagonist the master swordsman best known as Miyamoto Musashi’s rival. Murakami’s Kojirô bears some physical resemblance to Yoshikawa’s conception: he is a handsome youth who wears bright clothing and has not yet shaved his forelocks. However, Murakami’s Kojirô is compassionate where Yoshikawa’s is sadistic. Kojirô’s good looks and his tender heart attract the attention of the novel’s three heroines and in the course of the narrative, he makes love to each of them. Thus, in

5Yamaoka Sôhachi, Tokugawa leyasu, 38th edition (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1983), 438-40. This essay was first published as Yamaoka’s afterword to the first volume of the1953 edition of Tokugawa leyasu. As Yamaoka suggests in the essay, although he earned a living as a professional writer since 1934, from August 1945 and October 1946, he published nothing. The short story he mentions, Atom Bomb (Genshi bakudan) was published in 1947. See Shôwa kokumin bungaku zenshû, vol. 14, Yamaoka Sôhachi shû, 490-91.
contrast to stoic master swordsmen such as Osaragi’s Kurama Tengu or Yoshikawa’s Miyamoto Musashi who repress their sensuality, Murakami’s Kojirō enjoys a vigorous sexuality, and freely indulges his desires. Moreover, this sexual indulgence is not portrayed as a weakness, but a natural, even positive, character trait.*

Despite these glimpses of the affirmation of desire in Murakami’s Sasaki Kojirō, Saitō Takashi suggests that Gomi Yasusuke’s (a.k.a. Kōsuke, 1921-80) debut novel Sōshin (Stupor, 1952) is the first jidai shōsetsu to clearly articulate the postwar affirmation of self-interest. The novel created a stir among popular readers for its overturning of the conventional morality characteristic of jidai shōsetsu during the 1930s and 40s. It also gained recognition within the literary establishment, even garnering the Akutagawa Prize in 1952, an unprecedented distinction for a work of popular historical fiction. Gomi’s affirmation of the pursuit and fulfillment of desire is apparent in the following passage in which the novel’s protagonist, the mysterious master swordsman Sewana Gen’unsai discusses his musō ken (dream sword) fencing technique with a prospective disciple.

In order to master the “dream sword” technique, you must first abandon all commonly held notions about training and self-discipline. You cannot master the secrets of the “dream sword” through careful attention to the usual methods of swordsmanship. On the contrary, the vital thing is to get back to the basic instincts inherent in all human beings.

Thus, whenever you eat, demand good food; if you find

* Yoshikawa, in particular, associates sexual indulgence with weakness. In Kennen jōnan, Shinkurō’s profligate behavior is chastised by several upright samurai. And in Miyamoto Musashi, Matahachi is denigrated for consorting with the dokutō Okō. The recognition of his own lack of moral rectitude is a source of shame and self-loathing. Like Kojirō, Matahachi is the perfect foil for the upright Musashi.

^ Terada Hiroshi, Chanbara kaisō, 186. See also Saitō Takashi, 11-12. Sōshin was vigorously endorsed for the Akutagawa Prize by none other than Sakaguchi Ango.
something disagreeable, express your displeasure openly; and from time to time, indulge the flesh. Do this, and never inhibit the exercise of your instincts.'

Gen'unsai makes no attempt to hide his disdain for "the usual methods of swordsmanship," and for the suffocating morality which prevents men from following their basic instincts, including the innate desire to survive. For him, notions of bravery and honor are meaningless when one is dead. "When I was young and foolish, I too, like everyone else, considered cowardice shameful," admits Gen'unsai. "But one day I saw a fellow instinctively shut his eyes when a small stone flew into his face, and in that moment, it dawned on me quite clearly: this is the true way."' Subsequently Gen'unsai strove to cultivate his instincts to their fullest, and in the process developed his "dream sword" technique. Whenever he draws his sword, he is able to stop thinking and to yield entirely to his unconscious will to survive. Thus, Gen'unsai has abandoned the feudal ethos regarding a samurai's conduct and lives by his own life-affirming principle.

Another jidai shôsetsu hero to negate conventional ethics is Shibata Renzaburō's (1917-78) Nemuri Kyōshirō, a nihilistic anti-hero in the tradition of Nakazato Kaizan's Tsukue Ryūnosuke. However, Kyōshirō's rejection of the mores governing a samurai's conduct far exceeds Ryūnosuke's. Although Ryūnosuke feels no compunction about murder or rape, he still has great respect for the sword. Kyōshirō, on the other hand, regards his sword as simply an implement for wreaking destruction, as Shibata Renzaburō explained in 1964.

6 Terada Hiroshi, 186.
If [Kyôshirô] is a nihilist, this does not necessarily mean that he is a samurai wholly devoted to his sword. For him the sword is not “the warrior’s soul,” but merely a weapon, a tool for committing violence, and he uses it however he pleases. He feels no qualms about using his sword to strip off a woman’s clothes, to cut down a stray dog, or even to poke a piece of shit. Nemuri Kyôshirô has trained with and uses his sword in a manner completely contrary to the pattern typical of the ardent, truth-seeking samurai common in jidai shôsetsu.”

We are told that Kyôshirô’s nihilism derives from the ignoble nature of his birth: he is the bastard son of a daiyô’s daughter who was raped by a Dutch missionary. Having been brutally tortured by the daiyô into renouncing his Christianity, this “fallen” missionary rapes the daiyô’s daughter in retaliation, and Kyôshirô is the offspring of this unholy union. Shibata explains that his inspiration for this scenario came from social conditions both before and after the war. He likens the torture of Christians during the Edo era to the persecution of “the reds” in the late 1920s and 1930s. The humiliation of Kyôshirô’s parentage was suggested to him by the proliferation of mixed race children during the American occupation. Like his predecessors before and during the war, Shibata, too, tried to incorporate contemporary issues in his jidai shôsetsu. But rather than selecting themes which inspired his readers, he presents those which evoke feelings of shame. Indeed, Shibata states that Kyôshirô’s nihilism “was born of the spirit of self-torment that modern people possess.”¹¹ While Shibata does not say as much, the themes he incorporates in his Nemuri


¹¹ “Nemuri Kyôshirô no tanjô,” as cited in Taishû bungaku jiten, 545 and Yamazaki Kazuhide, “Shibata Renzaburô,” Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshô, vol. 44, no. 3 (March 1979), 85. The term I have translated as “self-torment” is 自虐.
Kyôshirô novels suggest that, like Yoshikawa Eiji, he, too, regards jidai shôsetsu as a “literature of reflection” (hansei no bungaku). The difference is that Shibata’s fiction encourages critical introspection rather than nostalgic retrospection.

Certainly the postwar was a time for self-reflection and questioning. As Shibata’s comments imply, some writers, intellectuals and average citizens may have regretted their docility during the years leading up to total war, when the “conversion syndrome” that Matsumura Tomomi discusses, coupled with the force of the Home Ministry’s “thought police” (tokubetsu kôtô keisatsu), effectively stilled the voice of opposition. Others may have found the arrogance of the occupying forces humiliating and lamented the measures to which a number of Japanese resorted (including prostitution) just to survive. But by 1956, when the first Nemuri Kyôshirô novel was published, the vestiges of defeat from the immediate postwar were largely disappearing: the Occupation ended in 1952; the rebuilding of urban and industrial centers was well under way; and the economy was robust, so much so that in 1956 the political scientists and literary critics were declaring that the postwar was over. Saitô Takashi suggests that Japan’s booming economy of 1956—a harbinger of the “high growth” decade of the 1960s—made it possible for “the masses to finally acknowledge ‘personal’ desire.” He interprets Nemuri Kyôshirô’s manifestation of “self-torment” as a reflection of the anguish and guilt of the masses in the 1950s as they tried to reconcile society’s new affirmation of

the private to the civic-minded communalism which had become deeply engrained in popular consciousness during the war years. Many still considered the pursuit of personal gratification a dubious, somehow selfish business, and tormented themselves even as they embarked on their new private lives.13

The economic boom of the "high growth" 1960s was attended by what Carol Gluck calls the "optimism boom," best represented in the jidai shōsetsu of Shiba Ryōtarō (1923-96), "the popular avatar of the emerging middle-class myth."14 The "middle-class myth" was promoted by the government and mass culture during the period of high economic growth as evidence that Japan had achieved full recovery from the war and was now a thoroughly modern nation in which all citizens enjoyed similar levels of economic and social well being. The hero of Shiba’s Ryōma ga yuku (Ryōma shall go, 1962-66), the Imperial Loyalist from Tosa Sakamoto Ryōma, reflects this middle-class consciousness. Although the historical Ryōma (1835-67) grew up in the hierarchical society of the late Edo, Shiba’s Ryōma manifests a bourgeois, "anti-class perspective on history."15 At one point he muses, "Am I a samurai or a townsman? Such distinctions are but the borrowed clothing of this lifetime. What matters is me, the genuine article, one man only, Sakamoto Ryōma."16

With the advent of Shiba’s Ryōma, the affirmation of personal fulfillment moves out of the shadows of the war and

14 Carol Gluck, "The Past in the Present," 75.
15 Saitō Takashi, 13.

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defeat and into the sunlight of prosperity and progress. Shiba’s Ryōma views Japan not in terms of a loose confederation of feudal domains, but as a nation of the world. Such an cosmopolitan conception of Japan is historically inaccurate, but it reflects Shiba’s awareness of the popular notion during the late 1950s and 1960s of Japan as an international nation. During this period, Japan was admitted to the United Nations (1956), and the city of Tokyo hosted of the Summer Olympics (1964). A prominent character in the novel who reinforces the theme of progress is the “clear-sighted” Bakufu official Katsu Kaishū. Aware of the inevitability of the Bakufu’s collapse, Katsu works with Ryōma and the other Imperial Loyalists, negotiating a smooth and peaceful transition to Imperial rule. If Ryōma is a visionary who conceives of what Japan can be, Katsu is a technocrat who makes that vision a reality. Katsu is featured in a subsequent Shiba novel titled Kashin (God of flowers, 1972) together with another government functionary, Ômura Masujirō (1824-69). Both men serve in the bureaucracy during the transitionary period from Bakufu hegemony to Imperial restoration. The shift from revolutionary heroes like Sakamoto Ryōma and Saigō Takamori to administrative heroes like Katsu Kaishū and Ômura Masujirō is a reflection of the transition in the 1970s from the high growth economy created by individualistic entrepreneurs to an increasingly conservative, administration-oriented society in which an entrenched and powerful bureaucracy directed national policy.

We see then a subtle shift in Shiba’s historical fiction away from the affirmation of the private back to a conservative affirmation of the civic, a shift reflecting the
rise of neo-conservatism taking place in Japanese society during the 1970s. This mirroring of the growing conservatism of the times is indicative of the reflexive nature of *jidai shōsetsu*. The cycles and trends of popular thought are reflected in the myriad "booms" of popular literature. Moreover, the variety of popular tastes are mirrored in the assorted themes in *jidai shōsetsu*. When Gomi Yasusuke's *Sōshin* and Shibata Renzaburō's *Nemuri Kyōshirō* novels were creating a stir, Yamaoka Sōhachi continued to serialize *Tokugawa Ieyasu*. In fact, Yamaoka was still serializing *Tokugawa Ieyasu* when Shiba Ryōtarō had already completed *Ryōma ga yuku*. Similarly, Nakazato Kaizan was still producing installments of his novel *Daibosatsu tōge* when Yoshikawa Eiji had already finished *Miyamoto Musashi*.

One reason for the durability of *Daibosatsu tōge* and *Tokugawa Ieyasu* is the ability of Nakazato and Yamaoka to adapt their narratives to the prevailing tastes of their readership. While some readers at times crave nihilistic violence, others at times want depictions of androgyny or sadistic eroticism, and still others at times prefer the affirmation of self-interest. The themes of *jidai shōsetsu* are as diverse and changeable as the mass readership. Often it is the themes that defy conventional morality which are most acclaimed. Generally speaking, however, even the popular historical novels that flout traditional mores reaffirm the established social order in the end. Because popular historical novels are disseminated through the mass media, authors working in the genre of *jidai shōsetsu* tend to yield to the hegemony of the commercial publishing industry. In the final analysis, *jidai shōsetsu* is basically a conservative
genre. However, that fact does not preclude the possibility
of a popular historical novelist incorporating themes which
challenge conventional values, provided he is confident that
his readers will be receptive. The masses in the present are
his guide to portraying the historical past.
These the fields of my birthplace that I leave today, 
abandoning my hoe. 
This my aged mother who, leaning against the bamboo fence, 
sees me off... 
her hair white, her sorrows extended, her eyes dim and 
filled with tears. 
My toddler tugs fondly at my sleeve. 
Naive, he’s unaware that his father travels to the world beyond. 
How that breaks my heart! 
Because it’s all for country, and for Emperor.

Farewell to the fields I hoed. 
Farewell to the stream where I washed my spade. 
Neighbors now seeing me off, 
I beg you, stop for a moment your cries of “Banzai!”
Those grotesque shouts defile 
these peaceful mountains and pure rivers. 
With shouts of “long life” you see a man off to his death. 
Whence my bitterness? 
It’s because it’s all for country, and for Emperor.

Thousands of miles over foamy seas. 
To the east, I reflect on my birthplace and 
resentment rends my heart. 
To the west, if I look at my future I see only 
heaps of summer clouds. 
Shall I weep? Shall I laugh? Shall I scream? 
I pound the ship’s rail, gazing through the night at the moon 
--yes, I’m terrified, 
but I’m not thinking of those heroes of old 
who shouted verse with weapons at the ready. 
I’m thinking rather of mother, wife and son with 
no one to support them, 
of my half-acre of farmland with no one to cultivate it, 
of my native village...my tears fall like rain. 
Why do I weep? 
It’s because it’s all for country, and for Emperor.
The setting sun aslant on the desolate twilight plain, 
look! the fallen strung out as far as the eye can see. 
Bathed in the setting sun, their coloration depresses. 
Look! Blood shed by those butchered young men 
stitches gloom over summer grasses. 
Whether friend or foe, he and I are human beings. 
What authority forces one man to kill another?
What obligation dictates that one man murder another?
Ah, don’t tell me!
It’s all for country, and for Emperor.
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