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In A Perfect World: Utopias In Modern Japanese Literature

by

William James Burton

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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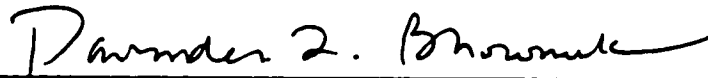
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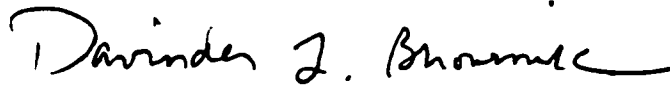
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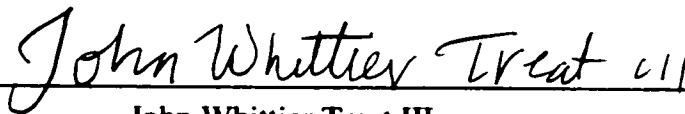


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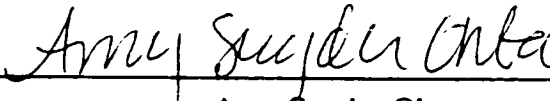
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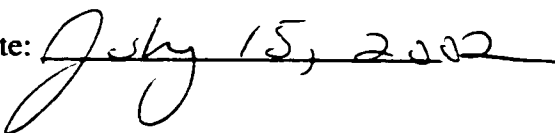


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Abstract

In A Perfect World: Utopias in Modern Japanese Fiction

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This dissertation analyzes works of Japanese fiction from roughly the 1750s to the 1920s that use the image of a fantastic locale or society to comment upon contemporary politics and social issues. Such utopian works reveal much about Japan's developing modernity, including changing conceptions of class and gender-roles in an emerging mass society. They also suggest points of continuity between Edo (1603-1868), Meiji (1868-1912) and Taishō (1912-1925) era popular literature that have hitherto been neglected.

Despite the fact that in various literary traditions writers have used the trope of a fantastic locale or society to address topical events and politics, surprisingly little has been written on the topic of utopias in East Asian literatures. My dissertation thus begins with conceptions developed in studies largely of Western utopian fiction. This is appropriate, however, given that there are in fact important historical connections

between the Japanese and Western traditions of utopian fiction. Due in part to a popular interest in circumstances in foreign and exotic lands, Western works depicting utopian locales were among the first Western literary texts translated into Japanese in the late Edo and early Meiji periods — works such as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, More's *Utopia*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and Jules Verne's *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours*. The influence of such quintessential Western utopian works can be seen in many Meiji era "records of the future" (*miraiki*) and political novels based on the idea of a perfect republic or commonwealth.

Taking a longer view of the phenomenon of utopian writings in Japan, I propose in this dissertation that such works were assimilated into a pre-existing native tradition of travel narratives depicting visits to similarly fantastic locales. I first consider several Edo period fantastic travel narratives, written by writers of popular fiction such as Hiraga Gennai (1728-1779), Yūkokushi (pseud., fl. late 18th c.), and Takizawa Bakin (1767-1848), which served as models for later Japanese utopian works. In later chapters, I discuss the continued influence of both Asian and Western traditions of utopian fiction among such mid and late-Meiji writers as Hattori Bushō (1842-1908), Yano Ryūkei (1850-1931), Uchida Roan (1868-1929), and Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916).

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Chapter One: Introduction

In this introductory chapter, I define the term “utopian fiction” as used in this study and discuss several pre-modern examples of this genre. From one commonly accepted etymology of the term *utopia* as a combination of the Greek words *eu*, or “good,” and *topia*, “place,” one might imagine that any work that depicts an idyllic locale would qualify as utopian fiction. Critical studies of utopian fiction however often present their own more elaborate definitions. Specialists of utopian fiction commonly base their definitions on attributes of utopian locales or societies as found in a few select works, such as Plato’s *Republic* or Thomas More’s *Utopia*, both of which are commonly considered archetypes for this mode.

Due to a strong belief in the influence of classical Greek and European Renaissance models on utopian fiction, many critics claim even that this form of writing is largely a Western innovation. In *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*, for instance, Krishan Kumar writes explicitly that “Utopia is *not* universal. It appears only in societies with the classical and Christian heritage, that is, only in the West.”¹ In contrast to this common notion that utopian fiction in pre-modern times could be found only in areas with the “classical (read, ‘Greek’ classical) and Christian heritage,” in early

¹ Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 19.

chapters of this study I considers ways in which Japanese writers, beginning in the Edo period, used Buddhist or Taoist visions of paradise to create their own more secular utopian visions. In the past, scholars have largely neglected this question, as they have that of utopian writings in Asia in general.

As do many other scholars of this genre, Kumar stresses the importance to utopian fiction of Christian and Greek archetypes. A presumed scarcity of utopias in other traditions, he writes, “must almost certainly have something to do with the nature of Christianity as a religion, and its unique blending of a terrestrial and non-terrestrial, supramundane, paradise, ‘a heaven and a new earth.’”² This explanation does not demonstrate why a Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian or other tradition could not produce their own forms of utopian fiction. In the second chapter of this study, I examine numbers of Edo period works in which the author adopts Buddhist or Taoist visions of paradise, often combined with elements of Confucian social thought, to create their own utopian fictions addressing various aspects of contemporary politics and society.

Whereas Kumar leans toward Christian origins in his history of utopian fiction, other studies stress the importance of Hellenistic thought and archetypes such as Plato’s *Republic*. One often finds an emphasis on Western classical and neo-classical models in studies even of utopian fiction as found in Japan. In *Yūtopiagaku kotohajime* (An

² Ibid., 428, note 29.

Introduction to the Study of Utopias), Takayanagi Shun'ichi writes that one may trace the history of all utopian fiction to Thomas More's *Utopia*, the work from which this genre takes its English name.³ In a quite rigid view of literary influence, Takayanagi claims that true utopian fiction appears in Japan only after the translation beginning in the 1880s of More's *Utopia* as well as Western political works such as Rousseau's *Du contract social* or Mill's *On Liberty*.⁴ Given this latter emphasis, it is clear that Takayanagi, like many others, rather narrowly conceives utopian fiction as the representation of a model *political* state and as the reflection of certain Western liberal ideals.

Takayanagi clearly regards utopian fiction as a mode closely tied to the Western political ideals of a perfect commonwealth or republic. This emphasis on Western models unduly restricts the range of the otherwise universal genre of utopian fiction. The common reference by scholars to Plato's *Republic*, More's *Utopia*, Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, James Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, and other Western political works, as archetypes for utopian fiction misleadingly suggests that the republic or the commonwealth are the only possible utopian models. In this study, I consider the influence also of Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist thought, and satirical reactions to the same, in the creation of various examples of Edo and Meiji period utopian fiction.

³ Takayanagi Shun'ichi, *Yūtopiagaku kotohajime* (An Introduction to the Study of Utopias) (Tokyo: Fukutake shoten, 1983), 244.

⁴ Ibid.

In his preface to an anthology of essays on Middle Eastern and Eastern utopias, tellingly titled *Aware of Utopia*, David Plath addresses the assumption that utopianism originated in the West and was only known belatedly to non-Western thinkers and writers. He poses the rhetorical question “Is this kind of yearning and striving for an ‘ideal place’ a habit peculiar to the West?”⁵ One would think the obvious answer to be “certainly not!” Yet, Plath notes, many critics base their conceptions of utopian fiction almost exclusively on More’s *Utopia*. By this more formal definition, he writes, the utopia “is a sketch of a harmonious society, outside the known world but peopled with real and ordinary (albeit much improved) humans, as reported to us by travelers or native informants.”⁶ This in fact rather obvious and simple plot device, as the following chapters will illustrate, is not unique to *Utopia* and other Western works but exists in Japanese fiction of various periods.

Seiji Nuita, in the essay “Traditional Utopias in Japan and The West: A Study in Contrasts,” collected in *Aware of Utopia*, lists numerous Japanese works which fulfill the above criteria.⁷ Many of these narratives tell of a traveler’s discovery of a fantastic land in which the customs or institutions of contemporary society are altered or reversed. Edo

⁵ David W. Plath, editor, *Aware of Utopia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), xi.

⁶ *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

⁷ Seiji Nuita, “Traditional Utopias in Japan and the West: A Study in Contrasts,” in *Aware of Utopia*, edited by David W. Plath, 12-32 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 31.

period examples of this familiar conceit include Hiraga Gennai's *Fūryū Shidōken den* (The Romantic Life of Shidōken, 1763)⁸ and Yūkokushi's *Ikoku kidan; wasōbyōe* (*Strange Tales of Foreign Lands; Or, Hyōei, The Japanese Chuang Tzu*, 1774).⁹ Over the next several chapters, I will discuss these and other Edo period examples as part of an examination of the pre-modern origins of utopian fiction in Japan.

As noted, formal conceptions of utopian fiction are often far more involved than the common conception of the utopia — that is, an idealized society or locale — might lead one to suppose. In many instances, scholars insist upon political philosophy, an enumeration of laws, and description of social institutions. In an essay on English utopian literature, for instance, Keith Thomas writes that in fiction the utopia is typically:

...portrayed as actually in existence, usually in some remote location. Its workings are evoked in detail, with special attention to the political structure, the laws and religion, the system of education, the economy and the working habits and living conditions of the population."¹⁰

⁸ Hiraga Gennai, *Fūryū Shidōken den* (The Romantic Life of Shidōken), in *Fūrai Sanjin shū*, edited by Nakamura Yukihiro, 153-224 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1961). This work has been translated into French by Hubert Maës under the title *Histoire galante de Shidōken* (Paris: L'Asiathèque, 1979). As above, in first reference to Japanese works, only titles of *published* English translations will be given in italics. In subsequent reference, all titles, whether published or otherwise, will be given in italics.

⁹ Yūkokushi, *Ikoku kidan; wasōbyōe* (*Strange Tales of Foreign Lands; Or, Hyōei, The Japanese Chuang Tzu*), in *Kokkeibon shū*, edited by Takada Mamoru, Hara Michio and Oka Masahiko, 5-51 (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1990). For a translation of the sections on "The Land of Perennial Life" and "The Land of the Giants," see B.H. Chamberlain, "Wasōbyōe, the Japanese Gulliver," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, first series, Vol. 6, Pt. 4 (1879), 287-313.

¹⁰ Keith Thomas, "The Utopian Impulse in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Between Dream and Nature: Essays on Utopia and Dystopia*, edited by Dominic Baker-Smith (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 23.

As in this description, specialists often emphasize selected administrative or legal elements of the fictional utopian society. Kumar distinguishes between ancient utopias, which he says are “socially hierarchical, economically undeveloped and static,” and the “modern utopia,” the latter reportedly being “egalitarian, affluent and dynamic.”¹¹

Many might dispute Kumar’s description of the modern utopia as essentially “egalitarian.” Other scholars, however, often similarly focus upon rather exceptional examples in their own definitions of “true” utopian fiction. In focusing strictly on legal or administrative versions of the utopia, many treat this genre in essence as a blueprint for an ideal political state, thereby ignoring countless works of utopian fiction by less rigid definition. As opposed to insisting upon the delineation of institutions and political philosophy, I will later consider examples of utopian fiction that are more “modern” than their predecessors in the sense that they concern themselves with such modern issues as rapid industrialization, the mechanization of culture and daily life, and the role of the individual or the respective genders in a mass society.

Studies of utopian fiction often overlook the fact that myths or tales simply of an ideal *place* are also commonly thought of as utopias. Although in this work I am interested more narrowly in visions of an ideal *society*, as opposed to a particularly idyllic place, I recognize the role of the latter in various types of utopian works.

¹¹ Kumar, 32.

In *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, Frank Manuel and Fritzie Manuel

make some effort to correct the critical view of the mere idyllic locale as a secondary type of utopian fiction, noting the origins of utopian fiction in universal types of myth and fable. “Anthropologists,” the Manuels write, “tell us that blessed isles and paradises are part of the dream-world of savages everywhere.”¹² Although phrased unflatteringly, this statement allows a place at least within the genre of utopian fiction for the idyllic visions presumably found in any tradition. In their studies of pre-modern fantastic literature, Sunaga Asahiko and Takada Mamoru have detailed the abundance of fantastic locales found in Edo period literature in particular. One might regard many of these to be utopias in the everyday sense of a land of bliss, free from strife and everyday cares.¹³ In many instances, one can trace the origins of such visions to Taoist and Buddhist myths of paradise or of a secluded land of peace and tranquility.

Despite their nominal recognition of the origins of utopian visions in myth and folklore, the Manuels, contradictorily, later question whether one can indeed find “true” utopias outside of the Western tradition. They write, with Orientalist flair,

¹² Frank Manuel and Fritzie Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1979), 1.

¹³ See Sunaga Asahiko, *Nihon gensō bungakushi* (A History of Japanese Fantastic Literature) (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 1993); Takada Mamoru, *Edo gensō bungakushi* (A History of Edo Fantastic Literature) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1987).

There are treatises on ideal states and stories about imaginary havens of delight among the Chinese, the Japanese, the Hindus and the Arabs, but the profusion of Western utopias has not been equaled in any other culture. Perhaps the Chinese have been too worldly and practical, the Hindus too transcendental to recognize a tension between the Two Kingdoms and to resolve it in that myth of a heaven on earth which lies at the heart of utopian fantasy.¹⁴

The authors in this and other passages propose that Middle Eastern or Eastern traditions, although possessing fantastic stories of earthly paradises and such, lack works with the right mixture of the worldly (i.e., the political) and the fantastic that makes up “true” utopian fiction. A similar Western bias emerges in numbers of works on utopian fiction, often tied to the idea that such works can only be produced in the liberal political atmosphere of ancient Greece or the European Renaissance.

Those who claim that utopianism is strictly a Western innovation fail to appreciate the utopian elements of such influential Eastern schools of thought and religion as Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Despite his claims for the singularity of the Christian utopian tradition, even Kumar notes this influence. Yet, he rejects the suggestion that such systems of thought produced a sustained tradition of utopian fiction:

The claim has been made that China has an authentic utopian tradition. Particular emphasis is put on the Confucian concept of *ta-t'ung*, a Golden Age of “Great Unity” or “Great Togetherness”; the Taoist concept of *t'ai-p'ing*, the “Great Harmony” ... the important thing, surely, is that none of these “utopian” elements cohered into a true utopia as they did in the West.¹⁵

¹⁴ Manuels, 1.

¹⁵ Kumar, 428, note 29.

In speaking of China's failure to produce a "true utopia," it is unclear whether Kumar refers to a presumed lack of utopian literature or to a societal system he feels lacks utopian attributes. In either case, China, whether in the Confucian past or Communist present, has both produced and, most would agree, been greatly shaped by utopian thought. By way of China, the prestige of Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist ideals extends in traditional times to Japan where it elicited numerous utopian works.

I believe that religious-inspired myths of an otherworldly paradise are no less worthy of being called utopian fiction than more overtly secular visions of an ideal society or political state. As one objective of this work, nevertheless, I wish to take up the question of whether traditional writers in Japan did in fact produce utopian fictions intended as models or commentary upon contemporary society and politics. As in the various uses of the Eden myth in traditional Western utopian fiction, Edo period writers often use Buddhist or Taoist inspired visions of a fantastic paradise to accentuate the shortcomings of their own society. In the ensuing chapter, I will discuss in detail three examples of such works, namely, Andō Shōeki's *Tales of the World of Law*, Gennai's *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, and Yūkokushi's *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands*.

As I have pointed out, Kumar, the Manuels and other scholars of Western utopian fiction often claim a strong connection between elements of utopian thought and

supposed Greek classical or Judeo-Christian origins. The Manuels, for instance, underlining the dual mundane and fantastic qualities of the utopian vision, write that “utopia is a hybrid plant, born of the crossing of a paradisiacal, otherworldly belief of Judeo-Christian religion with the Hellenic myth of an ideal city on earth.”¹⁶

In studies of utopian fiction, works lacking this proper mix of the worldly and the fantastic are often referred to as *mere* “Shangri-Las,” a term taken originally from the invented Tibetan city of James Hilton’s *Lost Horizons* (1933). Such references reinforce the notion that true utopian fiction — that is, utopian fiction concerned with the contemporary world — can only be found in the West. As Robert Bishop discusses in *The Myth of Shangri-La: Tibet, Travel Writing, and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape*, however, the Shangri-La myth of an exotic Eastern city free from worldly cares and political strife itself is nothing other than a Western utopian fantasy.

The utopia (u-topia, or non-place) of Shangri-La was an ideal fantasy world at a time when geographical mystery had not yet totally vanished from the surface of the earth. Located, if not literally anchored, in geography and history, it stood midway between the Victorian quest for the Holy City and the mid-twentieth-century concern with metaphysical and psychological systems.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., 15.

¹⁷ Peter Bishop, *The Myth of Shangri-La: Tibet, Travel Writing and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 217. In contrast to the more common interpretation of the etymology of the word as consisting of the elements “good” and “place,” Bishop sees the initial “u” of this word as signifying a “lack of” or “non-,” giving a meaning “non-place” for this term.

The conception of Eastern landscape and philosophy as inherently “mystical” of course is not restricted to the region of Tibet. As Edward Said demonstrates, a similar process of dehistoricization takes place in various discourses concerning Eastern and Middle Eastern countries. It is such Orientalist conceptions, ironically, that prompt some commentators to dismiss Eastern utopias out of hand as not being sufficiently grounded in historical or political realities.

As another example of a denial of political concerns in Eastern utopias, Nuita stresses the essentially “natural” qualities of the traditional Japanese utopia. In contrast to Western utopian works, which he writes always represent “an obvious confrontation between man and nature,” Nuita writes that “it is not until the eighteenth century that we find in Japanese thinking an awareness of opposition between man and nature.”¹⁸ In such assertions, Nuita, no less than Kumar and others, relies upon broad cultural assumptions to prove the singularity of his own culture’s tradition of utopian writing.

Although Nuita recognizes an indigenous tradition of utopian fiction in Japan, he questions ultimately whether Japanese examples possess the explicit social vision usually considered a basic feature of utopian fiction. He states that “traditional Japanese utopias

¹⁸ Nuita, 18. Many scholars similarly regard Edo period popular fiction, or *gesaku* (of which *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* is an early example), on the whole as a light satirical genre with little connection to contemporary politics or relevant social issues. I will address this assumption later in this chapter in a discussion of *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* and *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands*.

therefore do not fit the Western model but remain instead at the stage of satire.”¹⁹ In terms of his proposed stages in the development of utopian writing in Japan, Naita writes that Gennai’s *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, for example, “is satire and pre-utopian.”²⁰ In calling such works “pre-utopian,” the implication is that they do not espouse a new vision of society and therefore fall short of the utopian model.

Naita’s distinction between utopian fiction and satire notwithstanding, many famous Western utopian works are in fact satires. Both *Gulliver’s Travels* and *Candide*, for instance, are considered works of utopian fiction because they satirize contemporary society and the excesses of existing utopian schemes, and not for any new model of society they propose in their own right. Such works, and especially later examples like *Brave New World*, are often termed “anti-utopias” or “dystopias.” The term “dystopia” is somewhat redundant for the utopian impulse itself tends towards satire and criticism: it does serve a purpose however in describing those utopian works conceived as critiques of earlier utopian models. For instance, *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, which has been compared with the utopian work *Gulliver’s Travels*, also serves as a *dystopian* reply to Confucian works that contributed to *utopian* state ideology.

¹⁹ Ibid., 24

²⁰ Ibid.

Of course, other Edo period utopian thinkers whole-heartedly endorsed Confucian social ideals. Edo period religious and social thinkers were drawn in particular to the Neo-Confucianism of the Chu Hsi (1130-1200) school and intensely debated its merits. In chapter four of this dissertation, I consider the significance of Takizawa Bakin's *Musōbyōe kochō monogatari* (The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly, 1810) as a utopian work that more heartily endorses Confucian social ideals.²¹

To briefly summarize, in this study I hope to correct the notion that utopian fiction is strictly a Western phenomenon. In the simplest of terms, one might define “utopian fiction” as that genre of writing created expressly as a reflection of the author's vision of a perfect world or society. Given the universality of such visions, it should not surprise us to find utopian writings in Japan, and other Eastern cultures as well, from the earliest of times. As background to more modern examples of Japanese utopian fiction, I will first consider ways in Edo period writers borrowed elements of Confucian social thought and Buddhist and Taoist paradise myths to create utopian works that more explicitly addressed the social issues and politics of their own time. In later chapters, I will examine the confluence in Meiji of native and Western traditions of utopian fiction as well as the attributes of various modern examples of this genre.

²¹ Takizawa Bakin, *Musōbyōe kochō monogatari* (The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly), in *Kyokutei Bakin shū*, No. 16 (Tokyo: Kokumin Tosho Kabushikigaisha, 1928).

Chapter Two: Edo Period Origins of the Modern Japanese Utopia

In many critical works on utopian fiction, one finds that a focus on political philosophy often unduly restricts the range of this quite versatile genre. Although I will attempt to avoid this tendency, this study will be concerned with politics in the wider sense of the word. Indeed, one can hardly comment on utopian fiction without considering the political environment that in many instances motivated its production. Utopian fictions that address or delineate aspects of a political or administrative order, however, are only one type of a range of visions to be found in this genre.

In her insightful work *Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Christine Rees writes that eighteenth-century British writers in general don't put politics, in the technical sense, very high on their agenda.²² She adds that utopian writers of this period — such as Swift, Defoe or Fielding — were nevertheless “extremely interested in ‘the political’, as distinguished from politics.”

[P]ower, property, and privilege inevitably shape human relations in eighteenth-century fiction, and it is the business of the utopian imagination to conceive ways of turning these to good account and to ameliorate the conditions that distort and inflict suffering on individual lives.²³

²² Christine Rees, *Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

Due in part to fear of official recrimination, Edo period writers in general were similarly disinclined to discuss ways of reforming the system of government. There did exist nevertheless a reformist consciousness in Edo times similar to that described by Rees wherein some writers began to “experiment with new and socially beneficial methods of handling communal relationships.” Edo period thinkers and writers often turned to Confucian and Neo-Confucian ideas in particular as models for the ideal social order.²⁴

The representation of ideal relations between different groups and interests of society is often seen as a common characteristic of utopian fiction. By this definition, one might regard even some Edo period *gesaku* works — although often dismissed collectively as being purely fanciful or “frivolous” — as works of utopian fiction for the manner in which they represent the mores and customs of different groups of society. I am particularly interested in this chapter in the ways Edo period utopian writers of various genres deal with differences of class, a perennial problem, coincidentally, of much Western utopian fiction as well.

Although a thorough history of Japanese utopian thought in pre-modern times has yet to be written, scholars have frequently compared the utopian elements of some Edo period works with those found in the works of Western contemporaries. Specialists have

²⁴ In “Neo-Confucianism and the Formation of Tokugawa Ideology,” Herman Ooms questions the overall influence of Confucianism in society at large. This essay is collected in *Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture*, edited by Peter Nosco (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

compared *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, for instance, with Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) for its use of the theme of fantastic travel to satirize contemporary politics and society.²⁵ Similarly, Andō Shōeki has been likened to Rousseau for his vision of an idyllic state-of-nature prior to the rise of human societies. To illustrate both the essential qualities and the paradoxes of utopian fiction, I find it helpful in this study to compare aspects of Japanese and Western utopian works.

Due to the Edo period policy of national isolation, known as *sakoku*, writers of this time had little exposure to Western society or culture. For this reason, one cannot attribute most similarities between Japanese and Western utopian fiction of this period to direct intellectual exchange.²⁶ Nevertheless, Rees proposes that in any society or age "certain conditions seem particularly to favor experimenting with radical alternatives to the prevailing culture," by which she refers to utopian fiction.²⁷

In discussing the historical background to Edo period utopian fiction, I will refer in this chapter to several of Rees's proposed conditions. First among Rees's suggested

²⁵ Such comparisons can be found in each of the following works: Jōfuku Isamu, *Hiraga Gennai* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1971), 57; Sugiura Minpei, *Ishin zenya no bungaku* (Literature Prior to the Meiji Restoration) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1967), 150-155; Tanaka Yūko, *Edo no sōzō ryoku: 18 Seiki no medeia to hyōchō* (The Edo Imagination: Eighteenth-Century Media and Symbols) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1986), 206.

²⁶ In the essay "Reopening the Question of Sakoku: Diplomacy in the Legitimation of the Tokugawa Bakufu," Ronald Toby questions the assumption, nevertheless, that there was little or no cognizance of Western philosophy or literature among Japanese writers and thinkers of this period. *Journal of Japanese Studies* 3, no. 2 (1977), 323-63.

²⁷ Rees, 7.

conditions for the emergence of utopian fiction is “a period of rapid change and instability, during which are shaken basic assumptions regarding the established order.”²⁸ Although change was less rapid than in Europe of the same period, one might apply this description to the social conditions of Japan in the eighteenth century.

During this time, an agrarian society and feudal structure dominated by the samurai class gradually lost ground to a more commercial economy and urban society centered on the merchant class. Jealously guarding its ascendancy, the Shogunate instituted numbers of restrictive social measures and increased taxes in an attempt to shore up the economic base of samurai society.²⁹ In addition to creating general disenchantment among the merchant class, such measures provoked numerous peasant revolts.³⁰ This instability however did not immediately produce social turmoil on the order of the French Revolution, or shift the balance of political power as in the Grand Revolution in England. In the realm of literature, it did elicit, nevertheless, utopian writings numbers of alternative social and political visions.

In an analysis remarkably similar to Rees’s above premise, Yasunaga Toshinobu writes in *Nihon no yūtopia shisō* (Utopian Thought in Japan), “as in the case of Thomas

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Tsuji Tatsuya, “Politics in the Eighteenth Century,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, edited by John Whitney Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4: 425–477.

³⁰ Mikiso Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, and Outcasts: The Underside of Modern Japan* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 2–27.

More in England, the conditions for utopian thought in Japan are provided by the rise of a robust merchant class within a declining feudal society.”³¹ Toshinobu may be somewhat overemphasizing similarities with the age of More, for, having less political power than their counterparts in Europe, this commercial class in fact rarely overtly opposed established authority. Yasunaga concludes nevertheless that, “since the crumbling of the old order was apparent to all eyes, a keen receptivity at least to utopian thought can be found in eighteenth-century Japan.”³²

Such cross-cultural comparisons of the origins of utopian fiction seem to be particularly popular among Japanese scholars. Nuita, as does Yasunaga, argues that Japanese utopian fiction emerged through circumstances roughly analogous to those found in seventeenth-century Britain.

In both countries, men apparently were convinced, first, that reforms were possible, and second, that criticism would not necessarily result in punishment. The implication I draw from this is that where conditions are identical or at least closely similar, we should expect no vast differences in the kind of utopias that are produced, whether East or West.³³

Many people, and especially historians, might have difficulty conceding that conditions in seventeenth-century England and eighteenth-century Japan were “identical or at least

³¹ Yasunaga Toshinobu, *Nihon no yūtopia shisō: komyūn e no shikō* (Utopian Thought in Japan: The Inclination towards the Commune) (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1971), 171.

³² *Ibid.*, 172.

³³ Nuita, 23.

closely similar.” Even granting parallels in the general decline of the influence of the aristocracy in both countries, I do not believe that utopian fiction, any more than literature in general, is a product solely of historical and social circumstances. Due to differences in Japanese and Western literary conventions, even Gennai’s *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, although often called by past scholars “the Japanese *Gulliver’s Travels*,” may not at first strike readers as similar to familiar Western utopian works.

Andō Shōeki and the Confucian Utopia

I agree with Yasunaga and Nuita, nevertheless, that the eighteenth century was a time when thinkers and writers in Japan were particularly receptive to utopian ideas. And yet, due both to strict censorship laws and the (understandably under such circumstances) subtle nature of dissent in literature of this time, the Edo period as a whole is not generally known for strident political satire or, for that matter, utopian fiction. Consistent with this general perception, Yasunaga, E.H. Norman, Nuita and others, describe the philosopher and social thinker Andō Shōeki as one of the few thinkers of his time to overtly oppose the Tokugawa feudal government. Yasunaga goes so far as to call him even “perhaps the single utopian thinker in the history of Japanese thought.”³⁴ This statement in itself demonstrates the great hesitance with which even sympathetic commentators have applied the Western term utopia to Japanese examples.

³⁴ Yasunaga 1971, 167.

Although I would add several other names to a list of Edo period utopian thinkers, Shōeki is indeed unusual in his time for his blatant rejection of the feudal class structure. Yasunaga's curious claim that he is Japan's sole utopian thinker is clearly based on a definition tied to the political dimensions of utopian thought, as opposed to its broader philosophical implications. Nuita describes in similarly narrow terms Shōeki's singularity as one of the few Edo period thinkers who "denounced the caste system of the feudal Japan of his day and went on to propose a better form."³⁵

The common view of Shōeki primarily as a political thinker is difficult to reconcile with the fact that he does not in fact overtly advocate resistance to authorities in his writings or elaborate the precise institutional forms a new utopian society should take. Like many utopian thinkers, Shōeki is more philosopher than statesman or revolutionary, as is reflected in his utopian vision which stresses more the mindset than the means by which one achieves the best of all possible worlds.

In *Hōsei monogatari* (*Tales of the World of Law*, 1755), Shōeki's discontentment with the contemporary political situation is nevertheless clearly evident.³⁶ In this work, in a manner similar to Swift's use of anthropomorphism in the "Houyhnhnys" chapter of

³⁵ Nuita, 20-21.

³⁶ A complete translation of *Tales of the World of Law* is published in Toshinobu Yasunaga's study *Andō Shōeki: Social and Ecological Philosopher of Eighteenth Century Japan* (New York: Weatherhill, 1992), 118-196.

Gulliver's Travels, Shōeki depicts assemblies wherein representatives of the animal classes denounce a legal system and class structure clearly based on those of the author's own time. In its fantastic setting and its discussion of political philosophy, this work is thus typical of well-known Western utopian works.

In an episode representative of the radical political philosophy running throughout *Tales of the World of Law*, a crow, joining an assembly of birds, condemns the human's so-called "rule of law"³⁷ as nothing more than systemized exploitation.

By the rule of these laws, the ruler sets the nobles and generalissimo to work for him and consumes the fruits of their labor. The nobles and generalissimo eat the fruits of the labor of their retainers, the retainers live off the labors of the craftsmen and the merchants, the master eats the labors of his servants, as do the Buddhist monks, doctors, shrine priests, and mountain ascetics.³⁸

Such remarks appear almost Marxist in the explicitness of their attack on the feudal economic and social system. Certainly rarely expressed in writing of this time, Shōeki bases this critique on a principle he calls "direct cultivation" (*jikikō*), or the belief that all members of society should engage solely in agricultural pursuits.

Yasunaga attributes this radical vision to Shōeki's experiences as a doctor in the isolated Tōhoku region of Japan during a period of extreme drought and epidemic.

During this traumatic time, according to Yasunaga, Shōeki experienced a conversion

³⁷ "Hōsei," in Japanese, a term related to the Buddhist notion of the dharma and therefore suggesting a whole cosmic order in addition to specific laws.

³⁸ Yasunaga 1992, 120-21.

wherein he came to question the haphazard agricultural practices, unreasonably high taxes, and other inequalities of Edo feudalism.³⁹

Nuita, differing somewhat from this romantic view, describes Shōeki's notion of direct cultivation not as a denouncement necessarily of misguided *social* policies, but as a more fundamental criticism of human society in general, "in which man makes laws as he pleases and thus strays from rapport with nature."⁴⁰ Such an emphasis of course fits Nuita's conception of Japanese utopias in general as ideal visions of man's relationship to nature. In my own view of Shōeki, I am divided as to whether he is genuinely concerned with the problems of Edo period feudal society, or whether his utopian vision is more that of an ideal cosmic order as found in Buddhist and Taoist philosophy.

A similar ambiguity in interpretation is perhaps reflected in the longer title of Yasunaga's biography *Andō Shōeki, Social and Ecological Philosopher of Eighteenth-Century Japan*. In his romantic view of Shōeki as a radical social thinker, Yasunaga describes him as a "modern utopian thinker," a term often used to differentiate utopian thinkers possessing a clear, and clearly enlightened, political philosophy from presumably less-evolved predecessors.⁴¹ As Yasunaga himself points out, however, many of Shōeki's ideals are engrained with traditional Buddhist and Taoist conceptions of

³⁹ Ibid., 19-53.

⁴⁰ Nuita, 21.

⁴¹ Yasunaga 1971, 171.

man's ideal place in the cosmic order. Such ideals are at odds, for instance, with Kumar's above-noted use of the term "modern utopia" to indicate a utopian community that is "egalitarian, affluent and dynamic." As Yasunaga writes, in contrast to most conceptions of the term "modern," "for Shōeki human life is always a part of the greater cosmic life," by which phrase he refers to the Buddhist and Taoist origins of much of Shōeki's vision.⁴²

In the introduction to their recent anthology *The Utopia Reader*, Gregory Claeys and Lyman Sargent argue for two basic types of utopias in fiction, the "utopia of human contrivance" and the "state-of-nature utopia." The former type, which the editors write was first introduced by More's *Utopia*, is supposedly based on the premise "that every aspect of the social order can be susceptible to human control."⁴³ Its presumed predecessor, the state-of-nature utopia, they describe as a simpler vision of an idyllic place provided through the bounty of nature or as a gift from the gods, characterized by simplicity, security, immortality or an easy death, abundance without labor, unity among the people, and harmony with the gods or nature, and so on.⁴⁴

It is convenient to think in abstract terms of utopias as falling neatly along these two axes, the man-made and the natural. In actuality, most utopian fictions demonstrate

⁴² Ibid., 60.

⁴³ Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, editors, *The Utopia Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 3.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

elements of both attributes. This state-of-nature versus man-made distinction serves in some studies simply to reinforce the status of supposedly more humanist or egalitarian Western utopian fictions. Kumar, again blatantly expressing the Western bias found in latent form in many scholarly works on utopian fiction, writes,

The modern utopia — the modern western utopia invented in the Europe of the Renaissance — is the only utopia. It inherits classical and Christian forms and themes, but it transforms them into a distinctive novelty, a distinctive literary genre carrying a distinctive social philosophy.⁴⁵

One wonders, since it seems only to detract from his general arguments, why Kumar is so insistent that what he terms “modern utopian fiction” can not be found outside of the West. Tied to the (in comparison with the feudal past) rapid changes occurring in Japanese society, three “modern” concerns that appear in Edo period utopias are those of technological innovation, including those in travel that resulted in increasing contact with outside countries, increased population and shifts in relationships between the traditional castes of society, and changes in relations between sexes.

There are several Edo period examples of “modern utopian fiction” that take fantastic locales found in more traditional sources, such as Buddhist travel narratives or visions of paradise, and apply them to a new view of the social world. In terms of approach, this is not necessarily distinct from when, say, Kamo no Chōmei borrows the

⁴⁵ Kumar, 3.

vision of a Pure Land Buddhist Paradise to describe his own dwelling in utopian terms.

The key difference is that in the Edo period a few works at least can be found that attempt to create an allegory of an ideal state of existence for society at large, or at least for those who are members of the educated classes, as opposed to more private utopian visions.

As Rees points out in her discussion of Swift, Defoe and other English writers of utopian fiction, the utopian thinker is typically conservative. Shōeki's utopian vision may at first strike one as distinctly modern in the apparent liberalism of its political philosophy. As opposed to an orthodox political utopia with all its legal and administrative trappings, however, Shōeki's utopia in many respects is closer to the state-of-nature model. Shōeki's ultimate ideal is a vaguely defined society in which all men, without exception, engage solely in farming and live without social distinctions or exploitation. Although seeming similar to the Marxist vision of a communal utopia, many elements of this vision are connected to a traditional Confucian view of the universe.

Rees proposes that a second condition for the emergence of utopian fiction in any tradition is "a certain level of intellectual activity, and confidence in intellectual debate as a productive and relevant contribution to society."⁴⁶ In the Edo period, such important intellectual movements as the debates on Neo-Confucianism, National Learning (*kokugaku*), as well as Buddhism, Taoism and other schools of thought, provide the

⁴⁶ Rees, 7.

philosophical background to utopian fiction.⁴⁷ In his writings, Shōeki toys with principles and social concepts from all of these schools.

Due to this influence, Shōeki, although described by biographers such as E.H. Norman and Yasunaga as a progressive social thinker, describes in his writings a utopia possessing many conservative attributes. Phrased differently, Shōeki's social vision is inseparable from his syncretic philosophical system made up of elements from the various religions and schools of the time. Shōeki frequently uses the stock political vocabulary of Confucian discourse, for instance, to criticize government leaders, lords, and the system of government as a whole. He mixes this with the language and principles of Buddhism, with which he was very familiar as a former Zen monk.

Rees argues that because of the utopian thinker's belief in the importance of intellectual debate they tend to be somewhat conservative in their social designs, as opposed to advocating revolutionary action. Unlike later Edo period satirists such as Gennai, Yūkokushi and Hōseidō Kisanji who frequently use Confucian and Buddhist terminology to great comic effect, Shōeki reveals an earnest belief in the basic principles of such traditional schools of thought. This conservatism is revealed in his repeated stress upon such Buddhist and Confucian values as abstinence, frugality, filial piety, chastity,

⁴⁷ See, John Whitney Hall, *Japan, from Prehistory to Modern Times* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies University of Michigan, 1968), 214-225.

and so on. In such attributes of his thinking, one might think of Shōeki more as a conservative than as a revolutionary utopian social thinker.

Shōeki's conservatism runs so deep in fact that in *Tales of the World of Law* he charges even the original founders of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism as having perverted the true way of heaven (*tendō*).⁴⁸ In one passage, for instance, a reed warbler, contributing to the council of birds, condemns "Confucius, Siddhartha, Lao-tzu and Prince Shōtoku" for "promot(ing) the selfishness, mental confusion, and reckless behavior that are the basis of the World of Law."⁴⁹ In numerous instances, *Tales of the World of Law* advocates traditional Buddhist and Confucian notions such as frugality and chastity, while at the same time berating the worldliness of contemporary monks and clerics. Hence, as opposed to rejecting outright Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist ideals, the political and social philosophy of *The Tales of the World of Law* is in many ways based on the founding principles of such schools and religions.

The Tales of the World of Law in its entirety thus demonstrates a quite traditional view of man's place in the ideal cosmic order. In "Atavism and Utopia," Eric Rabkin writes that many utopian fictions are indebted to tradition, despite their common

⁴⁸ In one passage, for instance, a reed warbler, contributing to the council of birds, condemns "Confucius, the Buddha, Laozi, Zhuangzi, the doctors, and Prince Shotoku" for "promot(ing) the selfishness, mental confusion, and reckless behavior that are the basis of the World of Law." Yasunaga, 1992, 127-28.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

futuristic settings or penchant for social planning. To emphasize this point, he claims that, “the most common vision of a eutopia, of course, is Eden itself.”⁵⁰ Although I question that Eden is the most common vision of a utopia, Rabkin’s point is well taken that utopian fiction is a strongly atavistic mode. Other studies of Western utopian fiction, such as *Utopian Thought in the Western World* might claim that the most common vision of the utopia is the classical Greek republic. These two very different presumed archetypes might be described as examples of the state-of-nature (i.e., Eden) and designed-by-man (i.e., the republic) extremes of utopian fiction.

I regard the above contrast more simply in terms of a dual impulse in the utopian imagination to seek alternatives to the contemporary situation in politics as well as in myth, religion, and fantasy. Although these dual influences cannot be neatly separated, many Edo period utopian works, like Shōeki’s *Tales of the World of Law*, often look for inspiration on the one hand to Confucian visions of an ideal political state and, on the other, to more fantastic visions of the respective Buddhist or Taoist paradises. I do not wish to suggest that Japanese utopian thought *originates* with these schools. Rather, I wish to point out simply that in the intellectual debates of the Edo period such models

⁵⁰ Eric Rabkin, “Atavism and Utopia,” in *No Place Else: Explorations in Utopian and Dystopian Fiction*, edited by Eric Rabkin, Martin Greenberg and Joseph Olander (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 1-10.

were as current as were, say, Thomas Aquinas or Plato for Western utopian writers like More and Swift.

In Shōeki's case, his utopian ideal has been more influenced by conservative social principles of Chu Hsi Confucianism than some past scholars have been willing to admit. In one recent reassessment of Shōeki, Jacques Joly describes him as "a Confucian master who, since he was 'rediscovered' in 1899 by Kano Kokichi, underwent an ideological appropriation by socialist, Marxist and ecologist thinkers in Japan."⁵¹ Joly writes that Shōeki, as opposed to being a liberal political thinker, appropriated elements of Chu Hsi Confucianism as well as the Taoist conception of a natural order (*shizen*) to construct "an autarkical closed world" based on the "rigid totalities of the village, of the lineage, of the man."⁵² Whether one accepts Yasunaga's view of Shōeki as a radical social philosopher or Joly's revisionist picture of him as a conventional Confucian thinker, it is clear that Shōeki's thought, and the fictional vehicle of *Tales of the World of Law* through which he expresses that thought, are well qualified by the adjective "utopian."

As Joly points out, many scholars have clearly been influenced by the desire to discover in Shōeki a thinker who more readily conforms to (Western) conceptions of progressive liberal thought. E.H. Norman, for instance, has written that he first came

⁵¹ Jacques Joly, "Andō Shōeki (1703-1762): Shizen and Its Ideological Appropriation." Paper presented at the Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Honolulu 1996.

⁵² Ibid.

upon Shōeki's work in his search for "any impressive evidence during the centuries of Japanese feudalism of a philosophy vindicating resistance to unbridled authority and oppression."⁵³ This of course is a gross simplification of Shōeki's more ambiguous social and philosophical vision.

Shōeki's vision of a society that proscribes all pursuits save the cultivation of crops suggests a starkly elemental state of existence. Interestingly, he believed that his utopian ideal had in fact been actualized by the Ainu society of Ezo (modern Hokkaido):

Their natures are honest and simple, and they do not use money. As a result, there are no rulers or ruled, and no control of one human being by another. As a result, too, they have no uprisings in which they fight and try to steal things from each other. They are without such artificial things as learning and writing, and so they are upright and honest.⁵⁴

This vision seems the very epitome of the state-of-nature utopia in which all is provided by the bounty of nature and man lives in harmony with his fellow man. More radical even than Rousseau, Shōeki follows such state-of-nature idealism to its logical or, as the case may be, illogical extreme, regarding even written texts as a perversion of the natural order of oral language.

One paradox of such primitivist ideals as found in utopian fiction is that for their actualization the author must often propose numbers of social restraints. Shōeki's utopian

⁵³ Herbert Norman, *Andō Shoeki and the Anatomy of Japanese Feudalism* (Washington: University Publications of America, 1979).

⁵⁴ Quoted in Yasunaga 1992, 41.

vision is for this reason quite authoritarian in its representation of such classic Confucian values as frugality, chastity, respect for elders and the proper roles in society of the respective sexes.

Such strict restraints might be seen, in fact, as part-and-parcel of the utopian dream of perfecting the human condition. Rees notes that *The Republic* and other famous Western examples, for instance, demonstrate a penchant in particular for eugenic theory. As the narrator Socrates relates, “It would be a sin either for mating or for anything else in a truly happy society to take place without regulation. Our Rulers would not allow it.”⁵⁵ Shōeki, somewhat similarly, mandates that members of the perfect society should remain celibate prior to marriage and that, after marriage, they should engage in sex only for reproductive purposes.

Rees writes that a preoccupation with rules regarding sex and reproduction in fact is common to most utopias. “Utopian states,” she writes, “may or may not privatize the means of production; but we tend to assume that the means of reproduction are already privatized.” This is not the case, however, in many utopian works. As Rees writes:

[F]ew utopian legislators are willing to allow citizens to conduct their own sex lives as they see fit. Too much is at stake. And since sexual compulsion ... can't be legislated out of existence, it has to be regulated.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Plato, *The Republic*, translated by Desmond Lee (New York: Penguin, 1987), 239.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

In Edo period works set in utopian locales, there is a similar preoccupation with issues of sex, reproduction, and male and female gender roles, with the important difference that many such works appear to advocate sexual license rather than restraint.

Hiraga Gennai's Anti-Confucian Dystopia

Many social measures proposed in what I call “Confucian utopian texts” of the Edo period might strike modern readers as distinctly authoritarian. Several dissident utopian works, however, emerged as Edo period writers resisted the Shogunate’s attempt to mandate Neo-Confucian virtues. In this section, I will discuss Hiraga Gennai’s *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* as a text that satirizes contemporary thinkers who attempt to apply strict Confucian values to the Japanese contemporary social situation.

I should begin this discussion by pointing out the somewhat different sense in which I consider *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* and several other *gesaku* works to be examples of utopian fiction. From the common conception of the utopia as an *ideal* place, one might suppose that the world depicted in utopian fiction will generally be, at least by implication, *better* than the one in which the author lives. Yet some utopian works reject this expectation, as in *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), where the hapless protagonist repeatedly finds himself in lands far worse than his home country, or in the dark vision of the future presented in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932).

Taking their cue from the setting of this latter work, some critics distinguish the utopia from the *dystopia*, or in layman terms, works set in a less than ideal locale.⁵⁷

Dystopian fiction is seen by such commentators as a sub-genre of utopian fiction, one in which an *undesirable* topos is used for various allegorical purposes. In such examples, dystopian fiction is seen as a category of utopian fiction. That is, dystopia is inextricably linked to utopia.

In other usage, the term dystopian is not used necessarily to refer to a type of locale but, rather, to a particularly critical or satirical view of the society ultimately targeted by the utopian work. Since utopian fiction, in imagining a better society or locale, is in most instances a highly critical mode, this distinction may be somewhat redundant. Nevertheless, I find it convenient in this study to use both the term dystopia, to refer to a singularly bad place, and dystopian, to refer to a singularly bleak view of society.

Although this distinction may seem fairly vague and subjective, as Chris Fern argues in the essay “Dystopia: The Dream as Nightmare,” the dystopia can be regarded as a distinct literary genre in the case of works whose overall tendency is to parody

⁵⁷ Such usage can be seen in the entry “Utopias and Dystopias” in M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Fifth Edition (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988), 195.

established utopian ideals or dreams of order.⁵⁸ In this sense, the term dystopia describes well numbers of Edo period narratives that satirize Confucian dreams of a perfectly organized society.

Rees writes that utopian fiction and satire have always had a natural affinity, “even (or especially) where the writer is committed to a conservative or nostalgic view of how human affairs should be conducted.”⁵⁹ Nuita, to the contrary, regards *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* and other *gesaku* works as true satire but, for this very reason, not as true utopian fiction since they fail to propose a new social vision of their own. In the next chapter, I will return to this question of whether utopian fiction and satire are inextricably connected. As opposed to being “pre-utopian,” as Nuita describes them, I see many *gesaku* works as a post-utopian response to the dream then current in government and intellectual circles of a perfect Confucian social order. *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, reacting to these dreams, repeatedly ridicules Japanese Confucian scholars and their social schemes. As satirical utopias (or, as some might call them, dystopias), this and other *gesaku* works serve to illuminate gaps between contemporary ideals and reality.

Edo period writers often use the theme of fantastic travel, both to exotic lands and back and forth in time, to explore various types of utopian worlds. This motif is of course

⁵⁸ Chris Ferns, *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 105-138.

⁵⁹ Rees, 123.

found in such famous Western utopian fictions as *Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe*, or *Candide*. In these works, descriptions of circumstances in foreign or fantastic lands are used to point out by implication inadequacies and potential trouble spots in the protagonist's own country.⁶⁰

In the above-mentioned work *A History of Japanese Fantastic Literature*, Sunaga discusses the long history of the theme of fantastic travel in the Japanese literary tradition. He writes that Edo period authors inherited this theme in part from earlier myths or fables, both native and Chinese, including tales of journeys through the various Buddhist hells or paradises.⁶¹ Claeys, Sargent, and other specialists might classify such fables, due to their origins in religious myth, as state-of-nature utopias, a label that suggests a lack of interest in politics and other affairs of human society. Sunaga writes, however, that beginning in the Edo period some ostensibly Buddhist fantastic travel narratives took a more secular turn. The tale *Saikaku meido monogatari* (A Journey With Saikaku Through the Realm of the Dead, 1697), for instance, although revolving around Buddhist myths and principles, also reflects social issues.

⁶⁰ See Hubert Maës, trans., *Histoire galante de Shidōken*, Bibliothèque De L'institut des hautes études japonaises (Paris: L'Asiathèque, 1979).

⁶¹ Sunaga notes the influence on Edo period writers of popular fiction of the Buddhist-influenced tradition of tales of trips through the various Buddhist hells (or *jigoku henreki*) in the section "*jigoku henreki* shōsetsu to Hiraga Gennai (Hiraga Gennai and accounts of journeys through the Buddhist hells), 138-49.

In this story, the famous Genroku era writer Saikaku leads the author of the piece, the poet Genmu, through the nirvana of Pure Land Buddhism as well as various types of hells (not unlike Virgil in Dante's *Inferno*). Although based on the Buddhist concept of karmic retribution, these hells satirize well-known figures and groups from contemporary society. In this work are described the various hells reserved for those comic poets who slight their mentors, who plagiarize, or who specialize in pornography. Although not depicting a utopia in the sense of an ideal state or place, works such as this show the potential of fantastic travel narratives to satirize various aspects of society.

The above types of tales are similar in their fantastic setting at least to many Western utopian fictions. Sunaga writes that more overtly satirical examples of the fantastic travel narrative began to appear around the mid-eighteenth century.⁶² The increasing popularity of fantastic travel narratives in this time might be attributed in part to an interest in conditions in foreign countries. As noted above, Shōeki similarly regarded the Ainu communities of Ezo as an embodiment of his perfect utopian ideal. Curiously, he also describes Holland as a country in which all persons lived in perfect harmony with nature and their fellow man.

In the Western tradition of utopian fiction, many writers of course also look to real-life countries and locales as inspiration for their own more fantastic visions.

⁶² Ibid., 139.

Somewhat similar to the prevalent use of nearby islands in Edo period utopian works, Daniel Defoe based the utopian *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) upon an account by Alexander Selkirk of the five years he spent living on a desert island. Such literal counterparts to fantastic travel narrative, however, were relatively rare in the earlier Edo period. Most of the extant literal accounts of foreign travel by Japanese in this day, in fact, are either the reports of a few official delegations or the transcripts of debriefings of unfortunate castaways who managed to make their way back to Japan only to be arrested for breaking the ban on foreign travel.

As one might expect, such accounts were not circulated widely. Several writers, nevertheless, did base their more fanciful tales of circumstances outside Japan on such records. The work *Torishima monogatari* (The Tale of Bird Island), for instance, retells an account of some fifteen castaways who lived for over a decade on a deserted island.⁶³ Whereas *Robinson Crusoe* describes a utopian community living free from the restraints of modern society, this story focuses on the group's struggle for existence on the barren island and the cooperative spirit with which they build a ship to return to civilized society.

⁶³ Anonymous, "Tori Shima Monogatari" (The Tale of Bird Island), in *Hyōryū kidan shūsei*, edited by Takada Mamoru, Hara Michio and Katō Takashi (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1990), 553.

The Romantic Life of Shidōken — which includes brief mention of the protagonist's travels to actual countries such as India, Indonesia, Sumatra, Borneo, Armenia, China, and Holland — might similarly be read in some sections as a parable of life in Japan versus that found in outside regions and countries. In *The Edo Imagination: Eighteenth-Century Media and Symbols*, Tanaka interprets *The Gallant Live of Shidōken* perhaps too literally as an exploration of world geography as it was known to eighteenth-century Japanese readers. Even in its mention of such fantastic lands as the “Country of Long-legged People” or the “Country of Demons,” Tanaka writes, this work supports conceptions of world geography as found in the contemporary encyclopedia *Wa-Kan sansai zue* (A Pictorial Encyclopedia in Japanese and Chinese) as well as in Edo period maps. “In this sense,” she writes, “all of the countries found in *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* were ‘real’ countries.”⁶⁴ Such similarities might simply demonstrate, on the other hand, a less exacting concern for literal accuracy in geographic works of the time.

Although clearly a work of the imagination, *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* similarly blurs the line between fact and fantasy. Even the protagonist, strictly speaking, is not a product solely of the author's imagination. Shidōken was in fact a contemporary figure, a famous storyteller of the Asakusa region of Edo. *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*

⁶⁴ Tanaka, 199-262.

first presents itself, for this reason, as a fanciful biography, opening with a brief description of Shidōken's childhood and youth as a Buddhist monk initiate.

As opposed to constructing a literal biography, however, Gennai seems to introduce the protagonist as a Buddhist monk as a means to parody Buddhist concepts, in a manner not unlike the parody of Christian theology in Voltaire's *Candide*, or Swift's *Tale of a Tub*. Early in the narrative, Shidōken (referred to by his youth name, Sen'noshin) receives a visit from a wizard named Fūrai Sanjin (or "wizard brought by the wind," Gennai's own pen name). The wizard tells Sen'noshin that he has been deluded in following the Buddhist path of sexual abstinence and self-denial. In a pun that also works passably well in English, the wizard tells him that that the quickest path to human (com)passion (*ninjō*) is in fact through sexual indulgence.

Sen'noshin thus discards his Buddhist robes and heads straight for the pleasure quarters, first of Edo and then — aided by a magic fan that allows him to fly quickly over great distances — of several provincial cities. In his biography of Gennai, Jōfuku Isamu writes that as a parody of works of moral instruction (*dangibon*), *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* borrows Buddhist and Confucian concepts to satirize various aspects of contemporary society.⁶⁵ The tale's more flippant and worldly qualities, however, are revealed when Shidōken visits the Yoshiwara and learns (among other things) the

⁶⁵ Jōfuku Isamu, *Hiraga Gennai* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1971), 161.

differences in etiquette required when soliciting male and female prostitutes. With its mixture of mock sermonizing and romantic escapades, *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* might be thought of as a combination of religious satire and picaresque novel.

In its mixture of the earnest and irreverent parody, *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* might be seen in Bakhtinian terms as an example of “serio-comic” literature. Bakhtin writes that works in this genre “reject the stylistic unity (or better, the single-style nature) of the epic, the tragedy, high rhetoric, the lyric...”

Characteristic of these genres they are a multi-toned narration, the mixing of high and low, serious and comic; they make wide use of inserted genres — letters, found manuscripts, retold dialogues, parodies on the high genres, paradoxically reinterpreted citations; in some of them we observe a mixing of prosaic and poetic speech, living dialects and jargons are introduced, and various authorial masks make their appearance.⁶⁶

This proposed genre might be thought of in more conventional terms as “satire.” The mix of mock-didacticism, humor, and fantastic setting found in *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* and other *gesaku* works qualifies them, I believe, as works not only of satire but also as utopian fiction. In Gennai’s case, this mix of satire with utopian setting is often used to investigate sexual mores and current fashions, in addition to issues related to contemporary politics and foreign relations.

⁶⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Theory and History of Literature 8, translator Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 108.

In terms of setting and narrative structure, the section of *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* perhaps most characteristic of utopian fiction is the tale of the protagonist's visit to the "Chest-Pierced Country" (*senkyokoku*). In this episode — following his visit to a land of long-legged people and a land of long-armed people — Sen'noshin visits a land where all of the inhabitants have holes in the center of their chests:

Sen'noshin flew four or five thousand leagues to yet another vast continent. This was called "the Chest-Pierced Country," for all the inhabitants, men and women alike, had holes in their chests. When the nobility of this land wanted to go some place, rather than ride a palanquin they would simply slide a pole through their chests and have themselves hoisted up and carried about. And yet they didn't feel any pain. At every crossroad, laborers could be found carrying poles: Those catching a ride would call out "Pole man! Pole man!" in the same way that in Japan we yell "Palanquin man! Palanquin man!" Sen'noshin thought that he'd try getting a lift too, but since he didn't have a hole in his chest, it was all for naught.

Traveling further into the land, numerous dwellings appeared and the surroundings became livelier. Given that this was after all a barbarous country, the manners of the inhabitants were quite coarse. Seeing Sen'noshin, all the people, both high and low, men and women, ran and gathered about him, exclaiming, "my, what a stunning figure; who would have thought such a man existed!" People couldn't get enough of the spectacle and as the day wore on the news spread throughout the country, finally reaching the ears of His Great Holeyness, the king.⁶⁷

Later, the reader learns that the social status of a citizen of this country is directly proportional to the size of the hole in his or her chest. Hence, the narrator refers to the king as "his most Confucian leader," a pun on the literal meaning of "great" and "hole" of the characters for Confucius's name. As in this reference to "His Great Holeyness,"

⁶⁷ Gennai, 196-197.

The Romantic Life of Shidōken is at times dismissive both of Confucianism and of authority figures.

The Romantic Life of Shidōken comments also on Japan's relations with outside countries. It at times compares China and Japan with countries that do not know the presumed civilizing influence of Confucianism and Buddhism. This is seen, for instance, in the description of the Chest-Pierced Country as a "barbarous land." At other times, however, the narrator ridicules aspects of Confucian and Buddhist thought. The work as a whole compares the merits and demerits of various philosophies without whole-heartedly endorsing any one.

Despite digressions and inclusion of details related to Sen'noshin's role as a romantic hero, it soon becomes clear that this episode is intended as a critique of the arbitrariness of feudal class distinctions:

When an official summoned Sen'noshin to the court, all the retainers were awe-stricken by his beauty. The king of the country had no sons, but was blessed with a daughter who was sixteen years old at the time. Beholding Sen'noshin's fine visage, the king and princess both promptly decided that he should be her bridegroom. The news that Sen'noshin would be heir to the throne was announced throughout the land and vassals and retainers were all bidden to gather. People were of mixed opinion, but since it was the great king's decree, and the princess's own choice, they could do nothing other than shout "*Banzai*, may the throne last a thousand years!"

Maidservants hurriedly approached Sen'noshin and told him that he must change into formal court apparel. They gathered about Sen'noshin and led him to a separate chamber where on a dais lay the many-patterned, gold-buttoned robe of a crown prince. As several maidservants began to undo his sash and change his

garments, however, they discovered that he did not have a hole in his chest. At this point, they all flew into a fright and, throwing the robe aside, rushed out of the room. One among them screamed out angrily, “Contrary to being of beautiful appearance, you are nothing more than a freak! Since you don’t even have a hole in your chest, you certainly aren’t fit to be considered leader of the country; the king and princess must both hear of this!”⁶⁸

In this part of the Chest-Pierced Country episode — in which the unfortunate Sen’noshin falls from grace when it is discovered that he does not have a hole in his chest — *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* reads as a clear parable of the potential arbitrariness of class distinctions on the order of, say, the island of the Lilliputians in *Gulliver’s Travels*.

In perhaps no other episode of *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* does the author more clearly satirize contemporary class divisions than when Sen’noshin is expelled from the Chest-Pierced Country:

Hearing people murmur, Sen’noshin had left in puzzlement. The chief retainer soon came and faced him, saying, “Although the king has declared that you should be his adoptive heir, as the maid-servant has just said, this is not permissible in the case of a person such as yourself who, lacking a hole in his chest, is clearly of inferior form. All wise persons throughout this land have wide holes in their chests, while those with narrow holes are all fools. It is for this reason that those with narrow holes never rise to high positions. It goes without saying that it would be impossible for a person with no hole at all to become crown prince. The marriage pledge has been retracted. The king has ordered that you be thrown out of the land; you must not tarry in the Chest-Pierced Country another day. Don’t grumble...leave at once!” Thus ordering Sen’noshin, the retainer drove him away with a sharpened bamboo pole.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 197-198.

Their shallow pledge so abruptly broken, the erstwhile fiancé gazed down at his chest and remarked, “what a shame that I was born without so much as a small hole.”⁶⁹

Although proposing no new society or social system of its own, *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* is a utopian work in the same sense as satirical works such as *Candide* or *Gulliver’s Travels*: It examines social hierarchy and other issues of human society through the construction of a fantastic parallel world.

The mix of romantic tale and social commentary found in *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, however, often confounds even experts. Edo-period literature specialist Sugiura Minpei, whose Marxist idealism favors Shōeki’s more stridently anti-establishment stance, writes:

If Hiraga Gennai had wanted to create a travel narrative that grabs our attention like *Gulliver’s Travels*, he should not have dallied about like his protagonist Shidōken. He should have demonstrated more aversion and abhorrence to, and more forcefully denounced, the contemporary system of society. An attitude that submits to the government doctrine of Confucianism and the teachings of the Five Virtues should not even be considered satire.⁷⁰

In response to this very critical view of *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, Sumie Jones counters that Sugiura has “little understanding of Swift or of satire in general.”⁷¹ Sugiura does seem to regard satire as a strictly didactic and moralizing mode. Nevertheless, being

⁶⁹ Ibid., 198-199.

⁷⁰ Sugiura 1967, 65.

⁷¹ Sumie Jones, “Comic Fiction in Japan During the Later Edo Period” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 1979), 20.

part picaresque novel, *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* only fits with some difficulty into the conception of satire as a critique of contemporary politics and social hierarchies. It might more easily be read as a utopia of Edo period sexual mores and gender roles.

Sugiura suggests that *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* is complicit with the government's use of Confucian principles to dictate social initiatives. In this work, to the contrary, Gennai in fact derides Confucian thought as extolled by many of his contemporaries. In "The Imaginary Travels of *Jinqhua yuan* and *Furyu Shidōken den*," Stephen Roddy compares the use of the theme of fantastic travel in *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, as well as the Chinese narrative *Jinqhua yuan*. Roddy writes that *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, despite its theme of foreign travel, revolves around domestic concerns involving "the use and misuse of Confucianism by the state and its ideological supporters."⁷²

In particular, Roddy notes Gennai's resistance to efforts by the Shogunate to promote such Confucian ideals as obedience to the ruler, devotion to the public good, scholarly attainment, and adherence to moral standards in both public and private life.⁷³ In one often-cited passage, for instance, the narrator, stating that "China is China, and Japan

⁷² Stephen Roddy, "The Imaginary Travels of *Jinqhua yuan* and *Furyu Shidōken den*" in *Tamkang Review* 25 (1994), 125-47.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 130.

is Japan,” criticizes Japanese Confucians for what he regards as their attempt to indiscriminately apply Confucian principles to then Japanese society.

The author’s overall attitude towards Chinese and Confucian influence in Japanese political and social life, however, is more ambivalent than the above might suggest. At the end of the work, the narrator returns to the question of Japan’s relationship to China, and presents the argument that Japan is in fact more Confucian than China. In a country such as China, prone to violence and rebellion, the narrator relates in this episode that the teachings of Confucius and other sages were expounded precisely because there was a need for them. As the narrator Fūrai Sanjin tells Shidōken, “Japan is a country that upholds humanity and righteousness naturally. Hence, even though sages do not appear, the country is at peace.”⁷⁴ This sentiment, which is also expressed in *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands*, perhaps reflects the interest among scholars of this time in a distinctly Japanese literary and cultural heritage.

Yūkokushi’s Satirical Taoist Paradise

Confucian doctrine and Buddhist travel narratives are not the only models for utopian fiction in pre-modern Japan. In the Edo period, works exist which, similar to the contrast between the political Greek utopia and the pastoral Eden myth, focus not on politics but on a lost world of tranquility and immortality, as found in Taoist philosophy

⁷⁴ Translated in Roddy, 137. Original is found in Gennai, 217.

and exemplified by the Chinese novel *T'ao hua yuan chi* (The Peach Blossom Spring, 376-396) by the poet T'ao Ch'ien. As discussed in *Yūtopia gensō: manyōbito to shinsen shisō* (Utopian Fantasy: The People of Man'yōshū Times and Mysticism), the Taoist inspired vision of a lost world of tranquility and immortality has been popular among Japanese thinkers and writers since the time of the *Manyōshū*.⁷⁵

The final work I would like to discuss in this chapter, Yūkokushi's *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands*, employs various facets of Taoist thought in its telling of the protagonist's visits to such lands as "the country of immortality" and "the country of plentitude." Similar to *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, this work promises a glimpse into unknown foreign lands. Although described by Sunaga as less literary than Gennai's famous *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands* parodies in a sophisticated manner the famous butterfly-dream episode of *The Chuang Tzu* in which the philosopher dreams that he has turned into a butterfly.

Hyōei, the protagonist of the Edo period version, is a successful Nagasaki merchant who, in true Taoist manner, has retired from active life to pursue philosophical study and meditation. In the first episode of the story, after falling asleep while fishing in a boat near his retreat, he is led by the legendary figure Urashima Tarō around islands

⁷⁵ Nakanishi Susumu, *Yūtopia gensō: manyōbito to shinsen shisō* (Utopian Fantasy: The People of Man'yōshū Times and Mysticism) (Tokyo: Taishūkan Shoten, 1993).

representing the various Taoist paradises. There is a nominal connection to trade and to relations with China and Holland, the languages of which, the narrator tells us, Hyōei is fully conversant.

Beginning with Hyōei's visit to "the country of antiquarians," it becomes clear that the narrative is to be read as an "anti-utopian" critique of Taoist idylls and their presumed irrelevance to contemporary life in Japan. Hyōei is next led to "the country of self-destruction," in which is demonstrated the negative side of utopian thinking in general. In this episode, coincidentally, we find the same myth of a land of chest-pierced people seen in *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, leading some to believe that it is in fact based in part on Gennai's version.

Flying hither and thither for several thousand more leagues, Hyōei alighted on a large continent. Asking the name of the place, he learned he had landed in the Country of Self-Destruction. He first took lodgings in Short Cut Town at the Stumble On Inn, run by a Jack-of-all-trades named Rihachi. Staying there for a short while, he went sightseeing every day, observing the customs of the country. All the people of the land, men and women alike, had a hole in their chest. Those of higher rank did not use horses or palanquins, but would simply slide a pole through their chests and be carried about. Bringing three retainers along on trips and switching them regularly, they could travel about by pole without exhausting their retinue. Mothers making a trip with their children to visit the grandparents could fit the oldest to the youngest, three or even up to five kids on a single pole, and have them carried about like dried sardines on a skewer. When going to fetch a doctor, a healthy family member could bring back a surgeon and general practitioner in the same trip by balancing them on either sides of a pole carried across his shoulders. It was a very handy form of transport, but it had its disadvantages as well, not the least of which being that the cavities in people's chests were prone to numbers of diseases. Also, when passing on a mountain path

through forests or woods, people would often get snagged onto a tree branch and become injured.⁷⁶

Whereas Gennai uses the myth of a land of chest-pierced people to create an allegory of arbitrary class divisions, Yūkokushi's version contains proto-science fiction elements, focusing on the futuristic implications of this novel mode of transport. Actually, the overall aim of the episode seems to be to demonstrate that new-fangled ideas never turn out in the end to be so truly ideal. Among the many rhetorical purposes to which the vision of a utopia may be used, this story, paradoxically, creates the fiction of an ideal world as an argument for remaining in the imperfect present situation.

This work shows a great concern for law and order, making it the reactionary Confucian antithesis of Gennai's quite *laissez faire* view of society.

From times long past, the land of self-destruction had had no settled laws of any sort. Studying the ways of the ancients and reading books were both forbidden. People devised their own selfish philosophies according to the logic of the moment, not considering long-term benefits or shortcomings. For the most shortsighted of reasons, they even changed their lodgings and dress on a daily and monthly basis, according to that which served them best or which made them most comfortable.

Sons would say, "Since all of us alike are mere humans, there is no need to serve a person or show them gratitude simply because they have raised you"; or, as the very pinnacle of selfishness, "Why should we respect those whom we have not requested or beseeched to birth or raise us? I have yet to meet a person whose character through a parent's skill or clumsiness in giving birth and child-rearing has turned out any less or more refined."

⁷⁶ Yūkokushi, 39.

In this country, the wife did not submit to her husband. Among brothers, the younger did not necessarily follow the elder, but if he were stronger would throw the elder out on the streets. If the wife were more clever than her husband, she would serve him divorce papers. Even among friends, the stronger would as a matter of course set himself up as leader.⁷⁷

This episode demonstrates that utopian fictions can indeed support the status quo. Written in the language of Confucianism, this episode may reflect concerns over the rise of economic influence of the merchant class. Although the background of the author, Yūkokushi, is virtually unknown, this work seems to reflect the fear among social elites that the traditional order of ranks is beginning to break down.

In the concluding scene of "the land of self-destruction," the narrator describes with ironic disdain a society that, in its more sanguine aspects at least, some might regard as the most commendable of meritocracies.

In all matters, people acted according to the demands of the moment, not considering later consequences. Courtesies of rank between members of the four classes of samurai, farmer, tradesman and merchant even were not observed. The young would compete according to their respective skills and those who worked hardest would take the best food, clothing and other fine things for themselves. Those who were old and could not work as well would receive only the poorest of food and clothing. When even an elder brother or parent became old and infirm, and were no longer of any service, they would be taken out into the mountains or valleys and abandoned.

When the youth gathered to discuss such matters, they did not feel at all chastened by circumstances in foreign lands. "In China, Japan, and such countries," they would say, "they relate that the people are educated and keep a record of ancient matters, and that they look after each other in various ways.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 39-40.

According to the laws and teachings circulated by the various creeds, those who are young and of greatest use eat the poorest food and wear the poorest clothing. The useless elderly, on the other hand, eat the finest foods and wear the finest of clothing. Call this filial piety, the Way, or what you will, but do such old teachings truly have any value today? These pathetic countries have no understanding of logic. Our country is wiser and better by far.⁷⁸

The comparison of the enlightened countries of Japan and China with this country that has no respect for social distinctions or bonds between parent and child might lead one to believe that the text as a whole is on the side of Confucian social order. In other passages, however, it surveys the merits and drawbacks of various schools of philosophy.

One finds that Edo period writers — similar to the common appropriation of the Eden myth by Western utopian writers — frequently used Taoist or Buddhist visions of paradise to their own secular ends. The Taoist elements of these works especially might be associated with so-called “state-of-nature” utopias, in which all wants are satisfied through the gods or the bounty of nature. As used by Yūkokushi, Shōeki, and Gennai, however, traditional visions of paradise often serve in fact to highlight societal conflicts at this time when, as Yūkokushi writes, “courtesies of rank between members of the four classes” had begun to break down. Although not always necessarily progressive in their ideals, these works reveal the concern for issues of class, property and privilege that Rees writes is a defining element of utopian fiction.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 40.

Chapter Three: Utopian Fiction in the Wake of the Kansei Reforms

I regard numbers of Edo period humorous or fantastic tales to be works of utopian fiction for the manner in which they use a fantastic locale to comment on aspects of contemporary life. Works such as *Tales of the World of Law*, *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* and *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands*, although based in part on Buddhist or Taoist visions of an otherworldly paradise, are also clearly concerned with more topical issues. Moreover, these are not representations of an uncomplicated earthly paradise — as in Pindar’s Elysian Fields where “in sunshine ever fair/ Abide the Good, and all their nights and days/ An equal splendour wear.” Many are concerned with such “modern” problems as class conflict and the changing role of the individual in a mass society.⁷⁹

One might question, nevertheless, whether such works truly evaluate or propose new models of society, often considered the hallmark of utopian fiction, or are more strictly speaking works of humor and diversion. Specialists in Edo period literature have debated whether popular works of this time, often referred to collectively as *gesaku*, as a whole should be regarded as satire or social criticism. Nakamura Yukihiro, for instance, writes that works of *gesaku* in general, including *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, should

⁷⁹ Pindar, Fragments 129, in *The Odes of Pindar, Including the Principle Fragments*, translated by John Sandys (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937), 591.

not be considered satire of the highest order since, he feels, “they lack the bitterness arising from conflicts between ideals and reality.”⁸⁰

I do not agree that *gesaku* as a genre (or, properly speaking, range of genres) lacks satirical qualities. Still, Nakamura presents a fair litmus test for satire, and for utopian fiction as well, when he describes it as a mode that is concerned foremost with schisms between ideals and reality. Rees and other commentators, significantly for this study, describe utopian fiction as closely linked to satire in its implicit criticism of the author’s own society. “By constructing an imaginary alternative,” Rees writes, the author of utopian fiction “implies that whatever is, is *not* right.”⁸¹ She adds that, given this mode’s often satirical view of the status quo, “writing utopian fiction is in all instances a subversive act.”⁸² Later in this chapter, I will reconsider this presumed association between utopian fiction and satire, as well as the debatable notion that these modes are inherently subversive. I will first discuss, however, several Edo period utopian works that clearly do criticize the social hierarchies and politics of their time.

Similar to the period in English literature known for satirists like Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) or Laurence Sterne (1713-68), one could describe the late eighteenth and

⁸⁰ Nakamura Yukihiro, *Gesakuron* (A Study of *Gesaku*), *Nakamura Yukihiro chojutsushū* Vol. 8 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1982), 120.

⁸¹ Rees, 123.

⁸² *Ibid.*

early nineteenth century in Japanese literature as an “age of satire.” However, even granting that *gesaku* is indeed a satirical mode, this comparison may not necessarily convince some critics of the ultimate literary value of Edo period popular works. Being closely associated with more everyday types of humor, satire, as Northrop Frye discusses in his well-known *Anatomy of Criticism*, has traditionally been considered one of the lower literary genres.⁸³ It is perhaps not surprising therefore that some critics have seen *gesaku* — and perhaps especially such comedic sub-genres as the *kokkeibon* — as a purely frivolous or even decadent mode of writing.⁸⁴

Sumie Jones writes that even specialists in Tokugawa era literature have often dismissed *gesaku* as a frivolous and decadent literary form that spelled the end of the literary golden age of the Genroku era (1688-1703). Indeed, disparagement of Edo period humorous fiction in particular is not a recent phenomenon. In the essay *Suwifuto to ensei bungaku* (Swift and Pessimistic Literature, 1909), Natsume Sōseki, the famous Meiji and Taishō era writer, compares Edo period humorous fiction with the, in his mind, more strident social criticism of Swift:

Some people have regarded Tokugawa era works of humor as satire (*fūshi*), but I do not see them in this fashion. In works like *Hizakurige*, one continually sees

⁸³ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 223-39.

⁸⁴ Jones, 2.

characters who looking back objectively on their own mistakes and blunders derive amusement from them. It is in all respects a light-hearted literature.”⁴⁵

It is interesting that Sōseki, who in his early period of writing is known as a humorist, makes a distinction between “true” satire and “mere” humorous writing. Although his views appear to change in his own career as a writer, Sōseki, who first presented the above essay as part of a lecture series on eighteenth-century English literature, presents a rather critical view of native humorous works in comparison with the more “serious” social satire of Swift and other Western writers.

In a book review titled “*World Within Walls: A View from Without*,” Robert Leutner notes a similar emphasis on Western models in noted Japanese literature specialist Donald Keene’s assessment of Edo period popular literature. Leutner writes that in chapters concerning *gesaku* fiction in his work *World Within Walls*, “Keene has found it difficult to talk about the books and authors he discusses from any perspective other than that of the standards by which we are accustomed to judge the fictional forms of our own European tradition.” Keene’s observations, Leutner concludes, therefore “paint a depressing picture of the state of the fiction-writing art in the Edo period.”⁴⁶ In

⁴⁵ Natsume Sōseki, “Suwifuto to ensei bungaku” (Swift and the Literature of Pessimism) in *Bungaku hyōron*, 353-522 (Tokyo: Shunyōdō, 1915), 366. This essay was first presented in 1909 as part of Sōseki’s lecture series on eighteenth-century English literature given at Tokyo Imperial University.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Peter Kornicki, “The Survival of Tokugawa Fiction in the Meiji Period,” in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41 (1981), 461-82: 466.

treating several *gesaku* works as examples of utopian fiction, I perhaps run a similar danger of attempting to fit Japanese works into a largely Western literary schematic. In an attempt to avoid such pitfalls, I will discuss various native literary techniques used by Japanese authors to create utopian fiction quite distinct from many Western examples.

In contrast to a traditional disparagement of *gesaku* as a less refined genre of literature, later critics such as Maeda Ai have considered its value as commentary on Edo period social mores and popular culture. In *Bakumatsu ishinki no bungaku* (Literature in the Last Days of the Tokugawa Shogunate and During the Meiji Restoration), for instance, Maeda discusses the enduring popularity and influence of various genres of *gesaku* in Meiji times.⁴⁷ Other commentators, however, continue to regard *gesaku* as insufficiently critical in its view of society or, in other words, to be lacking in true satire. For instance, Joel Cohn — although he presents in *Studies in the Comic Spirit in Modern Japanese Fiction* a well-balanced view of *gesaku* as comic literature — is skeptical of the ultimate value of late Edo *gesaku* works as social commentary. He writes that as a result of government censorship found in the Kansei and other reforms, late Edo period *gesaku* writers:

⁴⁷ Maeda Ai, *Bakumatsu ishinki no bungaku* (Literature in the Last Days of the Tokugawa Shogunate and During the Meiji Restoration) (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1972).

were constrained to limit themselves to the most innocuous of themes and techniques... pleasure-quarter shenanigans, country-bumpkin versus city-slicker buffoonery, and wordplay that owed as much to contrivance as to ingenuity.⁸⁸

In fairness to Cohn, the comic episodes of many late Edo period *gesaku* are often difficult to describe as a critique of important social issues. One can argue, nevertheless, that even in their “silliest” depictions of pleasure-quarter shenanigans, *gesaku* pieces possessed some deeper social and political relevance: If nothing else, in showing merchant-class characters living in grand style, they clearly flaunted the shogunate’s attempt to mandate Confucian morality and impose strict sumptuary laws.

As in Cohn’s comments above, a supposed “disappearance” of satire in *gesaku* is often attributed to strict censorship measures contained in the Kansei and later reforms. It is an unavoidable fact that government censorship certainly did discourage the writing of openly critical works. As Kōta Yōzo discusses in *Edo no kinsho* (Edo Period Banned Books), in the latter Edo period, official lists of banned books (or *kinsho mokuroku*) were distributed to booksellers as a means to ensure compliance with censorship laws.⁸⁹ In one such list, the greatest number of banned books appear under the heading “books on sensitive topics,” a catch phrase for any work dealing critically with the samurai, the shogunate, or the court. A cautionary addendum to one such list reads:

⁸⁸ Joel Cohn, *Studies in the Comic Spirit in Modern Japanese Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 67

⁸⁹ Kōta Yōzo, *Edo no kinsho* (Edo Period Banned Books) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1981).

In addition to the books listed to the right, there exist manuscripts of correspondence and miscellanies so numerous we cannot record them individually here. Among these, we need not even speak of works dealing with the court or the household of the shogun; all books treating the affairs of nobles or of samurai, or which discuss current affairs, even if they do not appear in the list to the right, are strictly forbidden.⁹⁰

As draconian as these measures may appear, it seems obvious that they were not successful in curtailing all criticism of government initiatives and policies in literature and arts. Even at the height of the reforms, political satire can be found in such diverse Edo period popular arts and forms of expression as theatre (*kabuki*), humorous verse (*senryū*), comic-story-telling (*rakugo*), public notices (*rakusho*) and satirical illustrations (*fūshi-e*), as well as in numbers of *gesaku* works.

One might say that the subtle form of criticism known as satire flourishes in those very times when authors are prevented from expressing their views more directly. Although some claim that censorship effectively eradicated satire from late Edo period works, Mizuno Minoru notes that numbers of highly satirical works in fact appeared in response to the Kansei reforms themselves.⁹¹ Among these, several *kibyōshi* (a form of *gesaku* that combines text and illustration) ridicule specifically the attempt of the reforms

⁹⁰ Quoted in Konta, 16. Translation my own.

⁹¹ This background is discussed in the chapter “Bakusei fūshi no kibyōshi, Kansei haikaku o megutte” (*Kibyōshi as a Criticism of the Military Government, the Case of the Kansei Reforms*) of Mizuno Minoru’s *Kibyōshi, sharebon no sekai* (*The World of Kibyōshi and Sharebon*) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 1976), 163-176.

to mandate activities and patterns of behavior deemed appropriate for those of the samurai class. Several of these works are typical of utopian fiction in their presentation of a fantastic locale (including several set in the distant past, discussed below) that can be taken nevertheless as a reflection of contemporary society.

In many instances, the fantastic locales and use of intricate puns found in *gesaku* works might be attributed to the political necessity of couching criticism in less overt form. An often-cited Kansei era comic poem, similarly, employs subtle puns to ridicule the *bunbu ryōdō*, or “dual paths of scholarship and military arts,” policy promoted as part of the Kansei reforms (1787-1793).⁴² Through this policy, members of the samurai class, who were perceived as having become lax in times of peace, were expected to demonstrate in essence their qualifications both as scholars and as warriors. This poem compares to the buzzing of a mosquito the flurry of activity produced as samurai rushed to demonstrate their preparedness in both scholarship and martial arts:

yo no naka ni

In the middle of the night

⁴² In the chapter “Tokugawa Society” in *Tokugawa Japan: The Social and Economic Antecedents of Modern Japan*, Chie Nakane describes the social situation of Edo Japan in which samurai “were the elite of the society, forming 6 percent of the total population, but they did not monopolize scholastic and cultural activities.” As Nakane relates, the role of samurai became increasingly unclear during the period of relative tranquility and rising merchant class fortunes in the Kyōhō and Kansei periods. The Kansei shogunate instituted the “dual-paths of scholarly and military arts” policy in an attempt to mandate the ethical guidelines provided by (Neo-)Confucianism and to refurbish the image of the samurai both as members of a hereditary warrior class and as scholars. Chie Nakane, “Tokugawa Society,” in *Tokugawa Japan: The Social and Economic Antecedents of Modern Japan*, edited by Chie Nakane, Shinzaburō Ōishi and Conrad Totman (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1990), 240.

*ka hodo urasaki
mono wa nashi
bunbu to itte
nete mo irarezu*

There is nothing
As irritating as a mosquito
The *bunbu* of its buzzing
Keeps me from getting any rest⁹³

This verse provides a good illustration of the subtle nature of Edo period political satire. Involving several puns, a literal English translation of this poem reflects merely the author's irritation at night over the buzzing of a mosquito. The onomatopoeia "bunbu," however, refers not only to the buzzing of mosquitos but to the unpopular *bunbu ryōdō* policy. The author, thought to be the famous poet and critic Ōta Nanpo, thereby voices his irritation both with the initiators of these reforms and with unctuous samurai "throughout society" (a second meaning of "*yo no naka ni*") who rushed to prove their mettle in the comically disparate spheres of letters and martial arts.

The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine as Anti-Confucian Dystopia

The most famous *gesaku* work created in response to the Kansei reforms is the political satire *Bunbu nidō mangoku tōshi* (*The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine; or Separating the Scholars from the Warriors*, 1788). Created by one of the pioneers of the *kibyōshi* genre Hōseidō Kisanji, this work criticizes both the government reforms and aspects of the social hierarchy of the time. Contemporaries clearly recognized this extremely popular work, which immediately went into second and third printings, as

⁹³ Quoted in Yoshihara Ken'ichirō. *Rakusho to iu media: Edo minshū no ikari to yūmoa* (Graffiti as a Media: The Humor and Life of the Edo Populace) (Tokyo: Kyōiku Shuppan, 1999), 91.

political satire, as is demonstrated by the fact that in the furor surrounding the piece

Kisanji was roundly censured by the shogunate government and forbidden to write any further prose.

In treating *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* as a work of dystopian fiction, I am particularly interested in the manner in which it transfers contemporary political events to a fictional locale set in a much earlier time. Although concerning a somewhat earlier period, Donald Shively writes that the playwright Chikamatsu (1751-1810) and other Edo period creators of potentially offensive or otherwise sensitive material would in similar fashion often transfer events to an earlier time and change the names of characters accordingly.⁹⁴

Although perhaps still partly motivated, one can imagine, by the necessity of avoiding the attention of government censors, by the time of the appearance of *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* this characteristic had become a common feature of *kibyōshi*, *kabuki* and other popular genres. Inoue Takaaki describes such “time-slips,” as he calls them, as an inherent element of much *gesaku* humor.⁹⁵ This common attribute of *gesaku* is similar to the types of chronological or spatial displacement found in utopian fiction.

⁹⁴ Donald Shively, “Chikamatsu’s Satire on the Dog Shogun,” in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 18 (1955): 159-180, 160.

⁹⁵ Inoue Takaaki, *Edo gesaku no kenkyū: kibyōshi o shu to shite* (A Study of Edo Period Gesaku: Focusing on Kibyōshi) (Tokyo: Shintensha, 1986), 331.

Such a parody of setting is also used in the work *Ōmugaeshi bunbu no futamichi* (The Twin Paths of Letters and Arms, Parroted, 1789), by Kisanji's close associate and fellow *kibyōshi* master Koikawa Harumachi (1744-89).^{*6} This latter political satire reveals the city of Edo transformed overnight by naive townspeople who believe that the dual-paths of scholarship and military arts policy applies to such aspects of every day life even as dress and sports. In this representation of the otherwise urbane lifestyle of late Edo times turned upside-down, courtesans discover a passion for horsemanship, while samurai, absurdly anachronistic to the time, are shown wearing armor and practicing such traditional pursuits as archery in the center of a bustling market place. In such details, Kisanji constructs a world paralleling contemporary society, in other words, a utopia.

The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine, in comparison with the representation of public market places and the variety of class types seen in *The Twin Paths of Letters and Arms, Parroted*, is more strictly concerned with those of the samurai class and in many sections directs its criticism at a single political figure, Matsudaira Sadanobu (1758-1829), the senior councilor (*rōjū shūseki*) of the shogunate and author of the Kansei reforms. Given the importance of Sadanobu both to this work and to politics of the time, I should give some background on his rise to political prominence.

^{*6} Koikawa Harumachi, "Ōmugaeshi bunbu no futamichi" (The Twin Paths of Letters and Arms, Parroted, 1789), in *Edo no gesaku chon*, edited by Masatane Koike, 107-142 (Tokyo: Shakai Shisōsha, 1980).

Tsuji Tatsuya writes that Sadanobu received a mandate to govern in part due to an association with his grandfather, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (1646-1709), a former shogun and author of the severe Kyōho reforms of some seventy years previous. In 1788, the same year *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* was published, Sadanobu was promoted hastily to a position of full authority in the shogunate to deal with violent peasant riots.⁹⁷ As senior councilor, Sadanobu quickly put into effect policies to redress what he regarded as the too lenient atmosphere of the administration of his predecessor Tanuma Okitsugu. Among various social measures, Sadanobu reinstated the strict censorship laws of previous administrations and initiated the unpopular *bunbu ryōdō* policy.

It is at this policy that *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* directs its sharp wit, ridiculing the arbitrariness with which the shogunate attempted to determine whom among the samurai were sufficiently trained in the military arts and in orthodox Confucian scholarship. Consistent with the etymology of the term *gesaku* as frivolous writing, however, the plot of *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* may at first strike one as a most indirect, or even evasive, form of criticism. Through use of the sort of “time-slip” described above, neither the current shogunate nor its effective leader Sadanobu in fact are mentioned directly in the work. Instead, various details of the *bunbu ryōdō* policy

⁹⁷ Tsuji, 425-477.

are mentioned in connection with a plan supposedly promoted by Minamoto Yoritomo, the founder of the original Kamakura shogunate.

In this plan proposed to ensure the military readiness of the samurai in the period of relative calm following the Genpei Wars (1180-85), Yoritomo orders that the samurai be divided into two categories, the *bun* (those interested in scholarly pursuits) and the *bu* (those engaged in the military arts). Yoritomo then persuades the samurai to enter several caves of Mount Fuji by telling them that inside they will find an elixir of life. According to which cave they enter, the samurai reveal their true identity as fearless warriors, scholars, or feckless types who excel in neither of these officially-recognized pursuits.

I should note that the utopia presented in the following passages of *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* might seem at first quite unlike any found in the Western tradition. This is largely due to differences between *kibyōshi*, as a quite short form that combines word and image, and the extended prose format of the typical utopian novel. However, Western writers and playwrights as well have described complete utopian visions in just a few lines of prose or verse, as in references in *The Tempest* to a land in which "Letters should not be known; riches, poverty, and use of service, none."

Although the following episodes are similarly cursory in their depiction of the political or structural elements of the imagined society, *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* is characteristic of utopias (or dystopias) that satirize existing utopian schemes.

***The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine; or,
Separating the Warriors from the Scholars***

Preface⁹⁸

In a land of Lords⁹⁹ such as ours, sophisticates naturally excel over boors, if only in arrogance and in sporting fancy coiffures.¹⁰⁰ In his great wisdom, Lord Shigetada¹⁰¹ — a man so fastidious he could spot a speck of dust in a serving of noodles — devises a plan. In three caves on Fools’ Mountain¹⁰² he exposes the habitual vices of the greater and lesser lords. At the seven hot springs of Hakone he cleanses them of their filth. And, though a far cry from the three islands celebrated in song,¹⁰³ in the perfumed waters of Ōiso¹⁰⁴ he sees that their slovenly ways are mended. By the request of the publisher, Tsutaya Jūzaburō,¹⁰⁵ this piece was given the title “The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine; or, Separating the Warriors from the Scholars.”

⁹⁸ In this translation, I rely on the text and annotations accompanying the text of “Bunbu Nidō Mangoku Tōshi” found in *Edo no gesaku chon* (An Illustrated Book of Edo Gesaku), edited by Masatane Koike, 45-80 (Tokyo: Shakai Shisōsha, 1980).

⁹⁹ From *kunshikoku*, a poetic appellation for Japan meaning literally “land of lords.” This monicker carries strong undertones of the tendency in Confucian discourse to refer to lords as paragons of its precepts. This preface parodies in particular a section from the sixth book of the *Analects* that concludes with the line, “only by balancing one’s innate nature with acquired refinement may one become a lord.”

¹⁰⁰ This is a parody of the following opening line from the sixth book of the *Analects*, “when outward appearance takes precedence over inner conviction, one becomes a pedant.”

¹⁰¹ Hatakeyama Shigetada (1164-1205), chief general to the founder of the Kamakura shogunate, Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-99).

¹⁰² I.e., *fuchi no yama* or “lack of knowledge mountain,” a pun on Mount Fuji.

¹⁰³ From the lines of a popular ballad, “unloose yourself, float down to the three islands, in the eau de toilette of the courtesans of the three islands.”

¹⁰⁴ A popular hot-spring resort on one of the stations of the Tōkaidō.

¹⁰⁵ The owner of a large publishing-house in Edo. For a discussion of the influence of the Tsutaya publishing concern’s influence on the social life and political debates of the times, see the chapter “Seishin o katachi ni suru henshūjin” (The Editor Who Gave Shape to the Spirit of the Times) in Tanaka Yūko’s *Edo wa nettowa-ku* (Edo as Network) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1993), 186-96.

In “The Literature of Wit and Humor in Late-Eighteenth-Century Edo,” Haruko

Iwasaki describes a technique widely used in Edo period popular arts whereby a well-known story or episode from the past, known as the *sekai* of a piece, is linked through various literary devices, or *shukō*, to contemporary figures or events.¹⁰⁶ In the above preface, Kisanji sets up the *sekai* (or “sphere”) of *The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine* — an episode involving the founder of the Kamakura shogunate, Minamoto Yoritomo, and his general Hatakeyama Shigetada — upon which he applies various satirical devices.

As Iwasaki relates, this convention was a common technique of the day.

Contemporary readers therefore probably anticipated that the author intended to link the ostensible Kamakura setting of *The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine* to contemporary events and figures. Such use of a distant (in spatial or chronological terms) world to comment upon aspects of contemporary society is not unlike the basic method of utopian fiction. Techniques the artist may apply to this sphere, however, may at first seem quite unlike parody, satire, personification, and other conventions so commonly found in Western utopian fiction. Following my translations of sections of *The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine*, I will show how Kisanji satirizes society, politics, and leading figures of the day using such Edo period techniques as *naimaze*, *mitate*, and *ugachi*.

¹⁰⁶ Haruko Iwasaki, “The Literature of Wit and Humor in Late-Eighteenth-Century Edo” in *The Floating World Revisited*, edited by Donald Jenkins, 47-61 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993).



Figure 1: Yoritomo Consults with Shigetada

Reprinted from *Kibyōshi; Sharebon shū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958)

I

[Narrator]

Lord Yoritomo,¹⁰⁷ the following question troubles your people: Now that you have settled Japan and brought relief to the greater and lesser lords, how will Shigetada¹⁰⁸ maintain the spirit necessary for military readiness? Although one may think that the world is currently at peace, one can hardly maintain order solely through scholarly endeavors. It is up to you now in your wisdom to decide to what extent the lords should

¹⁰⁷ Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-99), who in 1185 established the Kamakura *bakufu* and unified Japan. Pictured second to the left, he looks young for a man who would have been at least forty years old. Yoritomo is a stand-in for Shogun Tokugawa Ienari who was fifteen at the time this work was written.

¹⁰⁸ Hatakeyama Shigetada (1164-1205), Yoritomo's chief general. It is quite obvious from the context that Shigetada, the farthest figure to the left, is a foil for Matsudaira Sadanobu. In early editions, this connection is made explicit by the fact that the Sadanobu family pattern, the plum blossom, is printed on his kimono.

be allowed to study letters and to what extent they should devote themselves to the military arts.

[Shigetada]

As for those samurai not already following the paths of scholarship and military arts, we should mandate to which of these pursuits they should direct their efforts. There are also a lot of shiftless samurai who lack skills both in letters and in the military arts. Let's divide the samurai into several groups and ferret out the bums among them.

[First Scribe]

Who would want to expose the lords this way? Did I hear that someone's been drinking cheap liquor from fine bone china?¹⁰⁹

[Second Scribe]

They say Shigetada comprehends the four stages of human existence, but does he realize that four sages are on their way from the temple?¹¹⁰

[Third Scribe]

Perhaps they're talking about snake eyes in a game of backgammon.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Eavesdropping on the conversation between Shigetada and Yoritomo, the first of three scribes pictured in the right of the scene mishears the phrase *bunbu kenbi*, meaning to "combine scholarship and military readiness," as *bunpuku kenbishi*, a nonsense phrase comprised of *bunpuku chagama*, or the teapot from a well-known children's story, and *kenbishi*, literally "sword and water chestnut," a popular brand of sake in the Edo period.

¹¹⁰ This second pun turns upon homonyms of the word *shisō*. One sense refers to the Buddhist notion of the four phases of human existence (that is, birth, aging, illness, and death), the other to a priest (or priests, which with some license I translate here as "four") sent from a temple as messenger.

¹¹¹ Yet another homonym of *shisō* refers to a combination of "three" and "four" when tossing dice in *sugoroku*, a game originating in Egypt and India and introduced to Japan from China in the Nara period. Similar to backgammon, the objective of the game is to move one's fifteen pieces as quickly as possible around the board. This combination, therefore, did not make for a terribly good roll.

In the first scene of *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine*, Kisanji introduces the first Kamakura era shogun Minamoto Yoritomo and his chief general Hatakegawa Shigetada as foils for the contemporary shogun Tokugawa Ienari and his chief senior councilor Matsudaira Sadanobu. The topical nature of their plan, to redeem samurai who excel neither in scholarship nor in military arts, must have been obvious to contemporary readers. In this parody of the *bunbu ryōdō* policy, Shigetada (read Sadanobu) proposes that the samurai be divided into groups according to their true natures as warriors, scholars, or those who excel in neither of these all important pursuits.

Despite its historical setting, the details of this scene all point to contemporary figures and events, down to the very patterns seen on the *kimono* of the figures. This mix of ancient setting and topical subject matter is an example of *naimaze*:

Whatever the sources, many *naimaze* and *hamemono* fictions freely resorted to the trick of double identity to connect the disparate tales. Thus a thoroughly contemporary hero might suddenly elevate his petty street scuffle to a higher level at an opportune moment simply by declaring, "Well, in fact, I am really. . . (*Jitsu wa*. . .)," revealing that he was carrying out the vendetta in a famous samurai saga of centuries past.¹¹²

In *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* this method is somewhat reversed in that the identity of the various characters as historical figures is clear, while their identities as contemporary individuals is known only through subsequent context.

¹¹² Iwasaki 1993, 52.

In addition to Yoritomo/Ienari and Shigetada/Sadanobu, minor characters appearing in this piece also share identities with contemporary figures. The three scribes seen in the right of this scene are modeled on contemporary officials assigned to take a census of the preparedness of individual samurai in scholarship and military arts. This association is made more explicit in the final scene of this section in which Yoritomo and Shigetada (that is, Ienari and Sadanobu) discuss the scribes' respective reports. I see this curious technique as very similar to that of chronological or spatial displacement of utopian fiction whereby the author is able to comment indirectly on the contemporary.

The buffoonish scribes of this scene, in comically misconstruing elements of Shigetada's discussion of the merits of his plan, play a role similar to that of the figure of rogue, clown and fool in many Western novels.¹¹³ In an indirect method of political critique, the slap-stick asides of the scribes serve to take the air out of numbers of sonorous phrases, such as "to combine scholarship and military readiness" (*bunbu kenbi*), used by Sadanobu to lend authority to the "dual paths" policy. Although, through the technique of *naimaze*, set ostensibly in the distant past, *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* demonstrates the potential of *kibyōshi* and other types of *gesaku* as a critique of contemporary political figures and policies.

¹¹³ See Bakhtin's discussion of this role in the section "The Functions of the Rogue, Clown and Fool in the Novel" of *Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel*, collected in *The Dialogic Imagination*, edited by Michael Holquist, 158-67 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).



Figure 2: Shigetada Directs the Samurai towards the Caves of Mount Fuji

II

[Narrator]

In a plan devised by Shigetada, the greater and lesser lords of Kamakura are told of an elixir against death and aging to be found inside Mount Fuji. Directed to find the elixir, they enter Fuji en masse through the crevice known as the “human cavity.”¹¹⁴

In the guise of a Shinto priest, Shigetada¹¹⁵ sits on the stage where the sacred dances are performed, directing the lords toward the opening.

¹¹⁴ In Japanese, *hitoana*. Edo period guide books such as the *Tōkaidō meisho zue* (Images of famous sites along the Tōkaidō) relate that this cave was first searched by order of the second Kamakura Shogun Minamoto Yorii. In addition to lending a more literal dimension to the image of hordes of samurai being swallowed up by “Fools’ Mountain,” the name *hitoana* is used in various puns throughout the narrative.

¹¹⁵ Shigetada, as is indicated again by the plum-blossom crest on his kimono, is in actuality Sadanobu. In the third edition of *The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine*, this mark was effaced from the original wood block, a fact which underlines its political significance.

[Shigetada]

Keep in line! Keep in line! (To a tribute collector) I've got my own pile of rice right here, thank you.¹¹⁶

[A Vendor]

Tour the cave, three *mon* a person . . . Tour the cave, three *mon* a person¹¹⁷

[Refrain]

O yet unseen chasm at the base of Fools' Mountain, tell me, when will the samurai tumble into you?¹¹⁸

The setting of this second scene, in which, amidst great fanfare and confusion, Shigetada (read Sadanobu) leads the samurai towards the “human cavity” of “Fools' Mountain,” is similar in its fantastic qualities to common locales of utopian fiction. In native terms, this scene constitutes a classic example of *mitate*, a mode in which two apparently different or unrelated items are juxtaposed against one another in such a way as to reveal hidden similarities. As Iwasaki relates, it is the incongruity or unexpected nature of these hidden similarities that produces surprise or humor.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ This remark is directed to a man in the crowd collecting temple offerings. The spectator seat on which Shigetada sits is presumably stuffed with rice, the common denomination used in tributes. This irreverent phrase (both to priests and to Sadanobu) phrase, as I discuss below, was quite probably read as a barb against the acquisitiveness of the Sadanobu administration.

¹¹⁷ This line, *hitoana sanmon*, is a pun on the phrase commonly used for calling out goods, *hitoyama ichi mon*, or “one heap, one *mon*.”

¹¹⁸ This refrain, foreshadowing events in upcoming scenes, is a parody of the lines “Oh ageless Mount Fuji, tell me, when will snow fall in small flecks about your base?” from the *nō* chant *Fujisan*.

¹¹⁹ Iwasaki 1993, 52.

In this scene, on a more superficial level, there is humor simply in seeing the valiant general Shigetada, in “drag” as it were, in the robes of a priest. A deeper significance emerges with the realization that this is in fact Sadanobu, the author of the reforms. Similarities between the priest and the politician become clear as one reads the text. True to the definition of *mitate* whereby two essentially dissimilar things are demonstrated to share uncanny similarities, one realizes that the image of the priest urging samurai on to their respective fates in the caves of “Fools’ Mountain” is a very apt symbol for the manipulative policy that Kisanji describes as a veritable “threshing machine.”

Because of the notoriety of *The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine*, second and third runs of the piece were quickly issued. In these, however, a number of details were effaced from the printing block, presumably due to their charged political implications. Most tellingly, the plum-blossom crest, Sadanobu’s family pattern, displayed on the priest’s robes in this and other scenes, disappears altogether. This fact demonstrates both the potential effectiveness of *gesaku* as political satire as well as the pressures placed on individual authors by the censorship of these times.

In the punch line, so to speak, of this scene, Shigetada shouts out to a man collecting tribute, “I’ve got my own pile of rice right here, thank you.” This is a thinly veiled reference to several Kansei era political debacles involving rice. In the year *The*

'Two Paths' Threshing Machine was published, scores of peasant protests (117 by one count) had arisen due to famine conditions, aggravated by a land tax through which the *bakufu* extracted forty to fifty percent of the harvest. It might also refer to the fact that, to solve the increasing insolvency of many samurai, the Sadanobu regime ordered the cancellation of all samurai debts. This, Tsuji relates, in turn put rice brokers and moneylenders in great distress. In such a climate, one may imagine that the very mention of Shogunate figures in connection with rice constituted the sort of "sensitive topic" discouraged through censorship of the time.

I regard this work to be a work of dystopian fiction for the manner in which it recasts contemporary figures and issues in a farce set in a different time and place. In the above scene, Shigetada/ Sadanobu, from the vantage point of his place on the ceremonial stage, plays the literal role of impresario of the political farce described *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine*. Considering the strict censorship of these times, such irreverent depiction of contemporary political figures and policies was perhaps only possible through the sorts of chronological and spatial displacement characteristic of utopian and dystopian fiction. In the Meiji era as well, when censorship laws were still rigidly enforced, many writers of political novels (*seiji shōsetsu*) turned to utopian fiction as a means to express in a less overt manner criticism of the status quo. Some of these works show the influence of the earlier *gesaku* tradition in their idiom and manner of satire.



Figure 3: Inside the Caverns of Mount Fuji

III

The Cavern of Letters and Refinement

Warning: Persons lacking a passion for letters and refinement will please refrain from entering

[Unidentified Samurai]

No philistines allowed!

The Passageway to Eternal Life and Endless Youth

[Unidentified Samurai]

Seems like a nice enough place.

Hobgoblins' Grotto

Warning: Weaklings may not trespass

[Unidentified Samurai]

Pay that no mind . . . go in, go in!

The legend at the upper right of the above scene reads “inside the caverns of Mount Fuji.” Containing little dialogue, this scene presents to the viewer three caves, two representing, respectively, the paths of scholarship and military arts, as addressed in the shogunate’s dual paths policy, and a third cave representing the path of those without interest or aptitude in either of these officially recognized endeavors.

Signs (shown in italics in this translation) hang above each of the three caverns. The sign above the opening at the far right of the scene reads “the cavern of letters and refinement.” As befits its subject matter, this sign is written in literary Chinese, using highly stylized, seal-script characters. This is obviously the path any samurai who considered himself a true scholar would follow. A warning posted outside of this cave reads, “warning: Persons lacking a passion for letters and refinement will please refrain from entering,” thus letting the unlettered know that they are not welcome. To reinforce this point, one of the samurai in the crowd shouts out “No philistines allowed!”

At the top center of the illustration, the sign above a second, somewhat more inviting-looking entrance reads “the passageway to eternal life and endless youth.” The suggestion in this case is that no person trained in the stoical way of the warrior would desire such utopian bliss. This is reinforced by the less than enthusiastic response by one samurai, “seems like a nice enough place.” Those who enter this cave, as the story

unfolds, are deemed to be the most feckless and dissolute of the samurai and are sent to a rigorous samurai training seminar held at the Hakone hot-springs.

The sign above the third opening, “hobgoblins’ grotto,” apparently makes this cave an irresistible Venus’ flytrap for any stalwart samurai anxious to demonstrate his mettle. This challenge is seconded in the sign posted outside that reads “weaklings may not trespass.” Numbers of fearless samurai choose to ignore this warning, as is witnessed by the long line outside of the cave door. It is these individuals who are most highly praised by the shogun and his general in the final scene of this section.

The caves depicted in this scene serve as a dystopian representation of the arbitrariness of the dual paths of scholarship and military arts policy which attempted to classify individuals according to stereotyped models for samurai behavior . The contemporary reader would have been familiar with surveys of military and scholarly preparedness then being conducted by the shogunate to establish the qualifications of individual samurai in (Confucian) scholarship and know-how in the military arts. Tsuji relates that one such survey, the results of which were recorded as *Kōgiroku* (Records of righteousness and filial piety), was commissioned by the Sadanobu administration to demonstrate its commitment to the dual paths of scholarship and military arts policy.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Tsuji, 469.



Figure 4: The Samurai Emerge from the Caves of Mount Fuji

IV¹²¹

[Narrator]

Those worthless samurai who veered from the paths both of letters and of military arts knew no shame. However, according to Shigetada's plan, their faults were soon made as clear as the light of day.

Egress from the Cavern of Letters and Refinement

[Narrator]

Those dedicated to books and learning soon began to pour out of this cranny.

¹²¹ This scene is the mirror image of the preceding one. The samurai, now properly sorted according to the respective paths they have chosen, are shown exiting from the rear of each of the three caves.

Portal Exiting the Passageway to Eternal Life and Endless Youth

[First samurai]

It's open! It's open! Get me the hell out of here!

[Second samurai]

You're telling me this sticky junk is an elixir for life everlasting? . . .

Nasty ooze! . . . More likely it's a concoction for an everlasting hard-

on!"¹² "My body's all slippery . . . I can't get a foothold . . . Oh, thanks buddy! . .

[Third samurai]

We've really hit rock bottom now! Help!!!

[Narrator]

Yam soup has been poured around the mouth of the portal and they all slip and fall. This is done in the way of a sly hint to those backsliding samurai.

The Back Door to Hobgoblins Grotto

[Fourth samurai]

They thought the threat of goblins would scare us? Not one showed up.

[Fifth samurai]

That was no challenge at all.

¹² The pun in the original revolves on two connotations of the word *nagainochi*, its literal meaning of "long life" and nuances of the term as used as the brand name for a commercial aphrodisiac.

Yet another native device used in this piece is that of *ugachi*, a quality that might be loosely translated as “satire.” Coming from the phrase *ana o ugatsu*, literally “to dig up or uncover a hole,” *ugachi* suggests figuratively the uncovering of some unknown or hidden fact. This sense is retained in such present-day Japanese expressions as *ugatta koto o iu* (to make a “digging” remark) or *shin o ugatteiru* (to hit the mark). Itself making liberal use of references to exploring holes or caves, *The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine* makes numbers of satirical “digs” at Matsudaira Sadanobu and his associates, revealing the absurdities of the “dual paths” policy when exposed to the light of day.

Sumie Jones relates that in addition to revealing hidden facts or secrets, *ugachi* may also refer to the revealing of faults, “as in the satirical raillery of individuals.”¹²³ In addition to lampooning shogunate officials like Sadanobu, Kisanji presents caricatures of several types of samurai to be found in late Edo times. Iwasaki discusses the changing ideals for samurai behavior and achievements of this time in which:

By the late eighteenth century, the image of a diversely talented, smoothly polished intellectual had gained much popularity, while the once-admired ideal of the samurai as single-mindedly devoted to the martial arts had become a popular target of ridicule.¹²⁴

In the dystopias described in both *The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine* and the contemporary work *The Twin Paths of Letters and Arms, Parroted*, the authors make fun

¹²³ Jones, 11.

¹²⁴ Iwasaki 1993, 49.

especially of those samurai who follow the traditional martial arts. But they also deride those samurai who, quite unlike the urbane sophisticates described above, define learning strictly as a study of the Confucian classics.

For those readers who identified with this ideal of a new, diversely talented samurai, *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* might have been read as commentary upon conflicting scholarly and philosophical epistemologies that favored, on the one hand, the Japanese and Chinese classics, and, on the other, took delight in contemporary culture and literature.

As a utopia of scholarship and learning, one might compare the three caves of *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* to the setting of St. James's Library in Swift's *Battle of the Books*, in which location Swift depicts a battle between the "ancients" and the "moderns," that is between the myriad books representing ancient wisdom and culture and those heralding the learning and achievements of the new day. Although these are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories, Kisanji represents in similarly abbreviated form a conflict between traditional Confucian scholars and those literati of late Edo times who, like Kisanji, had embraced the culture of the merchant class and found value in popular arts and entertainments. It is such "backsliders," the ensuing scene suggests, who were the true target of Sadanobu's reforms.



Figure 5: Yoritomo and Shigetada Read Reports

V

[Shigetada]

The scholars are clearly more superfluous than the valorous types. But there are also a lot of backsliders. That lot is no better than the chaff that comes off grain when you send it through the thresher.

[Yoritomo]

At least we can be thankful that the valorous still outnumber the scholars. What most worries me is that as the world remains at peace the literati will eventually come to outnumber the military men.

Connections Between Utopian Fiction and Satire

In the above concluding scene of the first half of *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine*, Shigetada and Yoritomo are shown reading the reports submitted by the three scribes. These are titled “a record of chivalrous samurai,” “examples of scholarly samurai,” and “a memorandum regarding backsliding samurai.” The last of these reports in particular might be read as an indication of the unease the author, as a free-wheeling artist immersed in merchant class culture, must have felt in the face of reforms designed to reverse the more laissez-faire social atmosphere of the Tanuma administration.

Such satirical *kibyōshi* created in reaction to the Kansei reforms, to which should be added Santō Kyōden's *Fuji no hitoana kenbutsu* (A Tour of the “Human Cavity” at Fuji, 1788), demonstrate that the supposedly frivolous humor of *gesaku* could be potentially damaging when directed at political figures and policies. It is clear that the Sadanobu administration viewed these works as subversive in intent, for they subsequently forbade Kisanji to write further prose and, in 1789, called Harumachi to appear before the shogunate.¹²⁵

Despite such attempts to quell criticism, the Sadanobu administration became increasingly unpopular. In 1793, bowing to public pressure, Sadanobu was forced to

¹²⁵ As Mizuno and others relate, Harumachi excused himself from this appearance by reason of an illness, shortly after which time he passed away. By some accounts, his death is also attributed to suicide. Mizuno, 182.

relinquish his duties as senior councilor to the shogunate and guardian to the young shogun Ienari.¹²⁶ Although they caused quite a stir among both merchant class and samurai readers, it is difficult to say to what extent the above works contributed to Sadanobu's eventual downfall. Despite such notable examples of political satire in *gesaku*, many regard these genres as whole, as I have discussed, as being rather ineffectual or even escapist when viewed as social or political criticism. Among more informed commentators, as in Nakamura Yukihiro's view of *gesaku* as a type of light satire at best, such conceptions might arise out of an awareness of the complexity of irony and satire as found in these genres or, for that matter, in literature in general.

In the Western literary tradition as well, satire, like its cousin irony, is of course known as a most ambivalent and contradictory form of expression. Similar to the question Linda Hutcheon poses in her work *Irony's Edge*, one may ask why *gesaku* authors chose to write in such a contradictory mode in which they would say one thing but often mean something altogether different.¹²⁷ Why, for instance, does Kisanji — despite the fact that contemporaries clearly recognized *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* as a spoof on the “dual paths of scholarship and military arts” policy — persist in using obscure puns and an entirely fabricated historical parallel throughout the work?

¹²⁶ Tsuji, 476.

¹²⁷ Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 5.

One obvious answer might be that this less direct rhetorical style allowed him, without breaking the letter of strict censorship laws, to discuss such “sensitive topics” as the court, the shogunate, and current affairs. Perhaps as a result of the laws that prohibited authors from discussing such topics, it is telling that that nowhere in *The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine* does Kisanji refer directly to Sadanobu or the contemporary shogunate. Instead, he relies upon puns, invented historical parallels, and visual clues to ridicule both Sadanobu and shogunate policies.

One can find a similar use of puns and circumlocution in more popular expressions of political criticism in Edo times. In several examples of *rakusho* (the satirical scribbles, including verse, that often appeared on public signboards and walls as a form of political dissent) Sadanobu is referred to simply as the “backscratcher.” This nickname, meaning literally “the hands of the grandchild” (*mago no te*) in Japanese, is used to link Sadanobu with his none-too-popular grandfather, Shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (1646-1709), who instigated the earlier, notoriously severe Kyōho reforms.

One such *rakusho* reads:

*Mago no te no
kayui tokoro e
todokisugi,
ashi no ura made*

The backscratcher
in reaching our itchy spots
goes a bit too far
scratching and searching about

kakisagasu nari

to the very soles of our feet¹²⁸

This verse supports the historical view of Sadanobu as a figure who was at first well-regarded due to his establishment of needed economic reforms, but who ultimately took things too far in his unpopular social measures. In the current discussion, I wish to point out through this example that subtle forms of satire were not the province strictly of literary works but can be seen also in more popular expressions of discontent in this time.

Since punning and clever allusion were such an important part of Edo period popular and literary expression, it would be an exaggeration to claim that such attributes arose *solely* out of a necessity to avoid the stamp of the government censor. It is not clear, therefore, whether the subtle use of puns and other half-concealed jibes in *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* derives from political necessity or from literary precedent. Arguing for the influence of the latter, even in the above satirical verse, which one might imagine to be a more spontaneous expression of discontent, the anonymous satirist strictly follows the orthodox form of Japanese poetry (or *waka*).

In light of the value placed on wit in Edo times, one may imagine that readers appreciated in their own right the witty wordplay and clever allusions seen in *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine*, irrespective of their function as political commentary. This would seem to argue for a conception of *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine*, as is

¹²⁸ Quoted in Yoshihara, 92

assumed of so many *gesaku* works, as being a work foremost of entertainment and only secondarily a work of political criticism. On the other hand, this piece demonstrates that humor, including the subtle form of literary humor known as satire, and social or political commentary are not mutually exclusive modes, a rather obvious point that is often forgotten in discussions of the social role of *gesaku*.

Gesaku might be seen as possessing the sort of earthy, irreverent humor found in some types of popular literature that Bakhtin calls the carnivalesque. Drawing on Bakhtinian ideas of dialogue between levels of artistic production, Cohn describes the social milieu that produced *gesaku* as a cross-fertilization of high and low culture:

Because *gesaku*'s initial creators and audience constituted an informal subculture in which highly educated but underemployed samurai from the lower echelons of the ruling class could mingle with sophisticated but socially lowly commoners from the urban merchant class, *gesaku* possessed attributes of both high and low culture without belonging to either.¹²⁹

The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine, providing a good example of this cross-fertilization of high and low culture, mixes vernacular dialogue with refined literary and historical allusion. In contrast to the at times scatological humor seen in the dialogue of the story, for instance, Kisanji refers to lines from *nō* dramas, as well as to historical figures both well-known and obscure.

¹²⁹ Cohn, 18.

Although *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* ultimately reached a much wider audience, which included those of both the samurai and merchant class, these latter attributes suggest the origins of *gesaku* within the more exclusive setting of the literary coterie. In gatherings such as *kyōka* parties, Iwasaki writes, hundreds of participants from all forms of the popular arts might gather to hear or perform satirical verse. Iwasaki notes that at such gatherings discussion was not limited to the arts, but that they “came to function as the marketplace of talents and ideas in literature, the performing and visual arts, scholarship, business, and even politics.”¹³⁰ Reflecting this background, *gesaku* could serve the function both of a playful intellectual exercise in historical and literary allusion as well as political commentary.

One may wonder, nevertheless, why precisely the shogunate considered *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* to be so subversive. In addition to the thinly-veiled ridicule of Sadanobu seen in this work, a good part of the answer, I believe, lies in Kisanji's subversive use of dialogue. Iwasaki, in describing the qualities of several earlier works by Kisanji, describes the style of the dialogue he puts into the mouths of his characters as one which “rang with Edo colloquialism, enlivened here and there by tongue-in-cheek

¹³⁰ Iwasaki 1993, 48.

one-liners.”¹³¹ As opposed to criticizing the dual paths policy in the terse language of a political tract, in *The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine* Kisanji takes the liberty of using this type of dialogue to transmogrify the language of official policies.

Most of the political satire of this work thus takes place in the form of humorous asides, as opposed to through direct criticism. If it weren’t for the fact that Sadanobu did clearly take offense at Kisanji’s representation both of himself personally and of his policies, one might nevertheless regard the at times light repartee seen in this work as a prime example of Swift’s famous maxim that:

Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it.¹³²

One wonders whether any other contemporaries could see their own visage in or take offense at Kisanji’s description of samurai entering “the cavern of letters and refinement” or avoiding “hobgoblin’s grotto.” In that Kisanji’s representation of class types remains at the level of caricature, this work is not surprisingly most often remembered as a satire upon a specific government policy, as opposed to social satire in the broader sense.

¹³¹ Haruko Iwasaki, “The World of Gesaku: playful writers of late eighteenth century Japan” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1984), 114.

¹³² Jonathan Swift, preface to “The Battle of the Books” in *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Edition of the Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 1.

Contrary to the common assumption that the Kansei reforms effectively sounded the death knell for political satire in *gesaku*, Iwasaki argues that the reforms themselves in fact spurred more stridently political types of satire in these genres. *Gesaku*, Iwasaki writes, was revitalized as a result of the turmoil of Tanuma's fall and the policies instituted by the rigidly Confucian Sadanobu:

These striking events opened up exciting new possibilities for satire, which resulted in a dozen or so superb *kibyōshi*, still considered to be masterpieces of the genre. What Sadanobu struck down from 1789 on was, therefore, not the established tradition of *gesaku* but the newly surging forces of political satire occasioned largely by his reforms.¹³³

Differing from the common view, Iwasaki in this passage describes the Kansei reforms as both a new beginning and end to political satire in *gesaku*. Such a view may not be encouraging for those whose taste is for more overtly political satire, but it acknowledges that other types of satire can still be found in *gesaku* works after this time. Iwasaki thus presents a refreshing alternative to the common view that *gesaku* as a literary form went into decline following the Kansei reforms.

Conceptions of utopian fiction, as I discuss in the previous chapter, vary greatly, with many scholars insisting upon explicit mention of government institutions, laws, governing bodies and so on. Following such a conception, Nuita, who is one of the few to consider Edo period works as examples of utopian fiction, would probably dismiss *The*

¹³³ Iwasaki 1984, 358.

'Two Paths' Threshing Machine, as he does Gennai's *The Romantic Life of Shidōken*, as a work that satirizes aspects of contemporary society but stops short of proposing its own alternative model. Although this is certainly true, such a literal definition of the term "utopia" might also disqualify such classic examples of this genre as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Voltaire's *Candide*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, among countless others.

As a literary term, I regard the utopia simply as that device whereby an author creates an exotic or fantastic locale as a means to consider various social or philosophical schemes. If, in creating such a realm, the artist's objective is to comment upon or criticize *existing* political or social schemes, the resulting fiction will naturally possess satirical qualities. In the last chapter, I presented several Edo period popular works which I describe as satirical utopias for the manner in which they represent realms that (although in some respects reminiscent of common Buddhist or Taoist visions of paradise) are clearly intended as critical commentary on society and politics.

The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine presents an interesting contrast to these works. In contrast to the spatial displacement of aspects of contemporary society to a fantastic locale set on some distant island, as seen in both *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* and *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands*, Kisanji uses chronological displacement in this work set in the distant past to voice his dissatisfaction with contemporary politics. Although, perhaps due to a fear of official recrimination, none of these works in fact present their

own vision of the ideal society, they are quite typical of satirical utopian fiction in the Western tradition.

The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine, by reason of its more explicit political content, might be regarded by orthodox definition as one of clearest examples of utopian fiction discussed thus far in this dissertation. As noted earlier, in the often rigid taxonomies found in studies of utopian fiction, works regarded as “truly utopian” are often those which present, or criticize, models specifically for an ideal *political* state. As a sign of the influence of such critical definitions, in his general glossary of literary terms M.H. Abrams describes the utopia as “the class of fiction that represents an ideal, nonexistent *political* state and way of life” (emphasis my own).¹³⁴

Following a further distinction found in many studies of utopian fiction, *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine* might be defined more narrowly even as a work of “modern utopian fiction” for the way in which it criticizes the inadequacy of provisions of the Kansei reforms that attempt to control scholarly and leisure pursuits. A topic to be explored further in the next chapter, I am interested in the ways in which late Edo and Meiji era artists similarly created utopian or dystopian realms as a way to comment upon the role of the individual in an increasingly complex mass society.

¹³⁴ Abrams, 195.

Chapter Four: Utopias and Dystopias in Meiji Era *Gesaku*

In his study of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), Peter Firchow describes a progression in which narratives portraying ideal societies or locales often elicit satirical works that point out their respective flaws and oversights.¹³⁵ Such is the essence of the opposition between utopian and dystopian modes of writing. As example of such, Firchow considers Huxley's reply in *Brave New World* — the setting of which, coincidentally, gave birth to the term “dystopia” — to the naive scientific optimism of H.G. Wells' earlier work *A Modern Utopia* (1916). One finds in the Edo period numbers of works, such as *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* or *The 'Two Paths' Threshing Machine*, that present dystopian replies to the fashion for Confucian social ideals in government and intellectual circles.

Whereas Firchow describes a shift over time from utopian to dystopian fictions, I am inclined to see fluctuations between sincere and satirical, radical and conservative visions as part-and-parcel of the utopian imagination in any given age. I am more struck, actually, by the *simultaneity* of utopian and dystopian visions in the Edo and Meiji periods. One finds that in some works an author may at first promote Confucian or Western social ideals, only to refute them in later passages.

¹³⁵ Peter Edgerly Firchow, *The End of Utopia : A Study of Aldous Huxley's Brave New World* (London: Associated University Presses, 1984).

Such fluctuations are seen, for instance, in *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands* in which the author alternately endorses and ridicules the Confucian ideals of filial piety and respect for elders. Later, at the height of the Kansei social reforms, one finds a more definite dystopian backlash in works like *The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine* or *The Twin Paths of Letters and Arms*, *Parroted* that pointedly criticize the attempt by the government to mandate Confucian morals and ethics.

Conversely, in the latter decades of the Edo period numbers of works appear in favor of Confucian social ideals. If one accepts Firchow’s hypothesis, this suggests a peculiar reversal, or perhaps the beginning of a new round, of the utopia begets dystopia cycle. Such a conservative trend would be consistent with a general view of late Edo *gesaku* writers — such as Takizawa Bakin (1767-1848) or, somewhat later, Shōtei Kinsui (1797-1862) — as being less critical, or even supportive, of government attempts to impose Confucian social values. For instance, in marked contrast to satires like *The ‘Two Paths’ Threshing Machine*, Bakin’s *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly* promotes such classic Confucian virtues as filial piety, respect to elders, sobriety, and, especially in women, chastity and modesty. Below, I consider the influence in Meiji of this and other late Edo period works of utopian fiction, including Shikitei Sanba’s *Ukiyoburo* (*The Bathhouse of the Floating World*, 1809-13) and Jippensha Ikku’s *Tokai dōchū hizakurige* (*By Shanks’ Mare Along the Tōkaidō*, 1802-22).

Utopian Trends in Late Edo Period Humorous Fiction

A shift in the late Edo period from dystopian to more enthusiastic representations of Confucian social thought agrees with the common conception of popular fiction of this period in general as being more conservative than that of earlier times. Scholars often see Bakin's writings in particular as indicative of a more conformist trend in *gesaku* coming in the wake of the Kansei reforms. Maeda Ai, for instance, writes that Bakin "showed enthusiasm in beating the drum of Confucian virtues, thereby supporting the reformist government."¹³⁶ Although often dismissed by later literary critics as being too moralizing, several of Bakin's works, including his most famous *Nansō satomi hakkenden* (The Story of the Eight Dogs of the Satomi of Nansō, 1814-42), present the ideal, which retained popularity through early Meiji times, of a society perfected through adherence to Confucian teachings and virtues.

I would like to mention several conditions that made this period particularly amenable to such allegorical works. The didactic tone of many of Bakin's works may at first seem somewhat at odds with the fact that popular literature of this time is also thought to have become, well, more popular than that of earlier decades, in terms both of increased circulation and in its crowd-pleasing style.

¹³⁶ Maeda Ai, "Bakumatsu no bungaku; gaisetsu" (Literature in the Latter Decades of the Tokugawa Era: Overview) in *Kinsei no bungaku* (Early-Modern Literature), edited by Ogata Tsutomu, Matsuda Osamu, Hattori Yukio and Maeda Ai, 248-257 (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1977), 249.

Although differing from today's tastes, the positive reception of Bakin's works suggests that for many late Edo period readers did not necessarily consider didacticism or moralizing to be weaknesses in fiction. The interest in late Edo times with accounts of the fantastic and exotic as well as in "moral lessons," typified by the Confucian encouragement to "reward the good, chastise the evil" (*kanzen chōaku*), naturally led Bakin and others to create works similar to the utopian mode in Western literature.

This demand for allegorical narratives explains the seeming contradiction between the heavy didacticism of Bakin's works and the fact that, in terms of sales, he is considered one of the most popular of late Edo *gesaku* writers. Maeda writes that provincial readers especially were drawn to the conspicuous enlightenment sensibilities (*kyōka ishiki*) of Bakin's works, finding in them an ostensible pragmatism and logicity that apparently appealed to their parochial view of the world. By courting this wider audience, Maeda says, Bakin and a new generation of "professional" writers of popular fiction were successful in establishing a broader foundation for *gesaku* in the decades following the Kansei reforms.¹³⁷

Bakin's historical dramas, written in the longer form of the *yomihon*, represent only one of various late Edo period popular genres of literature. In an overview of *gesaku*

¹³⁷ Maeda Ai, "Kansei no kaikaku to Edo bundan: gaisetsu" (The Kansei Reforms and the Edo Literary World; Overview), in *Kinsei no bungaku* (Early-Modern Literature), edited by Ogata Tsutomu, Matsuda Osamu, Hattori Yukio and Maeda Ai, 91-100 (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1977), 97.

following the Kansei reforms, Maeda writes that in late Edo the highly satirical genres of *kibyōshi* and *sharebon* came to be weighed down by trite romantic storylines and sheer sentimentality. Many readers, he writes, thus sought fresh diversion in the newer genre of humorous fiction known as *kokkeibon*. In comparison with the detailed satire and polished wit appreciated by samurai and upper-class merchant readers, Maeda writes, *kokkeibon* were often accented by simpler types of humor, such as facial expressions or comic voice inflections, used by actors in the types of dramatic entertainment that appealed to lower-class merchants and laborers.¹³⁸

As part of a tradition of utopian fiction that continues from late Edo into Meiji, I would like to consider the propensities for utopian locales in *kokkeibon*, a genre that critics often dismiss as containing little social commentary or significance to the politics of its time. Although they perhaps do not constitute works of utopian fiction by strict definition, such late Edo popular works as Bakin's *The Story of the Eight Dogs of the Satomi* or Jippensha Ikku's *Tōkai dōchū hizakurige* (*By Shanks' Mare Along the Tōkaidō*, 1802-22) or are of great importance to this study, for they later inspired in the early and mid-Meiji era numbers of utopian works by more orthodox definition.

Critics of late-Edo literature rarely see the above-described popularization of *gesaku* as an altogether positive development. Nakamura Yukihiro, for instance,

¹³⁸ Ibid., 98.

although he is fairly balanced in his comments, evidently regards late-Edo *gesaku*, and *kokkeibon* in particular, as artistically inferior to *gesaku* of earlier times:

Writers of the *sharebon*, *kibyōshi*, and the early tradition of the *yomihon*, by the terms I use, were amateur intellectuals. The works we now think of as the early period of *gesaku* were produced collectively by such individuals, half out of simple amusement or to satisfy a need for self-expression. These should be differentiated from the later tradition of *gesaku* which was transformed by genres such as the *kokkeibon*, *gōkan*, and newer types of *yomihon* and *ninjōbon*. These latter types of *gesaku* became the reading material (*shōsetsu*) of a popular age. The literary expression of such works was simple and their plots as well eschewed unnecessary ornamentation . . . Since such writings had become a consumer item, journalism of the time sought professional authors, or at least semi-professional authors, to supply this demand.¹³⁹

Nakamura concludes this overview by noting the “plusses” and “minuses” of the commercialization of *gesaku*. Chief among the latter, he comments that whereas earlier *gesaku* had been conceived of as a synthesis of refined (*ga*) and vernacular (*zoku*) expression, later writers of the popular school (*zoku bundan*) became “mired in a bog of amusements,” presumably referring to the slapstick or scatological humor of many *kokkeibon* works in particular.¹⁴⁰

Although viewed by some commentators as a lesser form of literary wit and satire, *kokkeibon* arguably represent a broader segment of society than is found in many

¹³⁹ Nakamura Yukihiro “Taishūka no shikō: gaisetsu” (The Inclination Toward Popularization; Overview) in *Kinsei no bungaku* (Early-Modern Literature), edited by Ogata Tsutomu, Matsuda Osamu, Hattori Yukio and Maeda Ai, 118-31 (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1977), 126.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 131.

earlier *gesaku* genres, an attribute that makes it particularly amenable to the descriptions of relations between classes and other social commentary typical of utopian fiction. Nakamura, however, regards Ikku's *By Shanks' Mare Along the Tōkaidō* and other *kokkeibon* as representative of a decline in the status of *gesaku* from fine art to expendable consumer material. "Perhaps the first professional *gesaku* writer," he comments, "was Jippensha Ikku, who beginning with the first edition of *Shanks' Mare* continued to effortlessly produce a series of *Shanks' Mare* pieces based on the same clownish characters."¹⁴¹ Similar to the divided reputation of Bakin in literary histories as too popular a writer, both Maeda and Nakamura describe Ikku as one of the most successful of a new breed of professional writers who, catering to plebian tastes, were able to create a mass market for *gesaku*.

By Shanks' Mare Along the Tōkaidō and other *kokkeibon* works that describe a certain exotic (for the urban reader) locale make for an interesting case-study of the assumed close connections between utopian fiction and satire. To differentiate utopian fiction from fiction in general, I emphasize the fantastic qualities of the utopian locale as described in literature. These are largely absent in the quotidian setting of *By Shanks' Mare Along the Tōkaidō*, a story of the adventures and mishaps of two native Edoites, Yajirōbei and Kitahachi, as they travel about the countryside. Nevertheless, this work

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 126.

could conceivably be described as a utopian travel narrative for the manner in which it employs the motif of travel to describe relations between characters representative of different groups of society.

Perhaps more problematic than its quotidian setting, many might find it difficult to see the (as Cohn writes) “country-bumpkin versus city-slicker buffoonery” of *By Shanks’ Mare Along the Tōkaidō* as typical of the biting social satire often associated with utopian fiction. By this, I do not mean to contribute to the simplistic notion that late-Edo *gesaku* altogether lacks social significance. Although there seems to be little overt social theorizing in *By Shanks’ Mare Along the Tōkaidō*, this work is of relevance to the broader social world opened up through the easing of restrictions on domestic travel in the late-Edo period.

In the first episode of the work, the narrator hints of the restrictions still placed upon travel in noting that Yajirōbei and Kitahachi are required to “pay a hundred coppers to get a traveling permit” and therefore skip town without paying the rent owed to their landlord.¹⁴² Ikku exploits the fascination many city dwellers had for regions that they had previously only been allowed limited access. Reflecting the boom in domestic travel that ensued with easing of travel restrictions, *By Shanks’ Mare Along the Tōkaidō* might be described even the first representation of true tourists in Japanese literature, that is of

¹⁴² Jippensha Ikku, *Shanks’ Mare*, translated by Thomas Satchell (Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle, 1960), 23-24.

persons who traveled simply for the pleasure of travel, in contrast to those who traveled solely for business or official purposes or to the ostensibly higher motives of the pilgrim or traveling poet.

Suggesting the relative novelty of this type of tourism, Yajirōbei, using information he has gleaned from a travel guide, repeatedly tricks provincials into believing he has a personal acquaintance with local merchants. Although not a work of utopian fiction by orthodox definition, much of the humor of *Shanks' Mare* concerns such differences between the actual circumstances of well-known locales and their more idealized representation in mass-publication sources such as travel guides or woodblock prints of the fifty-three stages of the Tōkaidō.

By Shanks' Mare Along the Tōkaidō, although often discounted as being purely slapstick in its wit and commentary, is of significance as a work representing relations between the metropolis of Edo and the provinces. If one can identify a single unifying theme among the numerous episodes of this long-running serialized work, it might be simply that encounters between city-dwellers and provincials will inevitably give rise to humorous banter and good-natured kidding. This formula does not necessarily produce great social satire, but the popularity of *By Shanks' Mare Along the Tōkaidō* does suggest a growing demand for a literature that considered urban and rural differences.

In commenting on the “plusses” of the popularization of late Edo *gesaku*, Nakamura writes that as a whole it had become through the process “more familiar, more contemporary, and known to a broader segment of the Japanese people.”¹⁴³ As part of this emerging national literature, *By Shanks’ Mare Along the Tōkaidō* presents characters who, although obstinately proud of the customs and dialects of their own regions, nevertheless are able to enjoy a good joke and share a sense of collective identity with persons from far-flung regions. Through the development of a literature capable of representing a broader segment of society than the many former popular works confined to the world of the pleasure quarters or literary coterie, Meiji era writers — such as Kanagaki Robun in his famous *Seiyō dōchū hizakurige* (*By Shanks’ Mare Along the West*, 1870-76) — were able for the first time to create utopian works intended as cautionary tales or normative fables for the entire nation.

In the late-Edo period, a broadening of subject matter can also be found in works set more exclusively in urban settings. In *Shikitei Sanba and the Comic Tradition in Edo Fiction*, Robert Leutner compares earlier *gesaku* genres with the later tradition of *kokkeibon*, writing that whereas the former were most often “directed at historical subjects, the literary tradition, or other objects that stood at a remove from the daily life

¹⁴³ Ibid., 131

of the streets,” *kokkeibon* were “not only products of urban merchant-class culture, but take that culture itself as their subject matter and make it the object of their satire.”¹⁴⁴

Leutner presents Shikitei Sanba’s *The Bathhouse of the Floating World* as prime example of the wider social world portrayed in *kokkeibon*. I am struck by ways in which the setting of this well-known work, a clamorous Edo public bathhouse, functions in a manner not unlike the fantastic island setting of so many utopian fictions, that is, as a self-enclosed microcosm nevertheless uncannily representative of the author’s own society.

The Bathhouse of the Floating World, like *Shanks’ Mare*, is perhaps set in too everyday a locale to be considered a work of utopian fiction by narrow definition. Even so, Sanba describes the bathhouse in metaphorical terms as a realm between earth and paradise, relating in the opening scene of the piece the ecstatic exclamations of bathers who upon entering the bath imagine they have been reborn in the Buddhist Pureland:

For every old man gumming “Amida be praised,” there is another coughing out, “Hail Amida of the Lotus of the Law.” The voices are by turn gravelly and nasal, and here someone announces in a loud, coarse voice that he resides “in the foothills of the Golden Mountains of Cathay”. . . This is the Bath of the Floating World, overflowing with gods and Buddhas, moral lessons, love, and

¹⁴⁴ Robert Leutner, *Shikitei Sanba and the Comic Tradition in Edo Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 75.

evanescence: the place could be anywhere, but the time is the middle of the month.¹⁴⁵

Describing the ecstatic bather suddenly transported to “the foothills of the Golden Mountains of Cathay,” or in speaking of the “moral lessons” to be learned in the bathhouse, Sanba is clearly aware of the allegorical uses of idyllic realms in Buddhist and Taoist devotional literature. Relating that the “place could be anywhere,” he emphasizes that this locale, found in any merchant-class neighborhood, serves as a synecdoche for an idealized vision of conviviality among members of the merchant class as a whole.

The origins of utopian fiction in Japan can be found in traditional tales of Buddhist, Taoist and other paradises. Earlier popular writers such as Hiraga Gennai and Yūkokushi parody such realms in their own secular allegories of an ideal *earthly* society. In somewhat opposite fashion, Sanba begins his narrative by describing how the bathhouse setting, so redolent of the contemporary “floating world,” in fact illustrates great religious truths. He notes in tongue-in-cheek fashion, for instance, how the customs of the bathhouse demonstrate each of the Five Buddhist Virtues:

At the bathhouse one sees demonstrated every one of the Five Virtues. Hot water warms the body, removes dirt, cures ills, and heals fatigue. This is Benevolence. A bather will not touch another’s wash bucket without first asking if it is free; and far from being selfish with the rinse buckets, customers will hurry to finish and

¹⁴⁵ Translated in Leutner 1985, 143. In his study of Shikitei Sanba, Leutner provides an excellent translation of Book I, Part 1 and Book II, Part 1 of *The Bathhouse of the Floating World*. This and following translations of *The Bathhouse of the Floating World* are taken from this source.

lend them to others. This is Integrity. Bathers denigrate themselves – “I’m just a bumpkin,” “Oh, I’m cold-blooded, I guess” – and politely say to others, “Excuse me,” “Good to see you,” and “After you!” Or perhaps they will say, “Come, let’s be a little quieter,” or “Go ahead, please take your time.” This is Propriety. The proper use of cleansing powder, pumice stone, or gourd skin to remove soil, or of cutting-stones to trim the hair – this is Wisdom. Adding cold water when someone finds the bath too hot, or hot if it is cold, and scrubbing one another’s backs – these things are Trust.¹⁴⁶

In a preface titled “The Larger Meaning of *The Bathhouse of the Floating World*,” Sanba declares the overarching moral lesson of this secular paradise to be “that all are naked when they bathe — the wise and the foolish, the crooked and the straight, the high and the low.” One might at first read this bit of folksy wisdom as a declaration of egalitarian ideals, such as that “all men are born equal.” Sanba, however, hardly hints in *The Bathhouse of the Floating World* to such sensitive issues as class, focusing on the simpler notion that everyone, from the low to the mighty, has their comically awkward moments.

The objective of *The Bathhouse of the Floating World* is comic diversion, not social criticism. And yet, as part of the humor of this work, Sanba goes to great lengths to represent the characteristic speech of persons from different backgrounds and locales, thus giving a glimpse, however caricatured, into relations between various groups of merchant society. In an author’s note, Sanba relates that he based these descriptions in part on stories of the public bath by *rakugo* artist Sanshōtei Karaku. Reflecting the

¹⁴⁶ Translated in Leutner 1985, 138.

influence of the story-telling tradition, *The Bathhouse of the Floating World* attempts to represent in writing Japanese as spoken by a variety of both city and rural dwellers.

The Bathhouse of the Floating World begins with a convincing (if fairly cruel) representation of the garbled speech of the neighborhood drunk, Butashichi, who also happens to have a speech impediment. As Leutner discusses, Sanba takes special care to represent persons speaking a variety of dialects and registers of language, inventing even his own diacritical marks to represent non-standard pronunciation. In the second series of this work, set in the women's side of the bathhouse, for instance, Sanba presents an extended dialogue between a woman from the Kamigata region (present day Osaka and Kyōto) and her Edo neighbors. Due to his experiments in representing real speech in print, Sanba was one of the writers whom later authors and critics such as Tsubouchi Shōyō and Futabatei Shimei turned to as they began to develop a more natural and easily understood form of written Japanese.¹⁴⁷

Also of relevance to the broader social world portrayed in *The Bathhouse of the Floating World*, Leutner writes that several of Sanba's earlier works are similar in conception to works describing familiar social types (*katagimono*) popularized by Ejima Kiseki in the early-eighteenth century. Such works depicted the manners and airs of specialized groups in Edo society, including *kabuki* enthusiasts, courtesans, teachers,

¹⁴⁷ Leutner 1985, 13.

inveterate drinkers, and so forth. Such sketches of the peculiarities of various groups in society retained, or regained, currency into the Meiji era, as seen in the popularity of Aeba Kōson (1855-1922), a writer often referred to by contemporaries as “the Meiji era Kiseki,” or the many works containing the word “character” (*katagi*) in their title, such as Tsubouchi Shōyō’s *Tōsei shosei katagi* (The Character of Today’s Students, 1885-86).

Although often seemingly avoiding commentary on the more politically sensitive aspects of relations between groups, the caricature of *katagimono* is similar to the depiction in much utopian fiction of relations between various groups of society. In *The Bathhouse of the Floating World*, Sanba uses such caricature to represent encounters between persons of several levels of merchant society, including, as in *By Shanks’ Mare Along the Tōkaidō*, encounters between Edoites and those from far-flung regions.

If *The Bathhouse of the Floating World* can be described as a work of utopian fiction, it is utopian in the much looser sense of a work representing an ideal setting or location, as opposed to one concerned with social issues per se. Sanba’s approach, differing from the conception of utopian fiction as foremost an expression of political ideals, avoids such problematic issues as class or the distribution of property and wealth in society. As Leutner writes, “Sanba’s vision of Edo in *Ukiyoburo* is a sentimental one.”

There are no suggestions here of the violence and grinding poverty that other sources tell us were facts of contemporary life . . . Nor have we any hint here of

the frustration and discontent that common sense and instinct tell us the rigid and authoritarian style of *bakufu* rule must have engendered.¹⁴⁸

Although *The Bathhouse of the Floating World* represents various character types, it is conversely quite narrow in the range of social classes it portrays. We are only given occasional glimpses, for instance, of such lower-class types as street vendors, bath attendants, mendicants and servants. More noticeably absent are individuals representing the upper classes. *The Bathhouse of the Floating World* depicts a largely homogeneous environment in which members of the solid middle-class of merchant society are able to enjoy a garrulous comradery without consideration of differences of wealth or title.

Both *The Bathhouse of the Floating World* and *Shanks' Mare* are often regarded as rather superficial in their commentary on contemporary social issues. On the other hand, they do describe a broader cross-section of Japanese society than is usually seen in the many *gesaku* works restricted to the narrow surroundings of the pleasure quarters. As I discuss below, this gradual broadening of the subject-matter of popular fiction enabled Meiji era writers such as Hattori Bushō, Kanagaki Robun, and Baitei Kinga to create utopian fictions that served as allegories for the nation as a whole.

In comparison with Sanba and Ikku, who turn a trip through the provinces or simply to the local bathhouse into a utopia of everyday amusements, Bakin is particularly

¹⁴⁸ Leutner 1985, 109.

attuned to the potential of *history* as source for utopian fiction. Differing from Leutner's description of late Edo period *gesaku* as being grounded in the "daily life of the streets," Bakin's works are more often based on historical themes. This fact has lead one prominent scholar of Edo fiction, Matsuda Osamu, to write that for Bakin history constituted a utopia through which he viewed contemporary society:

In his heroes taken from the Muromachi period, such as those found in *Hakkenden* or *Bishōnenroku*, Bakin created a utopia in which all evil had been expelled through the help of these handsome youths and chivalrous figures. Although such plots on the surface may seem a simple escape from reality, through them Bakin vividly captured the essence of the social reforms that bore so closely upon the daily lives of the populace.¹⁴⁹

In his use of historical or pseudo-historical themes, one might compare Bakin with Hōseidō Kisanji and other earlier *gesaku* writers who would often use real or fabricated historical episodes to comment upon contemporary society. Bakin, however, despite Matsuda's fairly flattering description of his method, uses historical material in a more conventional way as model or exemplar for contemporary life.

Although Bakin's use of history as moral guide is fairly predictable, this is not to say that the plots of his stories are based on a literal conception of historical fact. I regard Bakin's works as fairly orthodox examples of utopian fiction for the manner in which they describe highly fantastic settings and episodes as a means to illustrate the author's

¹⁴⁹ Matsuda Osamu, "Kyokutei Bakin" in *Kinsei no bungaku* (Early-Modern Literature), edited by Ogata Tsutomu, Matsuda Osamu, Hattori Yukio and Maeda Ai, 240-244 (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1977), 244.

(rather conservative) views on his own society. In his famous work *The Story of the Eight Dogs of the Satomi of Nansō*, Bakin tells the absurdly improbable story of eight sons born to a woman who mistakenly believes she has been impregnated by a dog. The woman subsequently commits suicide, but the sons, as indicated by emblems they wear on their chests, embody each of the eight Confucian virtues (i.e., benevolence, righteousness, etiquette, wisdom, fidelity, faith, filial piety and respect for elders).

As Matsuda suggests, the otherwise wholly fantastic plot of *The Story of the Eight Dogs of the Satomi of Nansō* — in which the eight heroes through their heroic acts redeem the prestige of their clan and make the Nansō region (present day Chiba) safe from evil — can be seen as a reverberation of late Edo social reforms. In a less complementary sense, many of his works reflect the same Confucian ethics and morality that the government used to justify its restrictive social reforms. Katō Shūichi writes that:

The values that underpin these novels are the Buddhist notion of *karma* and the Confucian injunction to 'reward the good and chastise the evil.' The good in this case are the virtues of filial piety and loyalty. Men must be courageous and women chaste. Evil, the absence of these basic virtues, involves treachery, flattery, deception, the lust for inordinate power, cowardice, cruelty, cunning and promiscuity. The good characters are absolutely good, the evil characters extremely evil, and no characters appear with a mixture of both qualities nor are there any scenes in which it is difficult to distinguish between the two.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Katō Shūichi, *A History of Japanese Literature: From the Man'yōshū to Modern Times* (Richmond, Surrey: Japan Library, 1997), 233.

In their emphasis on the benefits to society of Confucian ideals, Bakin's works are more than suggestive of the social reforms of late Edo times: They in fact actively prescribe Confucian ideals, such as the eight virtues, as an antidote for social problems.

Bakin's black and white view of such societal issues as poverty, education, and relations between the sexes is demonstrated in the utopian travel narrative *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly*. Based on Yūkokushi's *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands; Or, Hyōei, The Japanese Chuang Tzu*, Bakin describes in this version of the Hyōei saga the protagonist's travels about countries representing various faults or sins as seen in Confucian ethics, including the "Country of Lust" (*Shikiyokukoku*), the "Country of Drunkenness" (*Gōinkoku*), the "Country of Greed" (*Donrankoku*) and the "Country of Children" (*Shōnenkoku*).

The name of this last country (the first, actually, that Hyōei visits) may at first seem out of place among those named after various faults according to Confucian teachings. As it turns out, the Country of Children is inhabited by overgrown children who, raised without any parental discipline, lack all sense of obedience or filial piety. In actuality, most of the children's offenses, such as neglecting to bow or snatching food before a meal has properly begun, seem quite minor. In this, if you will, Confucian *Lord of the Flies*, Bakin thus seems inordinately concerned with such traditional Confucian values as discipline, filial piety and respect for elders.

I will discuss the “the country of children” episode in more detail below, but would first like to give an example of the general style of *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly*. Given its didactic and moralizing tone, *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly* may not seem to be a great advance in the history of popular fiction. This version of the Hyōei saga, on the other hand, is more sustained and “novelistic” than Yūkokushi’s original. The descriptive possibilities of this longer narrative style is demonstrated, for instance, in the opening episode in which the main character is first carried away on a kite:

Musō Byōei returned with the fishing pole given him by Urashima Tarō. This he attached to a large kite built closely to the specifications — which we need not go into here — in which he had also been instructed... In a moment, as he rode along on the clouds, just above the banks of the Kanagawa river, Musō Byōei felt that he had been turned into a wizard. With the end of the string tied to a pine tree, he held fast to the tail of the kite. At first he waited to for the wind to pick up, and then, as the east wind slowly blew, in amazement Musō Byōei found himself riding on the back of the kite, fluttering upward in the midst of the sky, up to where the clouds turn into mist. The string, which had at first been fairly short, began to stretch longer and longer like a strand of taffy, till he found himself looking across at the peak of Mount Fuji.¹⁵¹

This and other narratives by Bakin are thought to have been influenced by the extended narrative styles of Chinese vernacular works, such as the *Shui hu zhuan* (*The Water*

¹⁵¹ Takizawa Bakin, *Musōbyōe kochō monogatari* (The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly), in *Kyokutei Bakin shū* (The Selected Works of Kyokutei Bakin), *Kindai Nihon Bungaku Taikō No. 16* (Tokyo: Kokumin Toshō Kabushikigaisha, 1928), 350-51.

Margin, in Japanese *Suikōden*).¹⁵² As in *The Water Margin*, this extended prose style has great potential for extended social critique and as a primer in history or social norms.

Commenting on the conversion (*tenkō*) of many *gesaku* writers to the government's Confucian agenda in the years following the Kansei reforms, Mizuno Minoru writes that Santō Kyōden (Bakin's sometime mentor as well as rival) ridiculed *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly* for its denouncement of the presumed immorality of geisha.¹⁵³ Bakin makes his didactic intent in this work clear when in the preface he presents his opinions on Yūkokushi's original version:

Reading one day through Yūkokushi's *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands: or, Hyōei, the Japanese Chuang Tzu*, I found it exceptionally well-written, using a variety of analogies as it makes its way through the various paths of Taoism and Buddhism. It doesn't possess much value, on the other hand, as an antidote for foolishness.¹⁵⁴

Bakin makes clear in this assessment of *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands* his view of moral sentiment and didacticism as commendable traits in writing. In the case of Bakin, it is thus not self-evident, as Rees claims, that utopian fiction or satire necessarily oppose the status quo. This particular utopia, as Maeda writes of Bakin's work in general, validates the vision of a perfect Confucian state then current in government circles.

¹⁵² Nai'an Shi and Guanzhong Luo, *Water Margin*, translated by J. H. Jackson (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1975).

¹⁵³ Mizuno Minoru, "Kansei no kaikaku to Edo bundan" (The Kansei Reforms and the Edo Literary World), in *Kinsei no bungaku* (Early-Modern Literature), edited by Ogata Tsutomu, Matsuda Osamu, Hattori Yukio and Maeda Ai, 105-09 (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1977), 108.

¹⁵⁴ Bakin, 347. By more literal translation, Bakin remarks of *Hyōei, the Japanese Chuang Tzu* that it didn't contain "the sort of medicine that would do a fool any good" ("*baka ni tsukeru kusuri wa nashi*").

Although one might imagine that the extended prose style of this work would be more amenable to social critique than shorter forms of *gesaku* such as *kibyōshi* or *sharebon*, *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly* is weighed down by superficial observations and conclusions. Similar to *The Eight Dogs of the Satomi of Nansō*, this work moves quickly, and not always deftly, between fantastic scenes of adventure and dry moralizing. This can be seen in the episode immediately following that quoted above:

In the beginning, Musō Byōei thought he might fall and held onto the kite fearfully with all his might. But then, as the kite moved smoothly along, he became used to the danger of the situation, and was no longer afraid. Like those who go about the world on a boat, fully knowing that three feet below deck lie the hellish depths, or the lumber-jack who slides blithely down a branch, knowing full well that the fifty or sixty foot fall from the top of the tree will mean instant death, all things are merely a matter of perception. Even the sufferings of poverty, once the beggar becomes used to them, will seem to him like the most natural of circumstances.¹⁵⁵

In this passage, Bakin takes the relativist theme implicit in the title *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly*— taken from Chuang Tzu’s famous dream that he has turned into a butterfly — and applies it to the plight of the poor. The disquieting suggestion is that even such social problems as poverty are merely a matter of perception. As Katō writes of Bakin’s works in general, this utopia is very much influenced both by rigid

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 351.

Confucian notions of morality and by a superficially determinist conception of the Buddhist notion of *karma*.

In the Country of Children episode, the author seems perhaps to present more a treatise on Confucian-style childrearing than a work of utopian fiction properly speaking. This country consists actually of two islands, one called Oshiezujima (“lack of teaching island”), being inhabited by children who have never received proper teaching, and the other Saihajikejima (“precocious island”), inhabited by children who are far too precocious. In both episodes, the narrator lectures at length on the proper education and discipline of children:

Taking notice of circumstances on Oshiezujima, Wasōbyōei observed that since the children were always well fed, clothed warmly, and had never once been disciplined, they did not respect their elders. Since rewards and punishments had not been meted out correctly, they all deviated from their naturally good natures. In the olden days, people would send such a child off somewhere until their behavior improved. Since this was now taken as a lack of parental love and strongly criticized, parents instead would first hire a mentor for the child. The parents, it seems, became indebted to the mentor as a result of their own weakness. In the end, it simply became more and more difficult for them to teach things to their own child.¹⁵⁶

In his conclusion to this episode, Bakin states that “people’s nature, whether good or bad, is all determined by training.” The Country of Children might thus be taken as an allegory of the benefits to individuals and to society as a whole of education, were it not

¹⁵⁶ Bakin, 363.

for the fact that there is no mention of a need for any type of teaching beyond the years of development and no discussion of the types of study deemed most beneficial to society.

Given its narrow focus and penchant for conservative moralizing, *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly* does not conform to a notion of utopian fiction as a critique of political or social hierarchies. In contradiction to Rees's claim that the writing of utopian fiction is an inherently subversive act, Bakin seems more inclined to the view that whatever is *is* indeed right, or can be made right through a return to traditional Confucian values. Although this may indicate a certain dissatisfaction with the contemporary situation, Bakin's prognosis is too close to that of the official Confucian state ideology to be considered radical or seditious. Such conservative utopian fiction can be found in both the late Edo and Meiji period.

In his history of intellectual thought titled *Meiji no risō* (Meiji ideals), which uses as source material numbers of popular Meiji era utopian works, Kida Jun'ichirō compares Edo period utopian writings quite unfavorably with Meiji era examples that he finds more progressive in their political ideology:

On first viewing, I may appear above to recognize the legitimacy of the types of dream routines found in traditional Japanese or Eastern utopias. However, I must distinguish at this point between societal ideals (*shakai risō*) and fantasy. Bound

by the fetters of the feudal system, the utopias of our own country were escapist fantasies possessing no awareness of a means for change.¹⁵⁷

Kida writes that late Edo period utopian fictions in particular did not resist totalitarianism but in fact “requested” the same. *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly* might certainly be taken as an example of a utopian work that supports autocratic social schemes.

Kida’s socialist outlook, however, prevents him from considering the significance of works by even progressive Edo period utopian thinkers, such as Andō Shōeki who he writes “was not able to visualize the importance of the peasant as the proper agent of reform or revolution.”¹⁵⁸ Similar to Kida, though according to their own respective criteria, many commentators have seen the birth of “true,” which is often simply to say “truly enlightened,” utopian fiction as beginning in Japan only with the wholesale importation in the Meiji era of Western literary models and political philosophy.

As I look below at several of the numerous utopian works that appeared in the Meiji era, I will consider ways in which they were also influenced by the types of traditional fantastic travel narratives and visions of ideal locales discussed thus far in this dissertation. I am initially interested in particular in utopias created in the popular genre

¹⁵⁷ Kida Jun’ichirō, “Meiji no risō” (Meiji Ideals), in *Kida Jun’ichirō chosaku shū* (The Collected Works of Kida Jun’ichirō), 10-179 (Tokyo: San’ichi Shobō, 2000), 39.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

of *gesaku*. Works like Kanagaki Robun's *By Shanks' Mare Along the West* can be seen as a merging of native and Western utopian traditions.

Meiji Era Gesaku and Utopian Fiction

In "Kinsei kara kindai e" (From Early-Modern to Modern) Maeda writes that scholars have traditionally regarded the last four decades of Edo as a sterile period for fiction better left to historians than to specialists in literature.¹⁵⁹ In his own writings, Maeda demonstrates the continued relevance in early Meiji of the writings of satirists who were active in the late Edo period, such as Terakado Seiken (1796-1868) and Narushima Ryūhoku (1837-1884). Histories that regard modern Japanese literature as beginning in Meiji, conversely, often portray the late Edo period as a time altogether bereft of appropriate models for fiction, bemoaning in particular a perceived decline in the literary quality of the popular tradition of *gesaku*.

Nakamura Mitsuo, for instance, writes in *Gendai nihon bungaku shi* (A History of Modern Japanese Literature) that *gesaku* as a whole had so deteriorated in literary value by the time of the Meiji restoration that it did not "possess the will to survive."¹⁶⁰ Nozaki Sabun more even-handedly suggests that the *gesaku* tradition temporarily went into

¹⁵⁹ Maeda Ai, "Kinsei kara kindai e; Aisan•Tōkoku no bungakushi o megutte" (From Early-Modern to Modern: The Literary Histories of Aisan and Tōkoku), in *Bakumatsu ishinki no bungaku* (Literature of the Late Tokugawa and Restoration Period), 5-23 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1989), 6.

¹⁶⁰ Nakamura Mitsuo, *Gendai Nihon bungaku shi* (A History of Contemporary Japanese Literature) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1959), 20.

decline during the turmoil of the Meiji restoration as a result of the fact that its original audience, chiefly members of the merchant class or lower-level samurai officials, had either disappeared or no longer had the leisure to read such works.¹⁶¹

Studies by Okitsu Kaname, Peter Kornicki and others demonstrate that *gesaku* did not in fact disappear in the early years of Meiji, but, becoming part of the modern printing trade, in fact regained popularity in the 1870s and 1880s. In “The Survival of Tokugawa Fiction in the Meiji Period,” Kornicki criticizes the tendency among some scholars of modern Japanese literature to assume that earlier traditions of popular fiction had little impact on Meiji era writers and readers. “Due attention,” Kornicki writes, “is paid to the influence on Meiji writers of outside literary ideas and models, little is paid to the balance between such ideas and the immediate past.”¹⁶² Far from “disappearing” in the Meiji era, numbers of *gesaku* works served the specific function of utopian or dystopian commentary on the rapid modernization and other changes of this period.

As one example of the continuing interest in popular fiction in the Meiji era, Kornicki cites the responses to a letter by publisher Tokutomi Sohō (1863-1957) asking various writers, journalists and scholars for a list of their favorite reading matter. Of the

¹⁶¹ Nozaki Sabun, “Meiji shōki ni okeru gesakusha” (Gesaku Writers of Early Meiji) in *Meiji kaikaki bungaku shū* (A Collection of Literature of the Meiji Enlightenment Period), edited by Okitsu Kaname and Maeda Ai, 406-12 (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1989), 407-8.

¹⁶² Kornicki, 469.

sixty-nine responses — published in 1889 as the article “Shomoku jisshu” (Ten types of book lists) in the newspaper *Kokumin no tomo* (The Friend of the People) — twenty-seven mention at least one work of Edo period fiction. Many respondents, Kornicki writes, chose to include not Meiji fiction but late Edo fiction along with Western works they admired. Fukuchi Ouchi (1841-1906), for instance, chose Shakespeare, Schiller and Dumas, and several works by Lord Lytton, as well as Bakin’s *The Story of The Eight Dogs of the Nansō of Satomi* and *Chinsetsu yumiharizuki* (The Crescent Moon: A Strange Tale, 1807-11), Sanba’s *Bathhouse of the Floating World*, and another *kokkeibon*, Ryūtei Rijō’s *Hanagoyomi hasshōjin* (The Flower Calendar and the Eight Jokesters, 1820-49).¹⁶³

Kornicki also cites as evidence of the continuing audience for Edo period popular fiction the large numbers of reprints of such works that appeared in the first two decades of Meiji. Among these, he notes the circulation of reprints of works of such late Edo period *gesaku* writers as Jippensha Ikku, Takizawa Bakin, Tamenaga Shunsui, Ryūtei Rijō, and Santō Kyōden and many others.¹⁶⁴ In addition to the enduring popularity of such Edo period writers, writers such as Kanagaki Robun, Takabatake Ransen, Baitei Kinga,

¹⁶³ Ibid., 479.

¹⁶⁴ These reprints were eventually collected in the anthology *Teikoku bunko* (1893-97) and its sequel *Zoku teikoku bunko* (1898-1903).

Hattori Bushō and other Meiji era literary figures continued to write in traditional styles of popular fiction.

Despite ample evidence of the continued popularity of *gesaku* among early Meiji readers, Donald Keene, similar to Nakamura, describes these supposedly moribund genres as having disappeared of their own volition not long after the Meiji restoration:

Fiction seemed to be trapped in a quagmire of outmoded, moribund habits and incapable of making a fresh start. The readiness with which the *gesaku* writers abandoned their dying profession, and alacrity with which translations of Western literature were welcomed, provide plain evidence of the lack of vitality in the Japanese literary world, or at any rate of the lack of responsiveness to the new political and social conditions.¹⁶⁵

Whereas Keene writes that *gesaku* writers failed to respond to new political and social conditions, I am impressed by the deftness with which many created satirical replies to the government's Enlightenment program and the rapid Westernization and technological advancements of the age. Several of these replies are written in a style and format that is easily described as a type of utopian fiction.

Okitsu Kaname relates in *Tenkanki no bungaku; Edo kara Meiji e* (Literature of the Transitionary Period; From Edo to Meiji) that in the first decade of Meiji, many *gesaku* writers served a curious double role as writers of humorous fiction as well as creators of didactic works introducing Western countries and innovations to a general

¹⁶⁵ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1984), 13.

audience.¹⁶⁶ In part by dint of his experience in writing for a popular audience, Kanagaki Robun, the best remembered *gesaku* writer of this period, gained employment in the early years of Meiji writing primers on Western geography and history in the fashion of Fukuzawa Yukichi's widely-read *Seiyō jijō* (Circumstances in the West, 1866-1870). Similarly, even Baitei Kinga, whose later *gesaku* works, as I discuss below, are highly critical of Westernization, wrote didactic works in the first several years of Meiji introducing to a general audience Western history and inventions such as the gas lamp, the steam engine, and the telegraph.

This sudden interest in the West among *gesaku* writers would seem to refute the notion that they failed to adapt to the times. This too however is often seen as yet another sign of the imminent end of *gesaku* as a form of satirical fiction. Although Okitsu details the "resurrection" of *gesaku* writers in the mid-1870s, he describes Robun, Kinga and other surviving Edo period *gesaku* writers as having undergone a conversion (*tenkō*) in the first years of Meiji, that is, from their role as satirists of society to willing participants in the government's proclaimed Enlightenment.¹⁶⁷

Keene, Okitsu and others cite as a factor in the conversion of *gesaku* writers three prescriptions issued by the Ministry of Religious Instruction (*Kyōbushō*) meant to define

¹⁶⁶ Okitsu Kaname, *Tenkanki no bungaku; Edo kara Meiji e* (Literature of the Transitionary Period: From Edo to Meiji) (Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1963), 19-30.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

the social role of literature in the “civilization and enlightenment” program. Namely, that in literature and other popular arts:

1. Respect for the gods and love of country should be embodied.
2. The ways of Heaven, Earth, and Man are to be elucidated.
3. Obedience to the Emperor and his Will should be inculcated.¹⁶⁸

This official view of the role of the popular arts as a tool of indoctrination apparently did place pressure on artists in various genres to produce more “enlightened” works. As opposed to the usual fare of stories about famous thieves or murderesses, for instance, *rakugo* artist Sanyūtei Enchō was prompted to create the biographical tale *Shiobara Tasuke ichidai ki* (The Life of Shiobara Tasuke) telling the story of an Edo wood and coal dealer’s rise from rags to riches through hard work and perseverance.¹⁶⁹

Okitsu relates that Kanagaki Robun and other *gesaku* artists, responding to these three prescriptions, collectively declared in an open letter their intention to “elevate the path of writing” (*chōsaku michi o kakiage*).¹⁷⁰ Whether out of genuine reformist intent or simply to earn a living, it was in such a context that Robun created textbooks such as *Sekai miyakoji* (Roads to the Capitals of the World, 1873) as well as the fable *Taiyō*

¹⁶⁸ Translated and quoted in Keene, 21. For historical background, see Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 101.

¹⁶⁹ Okitsu 1963, 23.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

shinwa takonyūdō sakana sekkyō (The Sea Myth: or, The Octopus's Sermon to the Fish), the latter being a utopian tale based on Enlightenment ideals.

Hardly Robun's most sophisticated work, this latter work tells of a dragon king who, observing the "flowering of civilization" (*bunmei kaika*) taking place throughout human society, wishes to make his palace under the sea a similarly enlightened realm. He therefore calls representatives of the families of fish to a legislative hall where he lectures to them on Enlightenment principles. The narrative begins:

"Haven't you heard? Presently, all the countries of the six continents of the human realm are competing to rid themselves of past abuses, building libraries, promoting the study of science, reforming government rule, and developing new inventions." Inviting them to his palace of enlightenment, The Dragon King encouraged his subjects to join together to protect their country, to enlighten their minds, to obtain knowledge, and to make progress the object of all their efforts . . . Having considerable knowledge of the civilization of the human realm, the Dragon King strove to rid the various fish provinces of their narrow-mindedness, until they finally reached a state of perfect enlightenment.¹⁷¹

Although this transparently didactic work might be taken as a sign of Robun's total acceptance of the government's Enlightenment program, works he wrote only several years later — such as *By Shanks' Mare Along the West*, *Aguranabe* (*The Beef Eaters*, 1870-72), and other works discussed below — are more ambivalent in their view of Westernization. Similar to the frequent satirical use of Confucian ideas in earlier utopias,

¹⁷¹ Kanagaki Robun, *Taiyō shinwa takonyūdō sakana sekkyō* (The Sea Myth: or, The Octopus's Sermon to the Fish) in *Meiji kaikaki bungaku shū, Meiji bungaku zenshū, I* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1966), 177.

in these works Kanagaki often uses the themes of Western-style education or technological advancement to make fun of the Enlightenment movement itself.

The apprenticeship in Western learning numbers of *gesaku* artists acquired in the first decade of Meiji as creators of educational materials and primers on Western history and science proved useful when they later wrote dystopian works satirizing the same topics. In his famous *By Shanks' Mare Along the West*, Robun describes the travels through Western countries of the protagonists Yajirōbei and Kitahachi (the grandchildren of the characters of the same name in Ikku's original *By Shanks' Mare Along the Tōkaidō*).

By Shanks' Mare along the West is characteristic of countless comic works of the early Meiji era that exploit popular fascination with Western countries. Okitsu writes that the buffoons Kitahachi and Yajirō, as they demonstrate repeatedly their ignorance and wonderment over Western culture and technological innovations, are representative of an inferiority-complex held by ordinary Japanese in regards to the West.¹⁷²

I wonder, however, whether *By Shanks' Mare along the West*, like so many other anti-Enlightenment satirical works by *gesaku* artists of this time, is not intended as ridicule not only of those who blindly imitate Western fashions but of Western culture

¹⁷² Okitsu Kaname, *Saigo no Edo gesakushatachi* (The Last Edo *Gesaku* Writers) (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no Nihonsha, 1976), 47.

and technology itself. In many passages, the author appears certainly to invite the reader to laugh simply at the foolish antics of Yajirō and Kitahachi, as when they appear in Rome in their bare feet and betray naive surprise at seeing a water fountain.

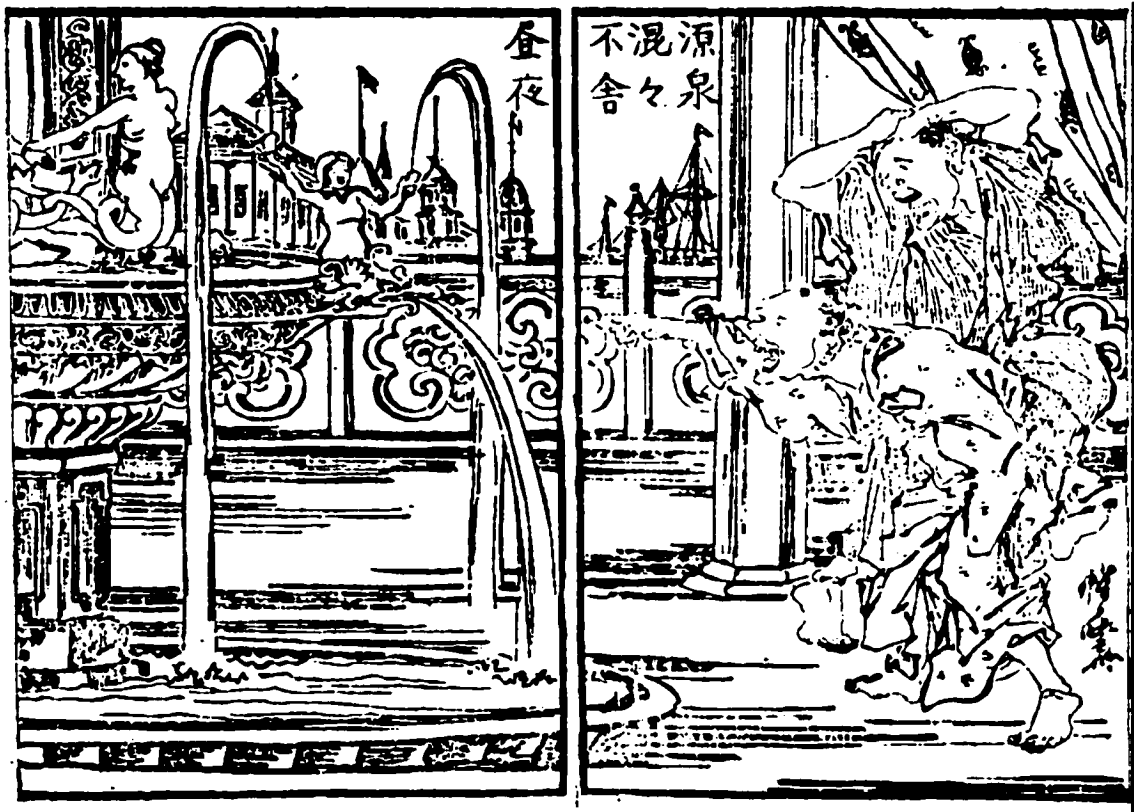


Figure 1: Yajirō and Kitahachi Encounter a Water Fountain

Reprinted from Okitsu Kaname, *Saigo no Edo gesakutachi* (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no Nihonsha, 1976)

One may also imagine the original reader's agreement with the protagonist's reactions to unusual customs and sights, in much the same way that in the Ikku's version the urban reader laughs *with* Kitahachi and Yajirō at quaint provincial folk and their manners. There is also a suggestion in Robun's version of a perceived superficiality or wanton extravagance of Western culture, as in the protagonist's reaction to, as I interpret this

episode, the Baroque excess and inutility of this fountain that, as the caption reads, “gurgles unceasingly noon and night.”

In the background to such episodes lie the Meiji government’s emphasis upon Western learning and technology in its own Enlightenment program. On first consideration, *By Shanks’ Mare Along the West* may seem to be support the Enlightenment program’s adoption of the West as utopian model of technological and social progress. However (as in Bakhtin’s conception of the role of the clown or fool in fiction as unwitting satirist) Yajirō and Kitahachi in their irreverent reactions also unwittingly question the supremacy of Western culture and its appropriateness as a utopian model. A more clearly dystopian reaction to Westernization program of Enlightenment period can be seen in the work *The Beef Eaters*, in which Robun ridicules those who indiscriminately adopt Western conventions and fashions.

One finds in many Meiji *gesaku* works a similar simultaneous construction and deconstruction of the utopian ideal of Western cultural and technological preeminence. Many regard works like *By Shanks’ Mare Along the West* as purely derivative and uninspired versions of the Edo period originals. I see them, to the contrary, as part of an ongoing tradition of utopian fiction in which writers of successive generations have updated the utopian vision to fit current circumstances.

Despite the passing pledge of some Meiji era *gesaku* artists to “elevate the path of fiction,” many of them, including Kanagaki Robun, Baitei Kinga and Mantei Ōga, soon began to ridicule the excesses of the Westernization and Enlightenment movements. In light of their frequent ridicule of the Enlightenment program, it is not surprising that, as Keene writes, *gesaku* writers quickly fell out of favor among Enlightenment thinkers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi and Nakamura Keiu.¹⁷³

Maeda writes that the perception of *gesaku* as a déclassé form of literature in fact began in the early Meiji era with new classification schemes for writing and scholarship proposed by Enlightenment thinkers.¹⁷⁴ In the most famous of these, Fukuzawa declares in *Gakumon no susume* (An Encouragement of Learning, 1872-76) that “Learning is not simply the study of obscure Chinese characters, reading ancient texts which are difficult to make out, or enjoying and writing poetry.”¹⁷⁵ One might imagine that in Fukuzawa’s devaluation of the social importance of Chinese scholarship and writing, fiction written in vernacular Japanese might in turn be elevated. Keene writes, however, that Fukuzawa

¹⁷³ Keene, 16-17.

¹⁷⁴ Maeda 1989, 7.

¹⁷⁵ Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Encouragement of Learning*, translated by David Dilworth and Umeyo Hirano (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1969), 288.

“condemned *gesaku* writings as a pointless waste of time, in much the same way that he condemned the composition of poetry in Japanese or Chinese.”¹⁷⁶

Gesaku, as an unabashedly frivolous type of writing, is certainly at odds with Fukuzawa’s conception of the proper end of education and study as the acquiring of “practical learning that is closer to ordinary human needs.”¹⁷⁷ Maeda writes that due in part to this widely influential pragmatic view of scholarship, the “upper types of literature” came to consist of Chinese studies (*kangaku*), Japanese studies (*kokugaku*), *waka*, Chinese poetry, history, and philosophy, whereas *gesaku* and humorous verse such as *haikai* or *senryū* came to be seen as decidedly of the “lower ranks of literature.”

Indeed, one might expect those who saw themselves as part of a new cultural Enlightenment to look down upon such an irreverent and often scatological forms of writing as *gesaku*. It is curious, however, that *gesaku* is often seen in similarly critical terms by later commentators. In *Dawn to the West*, for instance, Keene seems to agree at times with the most critical opinions of some Enlightenment intellectuals regarding *gesaku*, as when he writes that “*gesaku* had never been intended for educated men, who naturally preferred more elevated forms of writing.”¹⁷⁸ This is in fact quite far from the truth since the originators of *gesaku*, such as Hiraga Gennai, Santō Kyōden or Hōseidō

¹⁷⁶ Keene, 16.

¹⁷⁷ Fukuzawa, 288.

¹⁷⁸ Keene, 22.

Kisanji, were erudite individuals who wrote initially for a circle of like-minded sophisticates. Even during the above-described popularization of *gesaku* in the late Edo period, many readers certainly were better-educated members of the merchant class.

By the second decade of Meiji, *gesaku* works were published in a variety of popular newspapers and magazines and was read by persons of various backgrounds and educational levels. For readers with a higher level of education, newspapers also carried *kanbun gesaku* (also known as *gibun*), that is, witticisms, humorous sketches and stories written in *kanbun*. Demand was so great for such humorous works in the second decade of Meiji that humorous magazines — such as *Robun chinpō*, *Botan zasshi*, *Ninjō zasshi*, *Marumaru chinbun*, and *Kibi dango zasshi* — were soon created that carried mainly *gesaku* fiction and humorous sketches. Contradicting the notion that *gesaku* virtually and finally disappeared in the early years of Meiji, the *National Diet Library Catalog of Books Printed in the Meiji Era* lists over four-hundred extant Meiji era works of “humorous and satirical” fiction, including many by well-known *gesaku* writers.¹⁷⁹

Despite its continued popularity, or even as a result of its incredible popularity and perceived vulgarity among some intellectuals, a movement soon arose in the 1880s to reform *gesaku* and other forms of popular literature. This reformist view can be seen in

¹⁷⁹ Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan, *Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan shozō Meijiki kankō tosho mokuroku* (National Diet Library Catalog of Books Printed in the Meiji Era) (Tokyo: Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan, 1971), 537-548.

the famous preface to *Shōsetsu shinzui* (*Essence of the Novel*, 1885-86) in which

Tsubouchi Shōyō comments ambivalently on the rebirth of traditional genres of fiction

following the turmoil of the Meiji Restoration:

[A]s the result of the upheavals that accompanied the Meiji Restoration, for a time the popular writers ceased their activity, and the novel itself consequently lost ground. It has only been recently that a revival has occurred. The time indeed seems propitious for the production of novels. Everywhere historical romances and tales are being published, one more unusual than the next. It has reached such a point that even newspapers and magazines are printing reworkings of the hackneyed old novels, and thanks to this trend, the number of novels being produced is now beyond all reckoning.¹⁸⁰

Shōyō adds that “there is a simply staggering production of books, all of them extremely

bad.” Although Shōyō eschews writing that openly declares moral values or didactic

values, the new view of literature expressed in *Essence of the Novel* are certainly

influenced in part by the movement in the 1880 to “reform writing” (*shōsetsu kairyō*).¹⁸¹

In this new view of literature, *gesaku* could only be regarded as true literature if it were

“reformed,” a process that in itself seems to have elicited many utopian works based on

Enlightenment ideals.

¹⁸⁰ Tsubouchi Shōyō, “Preface to *Shōsetsu shinzui*,” in *Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology*, edited by Donald Keene, 55-58 (New York: Grove Press), 55.

¹⁸¹ For a thorough discussion of this movement, see Peter Kornicki, *The Reform of Fiction in Meiji Japan* (London: Published by Ithaca Press for the Board of the Faculty of Oriental Studies Oxford University, 1982).

Although given new impetus by Fukuzawa and later Enlightenment intellectuals' emphasis on practical learning, one might argue that the reform of popular literature began actually in the late Edo period with the censorship measures contained in the Kansei, Kyōhō and other social reforms. Since among popular writers Bakin's works most clearly reflect a *Confucian* reformist consciousness, this might help to explain the curious vogue his writings had among reform-minded thinkers in the Meiji era.

In *The Reform of Fiction in Meiji Japan*, Peter Kornicki writes that some Enlightenment era intellectuals, despite their general disparagement of other *gesaku* works, in fact recommended Bakin's writings as an example of the type of moral and political education literature could provide. One participant in the literature reform movement (*bungaku kairyō*) of the early 1880s, Kornicki writes:

...noted that the popular genres of fiction in the later part of the Tokugawa period had circulated widely and had in the case of Bakin's *yomihon* even inspired the lower classes to overthrow the *bakufu*. They could now help to further the spread of political understanding by taking up in an interesting way such subjects as the partitioning of Poland and the lives of Benjamin Franklin and Jeanne d'Arc.¹⁸²

One wonder whether Bakin, who was after all a most conservative writer, did indeed incite readers to rebellion. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that some reformist intellectuals would be interested in the possibilities of popular literature as a vehicle for political indoctrination. The renewed interest in Bakin suggests also that early Meiji era

¹⁸² Peter Kornicki 1982, 17.

thinkers, in addition to their frequently noted passion for Western works of improvement like Samuel Smiles' "Self-Help," also mined their own tradition for works that suited their social and political views.

Seemingly due to the above-described interest among some intellectuals in the potential of popular fiction as a means of sugaring the pill of political discourse, numbers of revisions of Bakin's utopian work *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly* appeared in the second decade of Meiji that propound a variety of political views.

One of the earliest of these, *Dai ni sei musōbyōei kochō monogatari* (The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly, The Second Generation, 1883) presents a reactionary vision of the Enlightenment period as a whole as dystopia. The author, Hattori Bushō, was, along with Narushima Ryūhoku, an editor of *Tokyo shinshi* (A New Description of Tokyo), a magazine containing satirical descriptions, written in *kanbun*, of current fashions and past-times. Many of the readers of this magazine were self-declared literati who considered themselves to have become redundant (or in Ryūhoku's well-known phrase made *muyō no hito*) due to the new official emphasis on Western learning and practical knowledge.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ See Okitsu Kaname, "Hattori Bushō kenkyū" (A Study of Hattori Bushō), in *Meiji kaikaki bungaku no kenkyū* (A Study of Literature of the Meiji Enlightenment Period) (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1973).

The first-person narrator of this work — referring both to the magazine *A New Description of Tokyo* and to works such as Ryūhoku's *Ryūkyō shinshi* (New Description of Yanagibashi, 1859-1871) that satirized contemporary fashions and past-times — declares himself to be “a disciple of the new descriptions.” As such, he describes how it is his wont to “clear my mind by sipping a bit of water from the inkstone, give a little cough, and after searching the depths of my soul declare”:

As a disciple of the new descriptions I am by birth a bickerer. A complainer. By soundly chastising others, the disciple of the new descriptions excuses his own faults. I submit to this fact. It is only by spending the day complaining that I am able to calm the bugs squirming about in my stomach.¹⁸⁴

True to this description, the narrator travels about by balloon to the various islands represented in Bakin's original version, grouching about the many changes in fashion and public policy that have been brought through Westernization. As one trained in the Chinese classics and writing in *kanbun*, one of Hattori's favored targets of criticism and ridicule is the new system of Western education.

The original lands described in *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly* are not utopias in the sense of being idyllic locales or societies. They are, rather, Confucian didactic dystopias foretelling the ultimate decline of society due to the

¹⁸⁴ Hattori Bushō, *Dai ni sei musōbyōei kochō monogatari* (The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly, The Second Generation, 1883), in *Koten bunko*, 72, editor Kazuo Yamashiki (Tokyo: Gendai Shichōsha, 1985), 57.

improper training of children and the wanton sexuality of many men and especially those women in the profession of geisha. It is curious that Hattori looks back on the dystopia described in this work with apparent wistfulness. He comments on the many changes, few for the better, that have taken place as a result of the Enlightenment in the Country of Children, Lust, Greed, and Drunkenness of the original version (the original work is so clearly a parable of contemporary society that Hattori makes no attempt to differentiate the two). When Hyōei visits Oshiezujima, in the Country of Children, the narrator relates that the children, thanks to the new system of universal elementary education, are now educated from an early age. He adds, however, that all they seem to learn is how to eat beef, drink beer, and dress in the latest Western fashion.

The narrator does admit to some advantages brought through the Enlightenment. He relates that the inhabitants of the Country of Children, who were formerly lost or abandoned and living without any parental training, had been reunited with their families thanks to the new system that used the telegraph to send reports of missing persons from one police station to the next throughout the entire country. This latter conceit might be taken as representation of the clear benefits of modernization in Japan, were it not for the

fact that Hattori elsewhere in this work describes the so-called “Flowering of Civilization” (*bunmei kaika*) as a gilded affair with no true substance.¹⁸⁵

The careers of writers like Hattori Bushō or Narushima Ryūhoku who wrote in a style only accessible to the highly-educated, argues against Keene’s suggestion that Meiji era *gesaku* could only be of interest to the uneducated:

[G]esaku writers, knowing their market, continued to grind out formless anecdotes or else variants on the hackneyed materials of the preceding two hundred years that appealed to the minds of the uneducated.¹⁸⁶

Even when written in a more accessible language, one wonders why “materials of the preceding two hundred years” should appeal in particular to the uneducated. Scholars of Western utopian fiction often comment upon the tendency of authors in this tradition to revise famous utopian works of the past. As opposed to a lack of originality or imagination, Meiji era *gesaku* writers returned to the themes and plots of works by Bakin, Ikku and others out of an impulse to describe changes in social vision that had occurred in intervening years.

As seen in both “low-brow” works by Kanagaki Robun and “high-brow” works by Hattori Bushō and others, *gesaku* had the propensity, which often appeared in the form of utopian or dystopian works, to criticize current politics and society, often comparing

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 95

¹⁸⁶ Keene, 14.

present circumstances with those described in popular works from the past. Keene, Nakamura Mitsuo and other literary historians, however, often overlook the social importance of earlier native popular traditions, emphasizing instead the influence upon society and literature in early Meiji times of translations of Western works such as Samuel Smiles *Self-Help* (translated as *Saikoku risshi hen*, 1870) or Disraeli's political novels. Kida similarly attributes the trend for utopian fiction in Meiji largely to the translation of Western works such as Rousseau's *Du contract social*, translated in 1881 as *Minyaku yakkai*, More's *Utopia*, translated in 1882 as *Yoi seifu dan*, or Albert Robida's *Le vingtième siècle*, translated in 1886 as *Sekai shinpo dai nijū seiki*.

The translator of the futuristic work *Le vingtième siècle*, significantly, was none other than Hattori Bushō, who three years earlier wrote *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly, The Second Generation*. As opposed to *learning* utopian fiction from the West, I believe that Japanese writers and readers were attracted to foreign examples of this genre that fit so easily into the native tradition of fantastic travel accounts and visions of the future. This confluence of Western and Eastern traditions of utopian fiction is rarely considered in studies of Meiji literature.

Interested more in the changes in Western political philosophy through the process of its introduction into Japan than in utopian fiction per se, Kida focuses upon Western models and on the political ends of Meiji era utopian fiction. Kida sees the

origins of political utopian fiction in Japan as originating with the “People’s Rights” (*jiyū minken*) movement (from, roughly, 1874-1883) in Japan and the desire to express in more accessible form the principles of human rights contained in works such as J.S. Mills *On Liberty* (translated in 1871 as *jiyū no ri*) or Rousseau’s *Du contract social*.

Curiously, most of the utopian works Kida discusses were written only in the waning years of the People’s Rights movement, or several years thereafter, and consist of, as opposed to descriptions of conditions in society at large, rather dry predictions of changes in government after the long-awaited establishment of a parliament and constitution. Kida nevertheless attempts to find in such works depictions of a full-fledged utopian society based on liberal political thought.¹⁸⁷ Kida’s analysis, similar to that of Kumar and others discussed in the introductory chapters of this study, is very much influenced by a belief that such utopian ideals originate in the West and are to be found in pre-modern times almost exclusively in Western works.

Kida sees the new Meiji era *miraiki* (“record of the future”) genre as the first example of the Western-influenced political utopia. In their rhetorical method plot structure, he writes, such works often use either inductive or deductive logic to argue for their respective visions of an ideal society.¹⁸⁸ In the former method, the author possesses

¹⁸⁷ Kida’s own term for such a utopia is *jiyūshugi teki na yūtopia*. See Kida, 31.

¹⁸⁸ Kida, 61.

beforehand a desired model for the future society and from this premise searches out the route whereby this ideal is to be achieved, or criticizes the failures of contemporary society to live up to this model. As example of such, Kida cites Takase Ukō's *Nijūsan nen miraiki* (A Record of the Future in the Year 1890).¹⁸⁹ Looking just a few years into the future, this work published in 1883 predicts the many benefits that will be brought to Japanese society through the parliament promised by Imperial order to be established in 1890. Numbers of Meiji era works, Kida writes, similarly look back on the failings of the contemporary government from the vantage point of a future utopia based on enlightened political philosophy.

In contrast to such inductive utopias, authors of utopian fiction who employ the deductive method, Kida writes, examine the current state of society and attempt to predict based upon their conclusions the forms the future utopia (or, more often it seems, dystopia) will take. Examples Kida gives of such works, again, consist of quite narrowly political discussions of the failure of the current government to live up to the ideals of Western liberal thought. These include a still later version of *Nijūsan nen miraiki* (A Record of the Future in the Year 1890), written by Suehiro Tetchō in 1886 that questions, given government resistance and the weakening of the Peoples Right's movement, whether the ideal of a representative government will ever be achieved.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 60.

Although it describes well several common rhetorical techniques of utopian fiction, Kida's distinction between inductive and deductive types of utopian fiction makes sense only if one assumes that the authors are always in earnest. In actuality, the rhetorical methods and aims of all but the most doctrinaire of political utopian works are more ambiguous than this simple distinction suggests. Kida himself notes the "failure" of still other versions of *A Record of the Future in the Year 1890* to appreciate the liberal political vision of the original work of this name.

As example of such misguided utopias, Kida discusses the work *Meiji nijūsan nen musōbyōei kaimei monogatari* (The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and Civilization in 1890) in which the wealthy miser Hyōei is visited in a dream by a catfish who advises him to send his son to serve in parliament as a means to raise his own social status. "This is all rather absurd," Kida writes, "but what this story itself demonstrates is that those who shouldered the destiny of the new utopia (*yūtopia no ninaite*) came from the so-called lower-classes and became assimilated into the educated bourgeoisie."¹⁹⁰ Seeing the People's Rights movement in itself as a drive for a new utopia, Kida criticizes in quite narrow Marxist terms Meiji era gesaku writers whom he believes as a group failed to grasp the significance of this dream:

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 37.

The power of social criticism (in Japan) was first born through the satirical temperament of *gesaku* writers such as Gennai or Bakin. Since (Meiji era) *gesaku* writers were for the most part of the Samurai class, the surface of their works reflect, as a more positive side of their Confucian morality and outlook based on Samurai ethos, a sense of self-restraint and stoicism that characterizes the pathos of many traditional Japanese utopias. On the minus side, typical of the disillusioned humor of *gesaku* writings, they presented the will for revolution as simply another pipe dream.¹⁹¹

It is unfortunate that as a result of his own socialist ideals Kida at times seems to altogether miss the larger satirical point of this and other examples of utopias found in Meiji era popular works.

In Bakin and Yūkokushi's versions of the Hyōei saga, one should note, the protagonist is first visited in a dream by the mythical figure Urashima Tarō, who symbolizes a visionary view of the future in these works. In exchanging Urashima Tarō for a catfish in this version, the author is employing a common association, seen in political cartoons of the day, between the "whiskers" of the catfish and the Western-style beards favored by government officials and bureaucrats. The clear satirical implication of the instruction of this catfish/ bureaucrat to the miser to send his son to serve in the soon-to-be established parliament is that many of those in government or behind the movement for Western-style institutions are self-interested social-climbers.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 38.

In focusing on more narrowly political utopias, Kida overlooks the many examples of utopian works by those who believed they had been excluded by the Enlightenment, or who chose not to participate in it out of an allegiance to the values and traditions of the past. These works are often disguised as a deductive vision of what society will look like after the Enlightenment has succeeded, but in fact argue for why society was better off prior to such changes. One should not, however, as Kida does, regard *gesaku* writers as necessarily antagonist to all social change, such as the movement for People's Rights. In the second decade of Meiji, much *gesaku* was in fact published in magazines supporting the People's Rights movement. As professional satirists, *gesaku* writers lent their pens to a variety of political causes.

In his emphasis on Western political philosophy, Kida also ignores more general types of utopian fiction to be found in the Meiji era, including many satirical utopias to be found in *gesaku* writings of the time. Similar to Kida's conception of the (Western) utopia as foremost an expression of political ideals, Nakamura Mitsuo and Donald Keene write that Meiji era readers were at first interested in Western works for the most pragmatic of reasons, as, essentially, primers in Western politics, geography, history and technology. Keene supports Nakamura's notion that readers, for this reason, were not interested in humorous fiction or other types of light literature from the West:

The Japanese might have borrowed humor from European literature when they came to know it better, but humor was not one of the literary qualities they sought. Realism, the exposure of social injustice, the discovery of the self, and other preeminently serious concerns, rather than comic invention, were what attracted the Japanese to the European masters.¹⁹²

Granting that readers of this time were attracted to European works primarily for their “exposure of social injustice” or their “discovery of the self,” Keene does not adequately explain why these aims are necessarily incompatible with humorous fiction. Judging from the early translation and popularity of works such as Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (translated in 1850 as *Hyōryō kiji*), Jules Verne’s *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours* (translated in 1878 as *Hachijū-nichi-kan sekai isshū*), Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (translated in 1880 as *Ehon Garibarusu shimameguri*), or More’s *Utopia* (translated in 1882 as *Yoi seifu dan*), late Edo and Meiji era readers in fact seem to have been interested in a similar mix of political commentary, humor, and travels through fantastic or exotic lands as found in their own popular tradition of utopian fiction.

As opposed to viewing utopian works by Swift or More as primers in *Western* geography or political philosophy, Meiji era readers were perhaps attracted to them as counterparts to the native types of utopian fiction with which they were already familiar. This process of assimilation is evidenced by the Japanese titles of many of these translated works. *Ehon Garibarusu shimameguri*, literally “Gulliver’s ‘trip about the

¹⁹² Keene, 30.

islands,” is taken from the generic term for native accounts of travel to nearby islands, both real and fantastic. *Yoi seifu dan*, literally “a discourse on good government,” is reminiscent of Confucian political discourse. These utopian works might have been read as counterparts to, on the one hand, more explicitly political utopias (such as the Anti-Confucian or Confucian works by authors such as Kisanji or Bakin) or, on the other, more fanciful accounts of travel, mixed with elements of social commentary (as in works by Gennai, Yūkokushi, or Ikku).

The career of Baitei Kinga illustrates the above-discussed changes in the medium of *gesaku* from late-Edo to mid-Meiji. As a review of these changes, I will consider by way of conclusion Kinga’s development from a writer of the most “frivolous” of *gesaku* works in the late Edo period to a writer of overt political satire and utopian fiction in mid-Meiji.

Before the restoration, Kinga wrote mainly *ninjōbon*, or romantic tales, which were greatly influenced by the *kanzenchōaku* tone of his master and namesake Baitei Kinsui.¹⁹³ In contrast with the moralist tendencies of his early works, his later and better-known *kokkeibon*, such as the famous series *Shichi henjin* (The Seven Editors [or, alternately, The Seven Odd Men], 1858-1864), were often irreverent and scatological in

¹⁹³ See Okitsu 1963, 118-26.

their humor.¹⁹⁴ In *The Essence of the Novel*, coincidentally, Tsubouchi Shōyō criticizes *The Seven Editors* as an example of the tendency of *gesaku* artists to present themselves to the public as mere comic entertainers, as opposed to serious commentators on society.

In the first decade of Meiji, Kinga — like Robun and many other *gesaku* writers — wrote numerous works explaining aspects of Western history, geography, and technology, to a general audience. These included general introductions to such Western figures as James Watt or Columbus as well as to numerous Western inventions.¹⁹⁵ Soon, however, again similar to Robun, Baitei began to write works critical of Westernization and the Enlightenment.

This more skeptical view of the West is evidenced in the sketch *Seiyō no nozokimegane* (Peephole to the West, 1875) that Kinga contributed in a series of humorous views on modernization to the dedicated *gesaku* magazine *Kishō shinbun* (The Funny News). Similar to the well-known sketch “The Western Peep Show,” found in Hattori Bushō’s *Tokyo shin hanjōki* (A New Record of Tokyo’s Prosperity), Kinga portrays popular interest in the West as a prurient fascination, not unlike the newly-introduced Western fad of the peep show.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Baitei Kinga, *Shichi henjin* (Tokyo: Dōmei Shobō, 1883).

¹⁹⁵ Okitsu 1963, 134.

¹⁹⁶ Hattori Bushō, “The Western Peep Show,” in *Modern Japanese Literature*, edited by Donald Keene, 34–36 (New York: Grove Press, 1957).

Kinga admits that he himself has been caught up in the craze, “like a curious child who tries to stare into his mother’s belly through her navel just at the moment she is about to give birth.”¹⁹⁷ This odd juxtaposition of far-fetched allusions is quite typical of *gesaku*. What intrigues me about both this sketch and Kinga’s general view of the West is that, in contrast for instance with Robun, he appears cognizant of the momentous changes that are taking place in Japan



through the Western-inspired modernization agenda, despite his best efforts to ridicule this process. Due certainly in part both to his background as a writer on Western technology and to the fact that he was still active as a writer during the high point of modernization in mid-Meiji, Kinga writes more convincingly on matters of modernization than do Kanagaki Robun and other earlier *gesaku* writers.

Figure 7: Peephole to the West
Reprinted from Kimoto Itaru,
“Marumaru chinbun” “Kibi dango” ga
yuku (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 1989)

Critic Etō Jun, in the chapter “Meiji ni okeru Saikaku” (Saikaku in Meiji) of his work *Kindai izen* (Before the modern), contributes to the debate on whether earlier types of popular literature did not contribute more to the development of Japanese fiction than

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

formerly has been thought. Known for his expertise in English literature and its influence on canonical Japanese literary texts, Etō is not necessarily a proponent of this notion. He does acknowledge however the advances of *gesaku* genres in Meiji, writing that with the modernization of the publishing industry, the relationship between the *gesaku* artist and his reader changed from an intimate, closed association to a more abstract one.¹⁹⁸ The style and subject matter of *gesaku* as well, he writes, also became more abstract in its logic and more sophisticated in expression of political or philosophical notions than that found in *kokkeibon* and other late-Edo and early Meiji genres.

This more evolved rhetorical style is seen both in Kinga's humorous editorials and in his longer utopian work *A Fantastic Record of the Future*. In the satirical piece *Gakumon no suzume* (The Learn'ed Sparrow, 1875), for instance, Kinga parodies Fukuzawa's suggestion in *An Encouragement of Learning* that even animals can benefit from a little education. In his twist upon this idea, Kinga tells the story of a sparrow who asks his friend the swallow to help him dye his feathers yellow like that of the bush warbler. The swallow replies that the bush warbler is praised not simply for the color of its feathers but for its beautiful voice heard so often in mating season.

The narrator, who has had a dream of this exchange, relates "Isn't this a great reply on the part of the swallow? Observing the youth of today as they prepare to take up

¹⁹⁸ Etō Jun, *Kindai izen* (Before the Modern) (Tokyo, Bungei Shunjū), 218

Western studies, isn't it a fact that they always first begin by putting on a pair of Western shoes and a scarf?"¹⁹⁹ As in this instance, Kinga's views, however reactionary, are often expressed in quite elegant and witty terms. Printed in mass-distribution newspapers and read by persons of various educational backgrounds, Kinga's works discuss the paradoxes of Westernization and modernization in a more sophisticated manner than had previously been seen in *gesaku* of the Meiji era.

Although he is more capable of discussing abstract political or philosophical ideas than many former *gesaku* writers, Kinga's works may at first seem completely at odds with the arguably more refined political novels, or *seiji shōsetsu*, of the same period. In presenting utopian alternatives to the contemporary situation, however, Kinga shares much political ground with the writer of *seiji shōsetsu*. Mikiso Hane relates that many disgruntled samurai who lost their hereditary privileges with the coming of the Meiji restoration later turned to journalism as a vehicle for launching attacks against the imperial government. Many of the figures behind the publication, whether as editors or writers themselves, of both *seiji shōsetsu* and the boom in serialized *gesaku* (or *tsuzukimono*) in the second decade of Meiji were of this very class. Many *gesaku* works

¹⁹⁹ Baitei Kinga, "Gakumon no suzume" (The Learn'ed Sparrow, 1875), in *Kishō shinbun* (The Funny News), No. 10, 1875. Excerpts are also found in Okitsu Kaname, *Kanagaki Robun: Bunmei kaika no gesakusha* (Kanagaki Robun: Enlightenment Era Gesaku Writer) (Yokohama: Yūindō, 1993), 103-4.

and *seiji shōsetsu* of this period reflect growing discontent with the restoration government among both progressives and reactionaries of the old guard.

In the second decade of Meiji, contributing to the People's Rights movement, numbers of anti-government *gesaku* pieces were serialized in popular newspapers, or *koshinbun*. Dedicated humor magazines also emerged that carried cartoons and *gesaku* sketches criticizing the Enlightenment program or the government itself. Among these, the humor magazine *Marumaru chinbun* had great notoriety and stayed in publication from 1877 to 1907.

Marumaru chinbun contained Western-style political cartoons similar to those found in magazines like *Punch*. It also carried Japanese satirical forms, including *senryū*, *gesaku* and *gibun*. Despite the heavy emphasis on humor, the slogan of the paper, "Observe, Listen, Record," suggests the demand among early Meiji readers not only for humorous diversion but for news of the world as well as domestic affairs. As a result of the reputation Kinga gained as a satirist of the Enlightenment for his pieces like "Peep-hole to the West," the editor of *Marumaru chinbun*, Nomura Fumio, hired him as the chief writer for this new magazine. In his role as principal writer, Kinga contributed satirical editorials, romantic tales, and humorous *gesaku* pieces.

In a section titled "English-Japanese Dual Translation" (*eiwa taiyaku*), found in the first issue of *Marumaru chinbun*, the editor makes clear the intended audience of the

magazine, that is, students and others of the new Meiji intellectual class, as well as resident native English speakers. Considering that the Japanese portion of this dual-language text is written in *kanbun*, the audience were presumably largely well-educated persons.

- A. Have you not heard that the Dandansha is on the point of publishing a newspaper?
- B. No! I hear about it now for the first time. Is the subject matter going to be the same as the others?
- A. On the contrary it will chiefly contain comic news, and laughable sketches of passing events in Japan and other countries.
- B. That will be very entertaining matter to read during our leisure hours, but is there nothing else to recommend this new paper?
- A. Certainly there is for the letters of the Kana are appended to each character, so that even children will be able to read and understand it.²⁰⁰

In the period of civilization and enlightenment, a humorous magazine, it seems, could not present itself to the public on its merits solely as a work of entertainment or diversion.

The editor is therefore anxious to point out the educational value *Marumaru chinbun* will have for those interested in domestic and world events. The divided audience (targeting both *kanbun* readers and the barely literate) and purposes (both as a tool of education and political indoctrination) of this magazine is telling of the diverse audience for *gesaku*.

²⁰⁰ This dialogue is reproduced verbatim as found in the first issue of *Marumaru chinbun*. In the work *Marumaru chinbun, Kibi dango ga yuku*, Kimoto Itaru suggests that the translator of the somewhat idiomatic English of the dialogue was the editor, Nomura Fumio, himself, who was formerly a Western studies scholar (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 1989), 54.

Despite the enthusiastically pragmatic rhetoric of this first issue, *Marumaru chinbun* was far from conformist. Led by former Satsuma-clan samurai and Western studies scholar Nomura Fumio, *Marumaru chinbun* was at once pro-enlightenment and anti-government. In one of his first editorials, in stride with the growing resentment in the 1870s against the imperial government, Nomura makes anti-government statements such as “The gains of the government are the losses of the people, the gains of the people are the losses of the Government.”

Just prior to the release of the paper’s first issue, in January 1877, the Satsuma rebellion broke out in Kagoshima. *Marumaru chinbun* carried updates of the fighting between Saigō Takamori’s rebel troops and the imperial army, often clearly biased in favor of the rebels. The audaciousness of these reports and anti-government sentiments presented in editorials is somewhat surprising given that censorship was carried out by the Meiji government through heavy fines and forced retractions.

Despite such laws, in his first contribution to *Marumaru chinbun*, Kinga wrote a satirical editorial on the topic of censorship itself. He does however mask the subject somewhat through liberal use of puns and other plays on language. The topic of the editorial is the meaning of the “marumaru,” literally “round, round,” element of the newspaper’s title. As all readers would have known, the name of this paper is in fact a

send-up of the censor's mark used at that time, the double "maru" or "○○," giving a meaning of "Censored Strange News" for the publication. The "marumaru" of his newspaper's title, Kinga protests in mock-earnestness, is not that of the censor's mark, but stands for such noble round things as the sun, the moon, roasted potatoes, and the male testicles. But above all these, he writes, "we have chosen '○○' as our symbol so that we might not forget for a single day the red, round sun (written "日の○" in the original) of the Imperial flag which proclaims to the world the glory of the Meiji era." Although cloaked in puns, the sarcasm of this passage, directed against the very symbol of the restoration government, is typical of the anti-establishment satire found in *Marumaru chinbun*.

In contrast with other Meiji era *gesaku* writers like Robun or Bushō who frequently adapted past works to demonstrate their discontent with present society, Kinga voices his discontent in the form of a dystopian view of the future. His *Mōsō miraiki* (A Fantastic Record of the Future, 1878) is more a dystopia of technological advancement, along the lines of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, than a simple celebration of technological progress.

Kinga describes in this long-running serial work the many technological and social "advancements" brought through one-hundred years of continued enlightenment,

from the year Meiji eleven (1878), the year in which this series appeared, through Meiji one-hundred and eleven (1978). At the current rate of the expanse of civilization, Kinga predicts that in a hundred-years time people will whisk about Tokyo on the equivalent of roller-skates, propelled by the wind or by other more elaborate means of locomotion:

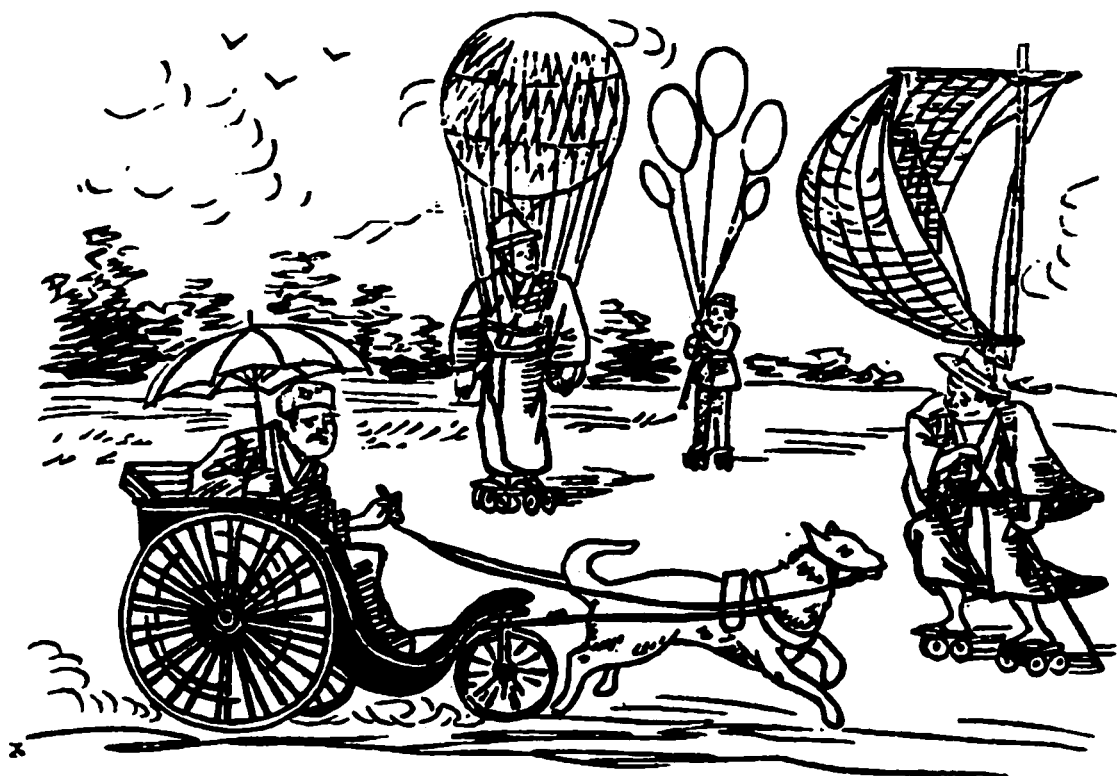


Figure 8: The Civilization of Japan in Meiji One-hundred and Eleven (1978)

People going about the streets all wear wooden clogs with wheels attached to their base. Those of lesser means carry a collapsible pole on their shoulders as a mast and hang a piece of cloth onto it about the size of the curtain one hangs over the opening of an outhouse. Opening this cloth up and rotating it around, they race around the side streets driven by the wind. Those with more means keep supplies of hydrogen gas and when they are ready to go out fill up a balloon with the stuff and tie this onto their waists with a rope. Letting the balloon float up into the air,

they then put on their rolling clogs and turn their bodies like a spindle to such an angle that they are prevented from floating up into space.³⁰¹

As in so many *gesaku* pieces produced in the Enlightenment period, such as in Robun's *The Beefeaters*, Kinga questions the ultimate practicality of technological innovation, presenting it more as a faddish gimmick than as something that will truly improve the lives of the average person. For instance, in comparing the sails used in the above-described marvelous new form of transportation to "the curtain one hangs over the opening of an outhouse," it seems clear that the author is less than enthusiastic about modernization in its own right.

This skeptical view of Westernization and technological innovation becomes more clear as the narrative proceeds. Kinga combines a skepticism of innovation with criticism of the new bureaucratic state in passages such as the following, a description again of the year Meiji one-hundred and eleven:

Dogs are sent to dog school to learn how to pull vehicles. Shikoku monkeys are procured through the Mitsukoshi Corporation and made to work in the masts of ships. Telegraph offices also use monkeys in the place of workmen to hang lines on telegraph poles. There is discussion even of having language schools train parrots to be used at translating bureaus, but this has yet to be fully implemented.³⁰²

³⁰¹ Quoted in Okitsu 1963, 148.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 149.

Although Kinga in such passages as this ridicules the Meiji passion for innovation, he also seems to take great pleasure in the theme of technological innovation in its own right. In this respect, the work *A Fantastic Record of the Future* differs greatly from the more narrowly political utopian works written in mid-Meiji times. I see this work, for this reason, as a forerunner to later more purely literary examples of Japanese utopian fiction.

In successive passages, Kinga describes in great detail a society completely changed through scientific innovations:

Coal was no longer used to heat peoples' homes. Instead, facilities were set up on active volcanoes in Shinshū for use as a source of natural gas. Men would shovel molten lava into buckets to be transported by pipe to people's stoves and heaters. By turning the nozzle on the pipe, fire would shoot out of a spigot for use in heating tea or cooking rice.²⁰³

The innovations and resulting conveniences seen in this utopia come at a price.

Reflecting the conservative Confucian views of many of his generation, Kinga relates that this modernization of society results ultimately in the destruction of tradition values:

As civilization advanced, people's natures became frivolous. Since profit or loss became the guiding motive of all endeavors, fights broke out between couples over whether the husband was bringing in enough money. As a result, there were numerous cases in which couples petitioned for an official change of residence. For this reason, the head priest of Izumo shrine devised a system whereby relations between husband and wife were set at four year limits. If at the end of that time there were no serious rows, or changes of bed partners, the limit would be extended another four years. Patterned as it was on the term limits of the American president, people took this as the most sensible of measures and

²⁰³ Ibid.

promptly forgot the difficult pledges of olden times to stay with their partners unto death or even through two or three lifetimes.²⁰⁴

Reflecting the fact that many of his audience were politically-engaged members of the former samurai class, Kinga in this utopia/dystopia of technological progress walks the line between official and seditious, progressive and reactionary ideals. Less overtly political than the utopias of constitutional or political reform of this same period, Kinga creates a work of entertainment in its own right.

The seemingly contradictory rhetoric found in utopian works by Kinga and other Meiji era *gesaku* writers should not be taken as a sign of the author's lack of literary or political sophistication. To the contrary, one role of utopian fiction, as a satirical mode, is to highlight the contradictions of prevailing social and political ideals. Robun, Bushō and other Meiji *gesaku* artists were popular in part due to their play with utopian and dystopian views of the West and modernization. Rarely taking a definitive stand on one side or the other, the rhetorical ambiguity of the satire seen in such *gesaku*, by way of comparison, is not unlike that of Swift's long-winded title:

"An Argument to prove that the Abolishing of Christianity in England, may as things now stand, be attended with some Inconveniences, and perhaps not produce those many good Effects proposed thereby"²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 150.

²⁰⁵ Jonathon Swift, "An Argument to prove that the Abolishing of Christianity..." in *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, edited by Angus Ross and David Wooley, 217-227 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

Substitute the words “Feudalism” for “Christianity” and “Japan” for “England” in this title and one comes to a fairly good summary of the equivocal position taken by many Meiji era *gesaku* writers in regards to modernization, of all sorts, in their respective utopian visions. Arguing, as they often did, against the benefits of technological innovation, equal rights for men and women, universal education, a modern constitution, and so on, it is little surprise that many later commentators dismiss such works as serious social debate. In failing to consider the social import of Meiji era *gesaku* works, nevertheless, literary histories often present a one-sided picture of views of the Enlightenment, modernization and other changes seen in literature of this time.

As a result of a confluence of Western and native genres and themes, utopian works considered in this chapter demonstrate an unusual combination of Western and Confucian political theory, the irreverent humor of *gesaku*, and travel episodes reminiscent both of Jules Verne and Buddhist fantastic travel narratives. Meiji era writers such as Kinga discovered utopian fiction as a broader form of entertainment, as opposed to a vehicle simply for political debate.

Chapter Five: Beyond the Political Utopia

In this final chapter, I will first review the trends in Edo and early-Meiji utopian fiction considered thus far in this study. I would also like to readdress the question of whether pre-modern Japanese utopian works commented in a direct manner on political and social concerns. This is a key issue in that for many commentators utopian fiction, by definition, is concerned with the problems of human society, as contrasted with the seemingly universal religious or other mythical visions of an otherworldly paradise.

Moving into mid-Meiji, one finds that many writers, political thinkers, and readers were captivated by various types of utopian writings, both as political allegories and as literary works in their own right. In addition to the many writers of *seiji shōsetsu* who experimented with utopian themes and locales, established literary figures such as Uchida Roan and, somewhat later, Natsume Sōseki showed an appreciation for, and borrowed elements from, both native and Western traditions of utopian fiction.

I conclude this study by considering Sōseki's famous novel *Wagahai wa neko de aru* (I am a Cat, 1905) as a work of utopian fiction. Several critics have written on the elements of traditional comic storytelling (*rakugo*) and popular fiction (*gesaku*) found in *I am a Cat*. Others have argued that Sōseki intended *I am a Cat* as social allegory in the fashion of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. I will discuss ways in which *I am a Cat* draws from

both Eastern and Western types of utopian fiction, and of its place in the longer tradition of Japanese utopian fiction.

Pre-Modern Japanese Utopian Fiction and Politics

Several specialists have claimed that in pre-modern times utopian works presenting alternative models for an ideal *earthly* society existed only in the West. One leading scholar of utopian fiction, Krishan Kumar, writes that utopianism was born through a duality of Christian thought that blends in a unique manner elements of a terrestrial and non-terrestrial paradise.²⁰⁶ The two-fold argument implicit in this claim is that, first, utopian thought emerged originally from religious-inspired visions of paradise and that, second, the Old-Testament myth of a Garden of Eden was a “unique” vision of a paradise-on-earth that lent itself readily to the utopian ideal of perfecting human society.

As the myth of a Garden of Eden originally comes from Semitic tradition, it strikes one as odd to claim it as a uniquely Western concept: If accepted as the original utopian locale, this would seemingly place the origins of utopianism in southwestern Asia or North Africa, not in Europe as Kumar and others claim. Regardless of its ultimate origins, the image of Eden does serve as a model for many early Western examples of utopian fiction. Francis Bacon sets his *New Atlantis* (1627), for instance, on an Eden-like, mythical South Pacific island in which the inhabitants (some fifteen-hundred years

²⁰⁶ Kumar, 428.

following a visit by Christ's apostle Bartholomew), as the story relates, have created an ideal society based on Christian principles.

As one might expect of a work written by Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis* combines Christian ideals with the notion of the betterment of human society through scientific innovation. The marriage practices of the island especially display a peculiar mix of Christian morality and scientific rationalism. Physical intimacy prior to marriage is strictly prohibited: And yet, due to the "many defects in men and women's bodies," representatives of the man and the woman are allowed to see the prospective partners bathe naked ("severally" the narrator is careful to point out) in "Adam and Eve" pools designated for such pre-nuptial inspections.³⁰⁷

Similar to Bacon's use of the Eden myth, Edo period utopian writers also frequently borrowed fantastic settings from earlier religious or mythical visions of a paradise. Yūkokushi bases the locale of his *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands* on Taoist myths of a land of peace and prosperity. Other Edo period utopian works, such as *The Romantic Life of Shidōken* or *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly*, employ the form of the *jigoku henreki*, or tales of visits to Buddhist hells or paradises, to describe the protagonist's travels to lands mirroring various aspects of the writer's own society.

³⁰⁷ Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis*, in *Three Early Modern Utopias: Thomas More, Utopia; Francis Bacon, New Atlantis; Henry Neville, The Isle of Pines*, edited by Susan Bruce, 149-86 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 174-75.

Despite the frequent Buddhist or Taoist, that is mystical, origins of the fantastic locales they describe in their works, several Edo period utopian writers certainly did intend their writings as commentary on contemporary social and political issues. Perhaps most notably, the political fable *Tales of the World of Law*, somewhat similar to the last chapter of *Gulliver's Travels*, uses anthropomorphism to describe the systematic exploitation of the Edo period feudal system as observed by various classes of animals.

Drawing on the Buddhist notion of karmic rebirth, the animals that comment critically on human society themselves represent the characteristic outlook and behavior of various groups and individuals of the time. The Eagle is thus the Shogun of the world of birds. He informs the other birds, "All of you, from the Crane, the Hawk-Eagle, the Hawk, the Falcon, the Buzzard-Eagle, and the multitude of small birds on down, are my possession."²⁰⁸ Albeit in a less overt manner than Shōeki, Gennai and Kisanji as well criticize aspects of the feudal hierarchy in their respective utopian works, demonstrating that political examples of this genre did exist in Japan in pre-modern times.

Not all Edo period utopian writers, however, necessarily possessed a radical outlook or welcomed social change. Many reveal a typically Confucian concern for the observance of established relations between the traditional four classes. In *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands*, for instance, the narrator tells disapprovingly of a land where

²⁰⁸ Yasunaga, 135.

“courtesies of rank between members of the four classes of samurai, farmer, tradesman and merchant even were not observed.” This land — in which “the young would compete according to their respective skills and those who worked hardest would take the best food, clothing and other fine things for themselves” — might be taken by more progressive utopian thinkers even as the most commendable of meritocracies.³⁹

Takizawa Bakin’s *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and the Butterfly*, which was based in part on *Strange Tales of Foreign Lands*, is equally critical of a perceived breakdown of traditional values, bemoaning especially a laxness in the education of youth. A radical, or even laissez faire, social outlook, however, is not a fixed element of utopian fiction. As Rees points out, many noted works of Western utopian fiction are quite conservative, if not authoritarian, in the measures they mandate for the perfect society — as in the notion expressed in *The Republic* that “It would be a sin either for mating or for anything else in a truly happy society to take place without regulation.”²¹⁰

To return to the discussion of the origins of utopian fiction, whereas Kumar claims the Garden of Eden as the original utopian locale, other critics cite the importance of classical Greek political models. More, Harrington, Bacon, and other sixteenth and seventeenth-century European utopian writers were clearly very taken with the idea of a

³⁹ Yūkokuishi, 39

²¹⁰ Plato, *The Republic*, translated by Desmond Lee (New York: Penguin, 1987), 239.

perfect commonwealth as found in classical works like Plato's *Republic*. One might argue that Japan and China also possessed in pre-modern times a dual tradition of religious and secular utopian fiction. Nevertheless, in the Edo period at least, the line between the two is rarely as clear as it is purported to be in the West. In their fantastic locales, Edo period utopian works often draw from Buddhist or Taoist visions of paradise, whereas in their philosophy they often argue for, or detract from, more secular Confucian views of ideal relations between the classes, or between rulers and ruled.

Another difference between Edo period utopian writers and writers like More or Bacon — whom many see as the founders of so-called “modern” utopian fiction — is that the former seem more attracted to dystopian criticism than to utopian exuberance. Gennai and Kisanji use the image of a fantastic locale or society largely to parody pre-existing Confucian utopian schemes. Conservative writers like Takizawa Bakin, conversely, highlight the presumed decadence of their own society in comparison with Buddhist or Confucian lost paradises. Nuita writes that Edo period writers of popular fiction as a group did not create true utopian fiction, since their descriptions of the fantastic society or locale were more often presented for purposes of satire than to advocate new ideal societies in their own right. Regardless of the political or social views of the writers themselves, the emphasis of Edo period utopian works does seem more upon the imperfect present than on some idealistic future state.

The dystopia itself, however, is a key part of the genre of utopian fiction. In the Western tradition, dystopian works by writers like Swift, Voltaire, or Huxley, in fact are better remembered than the many more straight-forward utopias of their contemporaries. As we move in this study from late-Edo to Meiji period examples, one notes a curious shift from dystopian to unreservedly utopian examples. In native literary terms, the frequently satirical views of contemporary society found in *gesaku* works are often regarded as having been eclipsed by the political utopias advocated in the new, Western-influenced genre of the *seiji shōsetsu*. Scores of fervently utopian political works appeared in connection especially with the Civilization and Enlightenment program and the mid-Meiji People's Rights movement.

The influence of Western political concepts and literary models is quite apparent in many *seiji shōsetsu*, to the extent that literary histories traditionally describe this genre as a purely derivative approximation of Western political novels. However, as demonstrated by Yano Ryūkei's *Inspiring Instances of Statesmanship*, which is often cited as the first *seiji shōsetsu*, mid-Meiji utopian writers borrowed elements not only from the West but also from the earlier native and Chinese literary traditions.

On one level, as Yano himself relates in his original preface to the work, *Inspiring Instances of Statesmanship* draws quite literally from published histories of the establishment of the Greek republic of Thebes. This choice of setting and historical

background is connected to the fact that Yano was a participant in the move for the establishment of a parliament. Japanese literary critic Kobayashi Chikahei writes that it was in large part due to the similarities with the politics of the day that *Inspiring Instances of Statesmanship* sold so well.

Although this work as a whole serves as an argument for Western political ideas, Yano's literal borrowing from episodes of Greek history is not unlike Bakin's use of well-known episodes from Chinese history in his own utopian works. *Inspiring Instances of Statesmanship* borrows in fact from both of these traditions. Many of its episodes are based also on the Chinese vernacular novel *The Water Margin*. Moreover, similar to the Confucian subtext of *The Water Margin*, Kobayashi writes that readers who trained in the Confucian classics identified the three heroes of *Inspiring Instances of Statesmanship* (Pelopidas, Epaminondas, and Melon) with the Confucian virtues of wisdom, benevolence, and bravery.²¹¹

Unlike the heavily Chinese-influenced language of many *seiji shōsetsu*, however, *Inspiring Instances of Statesmanship* is written in a quite accessible style. Extremely popular, it reportedly spurred a demand for similar political novels among well-educated readers. "Young intellectuals," Keene writes, "read the book until late in the night,"

²¹¹ Kobayashi Chikahei, "Yano Ryūkei: hito to sakuhin, *Keikoku bidan* o chushin to shite" (The Life and Works of Yano Ryūkei, Focusing on *Inspiring Instances of Statesmanship*), in *Keikoku bidan* (*Inspiring Instances of Statesmanship*), 5-25 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1969), 19.

...and even those who had professed nothing but contempt for earlier fiction now identified themselves with the noble Thebans, much as the leaders of the French Revolution had modeled themselves on Greece and Rome. They were inspired to write novels themselves, realizing that fiction, though traditionally despised, might be the best means of enlightening a large public incapable of absorbing political tracts.²¹²

This conception of fiction as a means to sugar the pill of political discourse naturally produced numbers of utopian works throughout the mid and late-Meiji period. Writers of *seiji shōsetsu* were especially fond, it seems, of the theme of travel to exotic locales, including actual Western countries, as a way of introducing new political ideas. One well-known example of such a utopian travel narrative is Tōkai Sanshi's *Kajin no kigū* (Chance Meetings with Beautiful Women, 1885-97), in which the protagonist witnesses liberation movements in Ireland, Spain and Greece, all of which background is obviously intended as an analogy or argument for Japan's own People's Rights movement.

Seiji shōsetsu, as seen above, have a propensity for fantastic utopian societies and locales. In Suehiro Tetchō's *Setchūbai* (Plum Blossoms in the Snow, 1886), to give yet another example, the narrator describes Japan as it would appear, through continued enlightenment, in the 173rd year of the reign of Emperor Meiji, or A.D. 2040:

Education has spread throughout the country, and the flourishing state of literature is without compare elsewhere in the world. When we examine the state of the government, we find above an Imperial Household of supreme dignity and authority, and below a Diet rich in wisdom and experience. The cabinet changes

²¹² Keene, 81.

smoothly as a result of elections contested between the two parties, Progressive and Conservative. The Constitution is firmly established and the laws well regulated. There is freedom of speech and assembly. The lack of abuses is surely without parallel in all of history, ancient or modern.²¹³

As in this example, descriptions of full-fledged utopian societies can be found in numbers of mid-Meiji works of fiction. The societies and governments envisioned in these works range from those based on a parliamentary system, as in Takase Ukō's original *A Record of the Future in the Year 1890*, to those which argue for the establishment of Japanese colonies on the Asian mainland or in the South Pacific, as in Katō Hiroyuki's *Nihyaku nengo no gojin* (The Japanese People, Two-Hundred Years from Now, 1890).

Given the abundance of works written in mid and late-Meiji that describe new model societies, I find it surprising that so few scholars have considered the importance of utopian fiction in literature and intellectual debates of this time. This may be for the reason that the word "utopia" is so closely associated with the Western tradition of writing that critics prefer to use other terms. In the following section, I will discuss the growing recognition among Meiji literary figures and critics themselves of utopian fiction, by this or other name, concluding with an examination of Natsume Sōseki's interest in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and his own utopian work *I am a Cat*.

²¹³ Quoted in Keene, 90. Original is found in Yanagida Izumi, editor, *Meiji shōsetsu shū I*, in Meiji Bungaku Zenshū series (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1966-67), 113.

From the Political Utopia to Utopias of the Imagination

In addition to the *seiji shōsetsu*, numbers of Meiji era presented their utopian views through the closely related genre of the *miraiki*, or “records of the future.” These visions of a (often not so distant) future Japan conform very closely to orthodox definitions of utopian fiction as the representation of an ideal political state. In typical examples, the so-called “record” is that of the enlightened circumstances of Japanese society after the establishment of a parliament or formal constitution. Takayanagi, Kida and others regard such works as the first “true” examples of utopian fiction, in the sense of a work that describes a model political state.

Rarely discussed as examples of utopian fiction are the numbers of detractors to such Western-influenced political visions. *Gesaku* writers such as Kanagaki Robun, Baitei Kinga, and Hattori Bushō created their own dystopian takes on what Japan would look like after so many years of continued “enlightenment.” The titles of numbers of these pun on the phrase “civilization and enlightenment” (*bunmei kaika*) itself, as in Yoshikawa Ryūgai’s *Kaika no yume: jigoku gokuraku* (A Dream of the Turning Strange of Civilization: Hell and Paradise, 1887). In the second decade of Meiji, as Okitsu Kaname relates, *gesaku* experienced a rebirth through the popularity of such parodies of the excesses of the government-promoted civilization and Enlightenment program.

Regarded strictly as works of literature (which is perhaps unfair since this was perhaps never these writers' main aspiration) many of these *gesaku* works are at least as narrowly topical as the political works they parody. Few, for instance, would argue for the literary qualities of either *A Record of the Future in the Year 1890* or its parodic *gesaku* version *The Tale of Hyōei the Visionary and Civilization in 1890*. In contrast to these strictly political utopias created for the express purpose of extolling the virtues, or ridiculing the folly, of parliamentary government, I present Baitei Kinga's *A Fantastic Record of the Future* as a satirical utopia that possesses more intrinsic interest as commentary on the ultimate desirability of technological modernization.

Another work that stands out in this period of often dry and pedantic political utopias, and deliberately abstruse *gesaku* parodies of the same, is Nakae Chōmin's *Sansuijin keirin mondō* (A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government, 1887). In contrast to Baitei Kinga, whose political views appear to have changed with every magazine to which he contributed, Chōmin was a steadfast proponent of peoples' rights and the movement for parliamentary government. While studying in France for three years, he began his translation of Rousseau's *Contrat social*, which was eventually published in 1881. Throughout his career as a politician and essayist, Chōmin advocated the Rousseauvian ideal of a republican government.

Despite Chōmin's liberal inclinations, *Sansuijin keirin mondō* (A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government, 1887) reflects the trend in the late 1880s and 1890s in which many political works promoted a militarily strong state (*kokken*) as well as territorial expansionism. In the introduction to his English translation of *A Discourse*, Nobuko Tsukui writes that this work marks a turning point in Japanese political history when popular rights movements were under attack and progressive thinkers attempted to merge political idealism with practical politics.²¹⁴ *A Discourse* for this reason appears to argue for seemingly contradictory progressive and reactionary ideals.

A great deal has been written on *A Discourse* as a work of political philosophy. I am most interested, however, in its literary qualities as utopian fiction. Although, due to its political subject matter, rarely considered a literary work per se, *A Discourse* borrows from both the Western and Eastern traditions of utopian fiction. Drawing on the traditional genre of debate literature, or *mondō*, it presents a discussion on democracy and international relations held by three tipplers — Master Nankai (*Nankai sensei*), the Gentleman of Western learning (*Yōgaku shinshi*) and the Champion of the East (*Gōketsu no kyaku*) — concerning the major political philosophies of the day.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Nakae Chōmin, 24–25.

²¹⁵ See Maruyama Masao, “Nihon shisōshi ni okeru mondōtai no keifu” (The Dialogue Form in the History of Japanese Thought), in *Nakae Chōmin no sekai* (The World of Nakae Chōmin), 180–210.

Master Nankai plays a role in this debate similar to the master of the Socratic method, eliciting views on the ideal form of government and on national defense from the Gentleman, an advocate of democratic ideals, and the Champion, an advocate of militarism. The Master does not judge the relative worth of these ideals. Rather, typical of many utopian works, Nankai comments on a range of political and social alternatives without apparent concern for their ultimate feasibility, consistency, or ethical integrity.

A Discourse is clearly intended as a more engaging way of expressing Chōmin's own political ideas. In doing so, it uses an interesting variation on the theme of fantastic travel. The narrator relates how after drinking a few bottles of saké Master Nankai, although his body remains in his small room, travels, as it were, to other realms:

[H]is heart is always climbing the mountain of Hakoya and roaming through the hamlet of Mukayū. Because of this, the geography and history he discusses have little in common with the geography and history of the real world and there are often, in fact, discrepancies between his world and ours. Of course, in his geography there are cold countries and warm ones, big and powerful nations as well as small and weak ones, civilized societies and barbaric ones. His history too, contains peace, war, prosperity and decline. In short, his geography and history sometimes do correspond to the real world.²¹⁶

Chōmin never describes this “geography and history” specifically as a “utopia,” but it is evident in this and other passages of *A Discourse* that he is conversant with both Eastern

²¹⁶ Nakae Chōmin, *A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government (Sansuijin keirin mondō)*, translated by Nobuko Tsukui, edited, with an introduction, by Nobuko Tsukui and Jeffrey Hammond (New York: Weatherhill, 1984), 47–48.

Western traditions of this genre. For instance, Mukayū, mentioned in the above passage, was Chuang-tzu's term for a realm of nothingness and absolute freedom. Chōmin contrasts this mythical realm of undisturbed tranquility with the realization that, as in the geography and history of Master Nankai's imagination, periods of peace will alternate with those of war, that prosperity will be followed by decline.

The conclusion of *A Discourse* as well — like the allegorical function of the fantastic, alcohol-induced dream-state described above — is quite typical of utopian fiction. The narrative comes to a neat resolution, in terms of structure at least, when Master Nankai is awoken from his reverie by the crowing of a cock. Returning to his home, he discovers that two or three years have passed during the course of the conversation with his companions.²¹⁷

Similar to Chōmin, numbers of Meiji era writers were conscious of both Western and Eastern traditions of utopian writing, and actively borrowed from each. This is contrary to the idea expressed in literary histories by Keene and others who claim a complete break from the past with the rise of the *seiji shōsetsu*. As noted, Nakamura Mitsuo has written that Edo period traditional popular genres, or *gesaku*, were so much in

²¹⁷ See Uchida Yoshihiko, "Yūtopia monogatari toshite no *Sansuijin keirin mondō*" (A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government as Utopian Tale), in *Nakae Chōmin no sekai: "San sui jin keirin mondō" o yomu* (The World of Nakae Chōmin: Reading *A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government*), 234–53 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1977), 242.

decline by the time of the Meiji restoration that they did not “possess the will to survive.”²¹⁸ In a later essay, however, Nakamura notes connections between the fantastic settings of *seiji shōsetsu* like *The Floating Castle* (which one might easily describe as a utopia of territorial expansion) and those of *gesaku*:

In *The Floating Castle* characters emerge whom one cannot imagine exist in actual fact, events are described as occurring in quite natural fashion that one knows could not occur in real life. Such attributes are tied to a conception of literature foremost as entertainment. Ironically, this notion of literature as a type of play, or as mere frivolous (*gesakuteki na*) writing, gives the writer greater liberty, allowing him to cross over national boundaries and consider possibilities in a wider realm. The societal scale is also broadened and the writer is able to more freely consider a variety of philosophies. Playing at will with plot and development, the writer is able to create a work that appeals to a broader audience. In this sense, although *gesaku* and the political novel are often thought to be antithetical types of writing, they in fact have broad arterial connections, to the extent that one might say that the political novel is an *extension* of *gesaku*.²¹⁹

I fully agree with Nakamura’s suggestion that *gesaku* and political fiction are more closely related than many realize. I also believe, however, that Meiji era readers were aware as well of Western humorous or fantastic works — such as *Gulliver’s Travels* or *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours* — that also served a dual role, similar to many *gesaku* or *seiji shōsetsu*, of entertainment and political commentary. Both of these traditions, each with their own characteristics, influenced later Japanese utopian fiction.

²¹⁸ Nakamura Mitsuo, 1959, 20.

²¹⁹ Nakamura Mitsuo, “*Ukishiro monogatari o megutte*” (Considering *The Tale of the Floating Castle*), in *Kindai no bungaku to bungakusha*, 179-86 (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1978), 184-85.

It is less clear, however, whether Meiji era critics and readers themselves regarded works of utopian fiction seriously as literature. Uchida Roan, a leading Meiji era critic and writer, for instance, was quite critical of what he regarded as a lack of literary qualities in *seiji shōsetsu*. In contrast with Nakamura's description of the expanded subject matter of *seiji shōsetsu*, Roan wrote that they only served to expand the exterior container of fiction while leaving the interior virtually empty.²²⁰ This sentiment would not lead one to imagine that Roan would have much good to say about the highly allegorical genre of utopian fiction.

In his earliest critical works, Roan emphasized the importance of literature as the representation of the human condition, as opposed to that of passing political trends. Like many critics of his time, he championed Tsubouchi Shōyō's *The Essence of the Novel* for its emphasis on similar objectives. Criticizing both *gesaku* and the *seiji shōsetsu* as unduly interested in the superficial and in transitory political debates, Roan wrote that thanks to the principles elucidated in *The Essence of the Novel* Japanese literature had:

Leapt up from the lowly status of *gesaku* to recognition as an important contribution to civilization, a splendid calling that not even dignified scholars should be ashamed to profess. The youth of the nation who had hitherto considered that politics provided the sole path to glory, discovered this new world and they rushed as one man to literature, as if they had been aware of it for the first time.²²¹

²²⁰ Quoted in Nakamura, 183.

²²¹ Quoted and translated in Keene, 105.

Notwithstanding his praise of the realistic method advocated in *The Essence of the Novel*, however, Roan is one of the few critics of his generation to argue for the importance of satire, a literary mode that, similar to the utopia, uses exaggeration to reveal the faults of society. In other essays, he praised the satirical works of Swift as well as the descriptions of familiar social types (*katagimono*) of Aeba Kōson (1855-1922), in both of which realistic depiction of psychology and motivation takes a secondary role to representation of interaction between characters representing different groups of society.

In an essay written in 1899, Roan compares Kōson's works favorably with both the character descriptions (*katagimono*) done by Kiseki as well as with the satires of Swift and Addison. Roan argued that in works like *Tōsei shōnin katagi* (The Character of Today's Merchants) Kōson — although drawing from *gesaku* writers like Ikku, Sanba, Kyōden, Gennai, and Robun — far exceeded most traditional popular fiction in his ability to uncover the seamy underside of society and to reveal the darker secrets of humanity.²²² In his emphasis in literature as an expression of social issues, as well in allegorical fiction by both Japanese and Western authors, Roan appears to have been formulating in these early essays a conception of utopian fiction that would greatly influence his most famous literary work *Kure no nijūhachi nichi* (The Last Day of the Year, 1898).

²²² Quoted in Nomura, 98. Original found in Roan's serial essay *Aeba Kōson shi* (Mr. Aeba Kōson), published in *Kokumin no tomo*, No. 113-19.

Despite his earlier criticism of the entire genre of political fiction, in *The Last Day of the Year*, Roan reveals a passion for utopian thought and writing. This novel tells of a writer's dream of founding a utopian society in Mexico of like-minded socialist thinkers and artists. Similar to *The Floating Castle*, this novel also has obvious connections to contemporary debates regarding territorial expansion. The protagonist, however, attempts to distinguish his own utopian vision from other colonial enterprises:

My own charter is completely different from that of the political or economic colony. Since its foundations are to be based on moral ideals, it may fail due to my own conflicting motives or lack of will-power, like the ant who tried to carry the mountain... In the forge of my imagination I have cast all the ideal republics that have been planned and abandoned by ancient thinkers since the time of Plato. I have thereby created a new moral paradise of scenic delight and joyful bliss which — although it may like a castle built on sand draw the scorn of others — possesses such force that it should be regarded as the final fulfillment of a long-cherished dream of the age.²²³

In speaking of “a long-cherished dream of the age,” Roan presumably refers both to the proclivity for visions of ideal societies in the Meiji period as well as to the more militaristic manifestation of this impulse as seen in the debates in the 1890s for the establishment of colonies. The artist's imagined colony is a curious combination of the republic, the colony, and the artists' retreat, described in terms borrowed from both Western utopian works and from Taoist descriptions of paradise.

²²³ Uchida Roan, *Kure no nijūhachi nichi* (The Last Day of the Year), in *Uchida Roan*, edited by Yuzō Tsubouchi (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2001), 100.

The protagonist of *The Last Day of the Year*, however, never describes his ideal colony as a “utopia,” perhaps because the word was not familiar to readers of this time. Yet, the work does clearly refer to utopian thinking and literature in its references to Plato and other ancient thinkers who imagined “ideal republics.” The protagonist also refers to his envisioned society in native terms as a *rakkyō*, or “paradise.” Finally, he compares it also to an actual communal society established in the state of Texas in the same period. Roan uses these references acquaint his reader with various conceptions of the utopias, both as a political state and as idyllic realm.

The protagonist comments in the above-quoted passage that his own envisioned utopia may fail due to “conflicting motives or lack of will-power.” In the end, the artist in fact gives up his utopian dream due to the opposition of his wife, whose hysteria deepens as he proceeds with his plan. This emphasis on the failure of utopian ideals fits the historical view of the 1890s as a period of disillusionment for liberal intellectuals such as Roan or Chōmin who had seen the People’s Rights movement end without substantial social or political changes.

Although *The Last Day of the Year* might itself be described as a *seiji shōsetsu*, Roan, as Nakamura points out, criticized the tendency in political fiction to place allegorical function over characterization. This explains the emphasis in *The Last Day of the Year* on the psychology of the characters, irrespective of their metaphorical role. In

his critical writings on Kōson as well, Roan argues for a more evolved type of allegorical fiction that serves also as a convincing portrait of the lives or psychology of the characters themselves.

In the satirical essay *Seiji shōsetsu o tsukuru beki yoi jiki* (A Good Time to Create Political Novels, 1898), Roan returned to his well-known debate on the failings of *seiji shōsetsu* as a literary form. In this later essay, he makes a tongue-in-cheek call for a return to the tradition of the political novel, which critics by that date generally regarded as a rigid and overly polemical genre. Roan argues that in this period of intense nationalism and self-serving politicians any attempt to write political fiction would naturally result in the creation of farce. Such a farce, he concludes in this somewhat involved argument, would in fact be the truest reflection of Japanese society at that particular time.²²⁴

Roan, quite in contrast with the emphasis upon realism among critics of his generation, was clearly interested in the literary potential of humor, satire and farce. In my conception, these qualities in combination with a fantastic locale produce utopian fiction. Roan suggests as models for this new type of political fiction a combination of

²²⁴ Uchida Roan, "Seiji shōsetsu o tsukuru beki yoi jiki" (A Good Time to Create Political Novels), in *Uchida Roan shū*, edited by Inagaki Tatsurō, *Meiji bungaku zenshū*, 24 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1978), 195-98.

the high moral tone of a Bakin novel and the social consciousness and sharp criticism of Swift, in essence the political novel *plus* wit and a more evolved type of satire.

Natsume Sōseki's Views on Allegorical Fiction and *I am a Cat* as Utopia

Similar to Roan, Natsume Sōseki wrote critical essays on such Western satirists and utopian writers as Swift, Defoe, Sterne, and Addison. Particularly relevant to this study is Sōseki's essay "*Suwifuto to ensei bungaku*" (Swift and the Literature of Pessimism), in which he assesses Swift's allegorical method, and in particular that of *Gulliver's Travels*.²⁵ In this essay, Sōseki views on *Gulliver's Travels*, as I will discuss, are closely related to the definition of utopian fiction in this study as combination of fantastic setting and social commentary.

In "Swift and the Literature of Pessimism," Sōseki, actually, is initially critical of what he regards as Swift's overuse of literal allegory. His general views of strictly political fiction are quite similar to those of Roan. Sōseki describes *A Tale of a Tub*, for instance, as a "completely arbitrary allegory" of the Catholic and Protestant reformations:

[T]he author had to proceed under heavy restraint because of the facts instead of letting allegory have free play. Therefore, even when he wants to change a little some part of the allegory because it is of not literary value, he cannot write what

²⁵ Natsume Sōseki, "Suwifuto to ensei bungaku" (Swift and the Literature of Pessimism), in *Bungaku hyōron* (A Criticism of Literature), 353-522 (Tokyo: Shunyōdō, 1915). Sōseki originally presented *A Criticism of Literature* as part of a lecture series on eighteenth-century English literature given at Tokyo University from September 1905 to March 1907. Sōseki extensively rewrote the draft version of these lectures before having them published in 1909.

he likes by his own fabrication. It cannot be helped even if there is no literary interest: he has to follow the history of the church at the expense of the allegory.²²⁶

Sōseki here refers to the elaborate allegory found in *A Tale of a Tub* in which the reformations of the Catholic, Protestant, and Presbyterian churches are compared to three brothers, Peter, Martin and Jack, who are given coats by their father under the express condition that they not be altered. The view that allegory of this sort could only be of interest to someone with a deep knowledge of the reformations reminds one of Roan's critique of the *seiji shōsetsu* as an essentially hollow literary genre.

From the views presented in this essay, one might imagine that Sōseki would not be complementary of political utopias such as *Spring Blossoms in Snow* that require an intimate knowledge of the parliamentary system and Western political theory to appreciate their plot and objectives. Sōseki, however, is not against allegorical works per se, but only those in which intellectual allegory takes precedence over more emotionally engaging elements. Allegory, he writes, is only of interest when it is “expressed in such a way that it naturally influences the reader and moves his feeling. It is not forced upon the reader, but the author's skill has moved him inwardly.”²²⁷ This emphasis upon emotion over intellectuality, I believe, can be seen in Sōseki's own allegorical work *I am Cat*.

²²⁶ Quoted in Sakuko Matsui, *Natsume Sōseki as a Critic of English literature, East Asian Cultural Studies Series*, No. 16 (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1975), 196.

²²⁷ Ibid.

In addition to his criticism of allegory as a technique that in its extreme form appeals solely to the intellect, Sōseki also criticizes fantastical works that he regards as having too little relation to the contemporary world. In comparing Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* with Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, for instance, Sōseki prefers the latter as a fantastical work with "a window open to the actual world." *I am Cat*, despite the fantastic element of speaking felines, is very much connected to Tokyo society of Sōseki's day. Sōseki appears to have followed his prescriptions both that description take precedence over pure allegory and that fantastic works maintain some connection to the real world.

Critics have frequently compared the use of talking animals as commentators on human society to the "A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" chapter of *Gulliver's Travels*. This influence seems quite likely given Sōseki's deep interest in Swift's works. The device of using the words, as it were, of animals to critique human society is also commonly found in Japanese folk stories, as well as, for that matter, earlier utopian works by Andō Shōeki and others.

Although having many similarities to Western and Japanese utopian fiction, *I am a Cat* departs somewhat from the tendency, found in both of these traditions, for allegory and the fantastic. Even the fantastic element of feline speech seen in this novel is made believable by the fact that Sōseki, not unlike Sanba in *Bathhouse of the Floating World*, goes to great lengths to accurately reproduce the characteristic speech of different groups

of society. In large part due to the particular language each uses, most of the characters (both feline and human) appearing *I am a Cat* are directly associated with a given group or class. Nevertheless, Sōseki also gives each his own distinctive personality.

In a famous early scene of the novel, the narrator of the novel, Mumeineko (or “cat with no name”), meets up with Kuroneko (or “Blacky”). The wide difference in the relative social positions of the cats — arising from the fact that one is own owned by a professor, the other by a rickshaw driver — is demonstrated by the very different types of language that they use. If we excerpt all parenthetical commentary by the narrator, the first conversation between these two characters proceeds as follows:

K: “And who the hell are you?”

“Omee wa ittai nanda”

M: “I, sir, am a cat. I have as yet no name.”

“Wagahai wa neko de aru. Namae wa mada nai”

K: “You...a cat? Well, I’m damned. Anyway, where the devil do you hang out?”

“Nani, neko da? Neko ga kiite akireraa. Zentee doko ni sunderunda.”

M: “I live here in the teacher’s house.”

“Wagahai wa koko no kyooshi no uchi ni iru no da.”

K: “Huh, I thought as much. ‘Orrible scrawny aren’t you.”

“Doose sonna koto daroo to omotta. Iya ni yaseteru janeeka.”²²⁸

My point in comparing the original and translated version of this “conversation” is to point out the importance in *I am a Cat* of language variation such as dialect versus

²²⁸ Natsume Sōseki, *I am a Cat*, translated by Aiko Ito and Graeme Wilson (Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle, 1972), 35.

standard Japanese or polite speech versus casual speech. In the original, Kuroneko's language, in its diction as well as in the manner certain vowels are lengthened and others elided, as in *omee* (*omae*) or *janeeka* (*janaika*), is characteristic of Tokyo dialect.

Many commentators on *I am a Cat* have noted the fact that the pronoun “*wagahai*” (“I” or “we” in English), used by Mumeineko in the preceding dialogue, was even by this date very archaic-sounding. Its use was already restricted to formal occasions, as when in parliamentary debates a speaker would refer to the collective group. In this passage Sōseki uses Mumeineko's absurdly polite language as a means to accentuate Kuroneko's equally, though in a more vernacular idiom, bombastic language, thereby satirizing speech representative of the high and low ends of the Tokyo social hierarchy.

As in this encounter between a cat who speaks in the standard Japanese of a university professor and one who represents the speech of a lower strata of Tokyo society, Sōseki uses *language*, as opposed to plot or allegory, to represent relations between various groups of Tokyo society. In the work *Sōseki to rakugo: Edo shomin geinō no eikyō* (Soseki and *Rakugo: The Influence of Edo Popular Arts*), Mizukawa Takao makes a strong argument for the influence on *I am a Cat* of the comic storytelling tradition of *rakugo* which made use of vernacular speech.²²⁹ In contrast to the typical

²²⁹ Mizukawa Takao, *Sōseki to rakugo: Edo shomin geinō no eikyō* (Soseki and *Rakugo: The Influence of Edo Popular Arts*) (Tokyo: Sairyūsha, 1986).

allegorical framework and reliance upon contrived plot in much utopian fiction, *I am a Cat* is an attempt to represent relationships between the various groups of Tokyo society through *language*.

First published in serial form in 1905, Sōseki's writing of *I am a Cat* coincided with the zenith of the language movement (*genbun'itchi*) whose goal was to lessen the gap between literary and spoken Japanese. Related to or even concomitant with this effort among journalists and writers, a movement was also afoot around this time in government circles and among educators to establish the speech of educated, middle-class Tokyoites as the standard *spoken* language of Japan. I would like to discuss in somewhat more depth the connection between *I am a Cat*, as a utopia of language, to both of these movements.

In Complicit Fictions: The Subject in the Modern Japanese Prose Narrative,

James Fujii writes that the object of the *genbun'itchi* moved in particular was to “elevate the authority of the written word by concealing its subject.”²³⁰ In terms of its influence on literature, Fujii writes that the *genbun'itchi* movement produced texts that “seek validation through the resulting sense of heightened objectivity and truthfulness conveyed

²³⁰ James Fujii, *Complicit Fictions: The Subject in the Modern Japanese Prose Narrative* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 110.

by a statement without a specified speaker.”²³¹ This problem is similar to that found in many works of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western literature in which an omniscient narrative style is used to project a sense of incontrovertible objective reality.

In *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, David Kelly discusses this conventional narrative method, noting the emphasis on domestic realism and “fact” in Romantic era novels in general. In such works, he writes, the ideal of a perfectly ordered social world is represented through the hierarchical relationships existing between languages associated with the various urban and rural social classes. In the novel *Village Anecdotes* (1804), he notes by way of example, the narrator Sophia, the “wise woman” of the village, relates her story in standard written English:

thus exhibiting her command of that professional middle-class discourse. She and the other virtuous characters also ‘speak’ in standard written English, in contrast to the relatively deformed sociolects and idiolects employed by the characters laboring under some form of false consciousness.²³²

In countless Romantic era novels (and into the Victorian era and beyond) one can witness a similar trait in which the narrator and more benevolent characters speak in standard English, while more peripheral or recalcitrant figures speak in various subordinate dialects. This distance is especially pronounced in novels dealing with such uneducated or otherwise “backward” figures as the rural or urban poor.

²³¹ Ibid., 109.

²³² Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period* (New York: Longman, 1989), 88.

In contrast to the conventional third-person narration of the novel, Fujii regards *I am a Cat* as a work that resists this hegemonic function of narration. Alluding to the fact that the narrator is in fact a cat, Fujii writes that in this novel,

[T]he very ‘neutrality’ and effacement of the speaking subject sought in *genbun’itchi* was tacitly questioned by the use of yet another (nonstandard looking) ‘colloquially based’ style, a narrator who proclaimed the strangeness of his own status as a narrator, and the deployment of a detached, third-person narrator.

Fujii neglects to mention however that the narrational style of *I am a Cat* is founded on classic *genbun’itchi* style, alternating between the “*de aru*” and “*da*” copula endings representative of two prominent strains of *genbun’itchi*. These endings were introduced to writing for the first time by proponents of *genbun’itchi* style – like Ozaki Kōyō in his translations of the naturalist writer Emile Zola – who did indeed wish to lend to their writing a sense of objective realism. *Genbun’itchi* was also an attempt to approximate in writing the more natural cadences of the spoken language, which is another reason Sōseki adopts its use in this work.

Quite contrary to Fujii’s notion that *I am a Cat* resisted the (presumed) hegemonic tendencies of *genbun’itchi*, Yamamoto Masahide makes the case in the work *Genbun’itchi no rekishiron kō* (A History of the Genbun’itchi Debate) that Sōseki was in fact an advocate of this movement. Yamamoto notes that in his early scholarly writings, reflecting his Chinese studies, Sōseki prided himself on his use of *bungo-tai* and *kanbun*,

using the types of archaisms and difficult constructions upon which these literary languages based their own authority. Sōseki was thus at first out of step with those — such as Futabatei Shimei who in *Ukigumo* or in his translations of Turgenev often used “de aru” style — who promoted the use of *genbun’itchi* in fiction

At a time when the use of *genbun’itchi* had actually gone into decline among writers, Sōseki began using “de aru” style *genbun’itchi* in essays such as “Eikoku no bunjin to shinbun zasshi” (English literati and newspaper magazines, 1899). Yamamoto sees this period as Sōseki’s apprenticeship in the *genbun’itchi* style he later used in the narration of *I am a Cat* and his later novels.²³³ Soseki later wrote more explicitly on the social and literary possibilities of *genbun’itchi*:

Although we may debate which particular form of writing will eventually form the essence of Japanese literature, it is evident that we can not go on in the willy-nilly fashion of the past. In other words, those with training in Chinese have to date used *kanbun*, those with a training in traditional Japanese style (*kokubun*) have used the national style (*kokubuntai*), while those with neither a training in Chinese nor in traditional Japanese style have used various types of translation style (*honyakusha-ryū*). If we go on in this fashion we will lose the opportunity to unify writing styles . . . For this reason, we should use the style of *genbun’itchi* that uses as its base the language of Tokyo to create a style of writing which allows us to write as concisely as possible. Each style has its strengths and weaknesses, but it is most important that we choose that one most expedient to the flowering of civilization.²³⁴

²³³ Yamamoto Masahide, *Genbun’itchi no rekishiron kō* (A History of the Genbun’itchi Debate) (Tokyo: Ofusha, 1971).

²³⁴ Quoted in Yamamoto, 501. Translation my own.

Sōseki wrote this declaration in 1908, three years after his completion of *I am a Cat*.

Although Sōseki obviously has reservations about *genbun'itchi*, this passage confirms

Fujii's view of the overly utilitarian views that often lay behind the language reforms.

This passage also suggests, that Sōseki was less interested in vesting the novel with

“authority” — as Fujii sees the *genbun'itchi* movement as a whole — than with simply

using in his novels a mutually comprehensible written language.

I am a Cat is an intriguing work in the manner it is able to present a variety of language types in a style nevertheless understood and appreciated by a large number of Japanese. As befitting the conception of *genbun'itchi* as a union of spoken and written speech, Mumeineko (as seen in the above passage) speaks predominantly in a fanciful hybrid of polite (that is to say, educated, middle-class) Japanese mixed with the vestiges of various types of literary language.

As Fujii points out, the narration of *I am a Cat* draws attention to its own artificiality. For instance, Mumeineko's famous reply to Kuroneko's question “*Omee wa ittai nanda,*” from which is taken the title “*Wagahai wa neko de aru,*” is humorous for the reason that no actual speakers probably spoke in this odd manner. *I am a Cat* is indeed unusual for the active — and, in contrast with narration in many traditional Western novels, self-effacing way — in which the narrator, Mumeineko, participates in conversations with speakers of other dialects such as Kuroneko or Kineko. In many of

these exchanges, the narrator's own standard Japanese, which is described on several occasions as ineffectual or overly precious, is clearly bested by these other characters.

In such depictions of relations between the different cats of this novel, Sōseki relies on certain stereotypes both of representative social types and of the language with which they were associated. Given that characters representative of more marginal groups rarely break out of these roles, the question naturally arises as to whether the author meant thereby to validate the Meiji status quo. Being himself born into a merchant-class (*chōnin*) family in the *shitamachi* area of Tokyo, Sōseki's own sympathies in this novel often appear to lie more with the declining classes of the old city of Edo than with the rising Tokyo middle-class. As opposed to any reformist intention, Sōseki presents the in many ways idealized and caricatured society formed by the feline characters of *I am a Cat* as means to highlight the duplicity and foibles of their human counterparts who are, for the most part, of the middle or upper-classes.

In his first encounter with Kuroneko, Mumeineko makes pejorative statements reminiscent of the prescriptive nature of the narration of many Romantic era English novels. Mumeineko comments for instance that, judged by his manner of speech, Kuroneko "could not be a cat of respectable background."²³⁵ Later, he comments:

²³⁵ Sōseki 1972, 35.

As one would expect of those brought up in a rickshaw-garage, he's tough but quite uneducated. Hence very few of us mix with him, and it is our common policy to "keep him at a respectful distance." Consequently when I heard his name, I felt a little jittery and uneasy but at the same time a little disdainful of him. Accordingly, and in order to establish just how illiterate he was, I pursued the conversation by inquiring. "Which do you think is superior, a rickshaw-owner or a teacher?"

Mumeineko at first shows disdain for Kuroneko not only because of his tough (*ranbō na*) character but also for his illiteracy (*mugaku*), evidenced through the latter's use of dialectal speech. Throughout *I am a Cat*, Sōseki's uses such variations in language to create a microcosm of Tokyo society. Although at times the narrator appears disparaging of characters speaking in the "lower" dialects, Sōseki's aim, I believe, is to represent the speech of groups left behind through modernization and the disappearance of the traditional Edo classes .

Lower-class speakers of dialect — of whom Kuroneko is clearly intended as a representative — were not the only persons left behind in the modernization process. In a brief overview of the history of spoken Japanese, Shibatani relates that the elaborate honorific system of the Edo period came to an abrupt end with the abolishment of the feudal system in the Meiji era. The feline character Mikeko, or, rather her mistress, a *koto* instructor, is presented as a vestige of the language differences and class-consciousness that still divided nobles from the common people throughout the Meiji period.

In contrast with Kuroneko, who speaks in the dialect of the *shitamachi* area of Tokyo, the speech of Mikeko, befitting the cat of a *koto* instructor descended from aristocrat family, is characterized by her consistent use of self-consciously genteel language. In its refined elocutions and perfunctory politeness, Mikeko's speech reveals a consciousness of a certain *noblesse oblige* as the cat of such an illustrious person.

In her first meeting with Mumeineko, Mikeko relates her owner's illustrious family connections in a way that satirizes both the feudal social structure and its intricate system of honorific language. Mikeko tells Mumeineko that her mistress "used to be a person of high standing . . . I understand that she's the thirteenth Shogun's widowed wife's private-secretary's younger sister's husband's mother's nephew's daughter."²³⁶ In the original, this litany of familial connections is not made any more clear through the inclusion of honorific prefixes and suffixes.²³⁷ Other aspects of Mikeko's speech as well, her use of the archaic "*odaiji ni nasaimashi*," for instance, as a parting phrase to Mumeineko, characterize her as the remnant of a bygone age.

In the utopia of language presented in *I am a Cat*, it is perhaps no coincidence that both Kuroneko and Mikeko, as representatives of such colorful language and such decidedly un-modern occupations as rickshaw man and *koto* master, both die within the

²³⁶ Sōseki 1905, 76

²³⁷ The original reads "*tenshōin-sama no go-yūhitsu no imoto no o-yome ni itta saki no okkasan no oi no musume nante*."

first fifty pages of this over five-hundred page work. The rest of the work is much more concerned with the idiosyncrasies, including their use of language, of middle-class characters. In Maeda Ai's estimation, the latter part of *I am a Cat*, after Kuroneko's exit in particular, slips into a sort of silence in comparison with its earlier garrulousness.

The author's quick dispatch of Kuroneko and Mikeko should not be taken as a crude parable of social engineering but, rather, as a recognition of the often catastrophic effects upon the original population of Edo through modernization and social reforms in its recreation as the capital city of Tokyo. Similar to Sōseki's essay *The Civilization of Modern Day Japan*, one might read *I am a Cat* as a dystopia of modern civilization.

In contrast with didactic or moralizing utopian fiction by Bakin, Yano, and others, I believe it was Sōseki's intent in *I am a Cat* to create a satirical utopia that stood on its own as a work of creative fiction, as opposed to a narrow political parable. The characters and events represented in this famous novel operate according to their own logic and possess their own destiny, while at the same time clearly representing persons, groups, or important philosophical or political debates within the author's own society.

As I have mentioned, much has been written on similarities between *I am a Cat* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Some scholars, however, have criticized Sōseki for not, in essence, learning more from Swift and more strident denouncing social inequality and

other injustices. One learns much about Sōseki's method, however, in reviewing what he actually does learn from Swift.

As the essay's title itself suggests, in "Swift and the Literature of Pessimism," Sōseki is somewhat puzzled by the bleak view of society seen in *Gulliver's Travels* and others of Swift's works. Sōseki writes that Swift's "pessimism" was quite at odds with the eighteenth-century positivist belief in a new civilized and enlightened age.²³⁸ In using the words "civilized" and "enlightenment," catchwords for modernization in late nineteenth-century Japan, I believe that Sōseki is viewing Swift and eighteenth-century England in part through the lens of Japan's own social situation.

Sōseki describes Swift's works as models of "satire for the sake of satire." In contrast to satire with good intentions or, its opposite, purely malicious satire, Sōseki describes Swift's satire as "extremely violent but extremely cold," offering no hope at all for redemption of the object of its wit:

Ordinary dissatisfaction always has satisfaction at its back, or dreams of it. Swift's dissatisfaction has no opposition of this kind. So the expression of his dissatisfaction is not an expression with some purpose. He expresses dissatisfaction as such and that is all. His dissatisfaction is that human beings of past, present, future of ancient and modern times, of east and west, all of them if they are human beings at all, are detestable animals. There is no hope, therefore. No way to be saved. No escape. His satire is like ice gushing from a crater. It is

²³⁸ Sōseki, 373-379.

extremely violent but extremely cold. It is not discontent in order to move people, nor is it to spare himself, it is discontent for the sake of discontent.²³⁹

Many commentators are less complementary than Sōseki of Swift's at times extremely cynical view of humanity. Thackeray, for instance, cautions "don't read the last part of the *Travels* because it is horrible, shameful, unmanly, blasphemous. . . filthy in word, filthy in thought, furious, raging, obscene." More recent commentators even have been quite critical of the ultimate value of Swift's dystopian outlook. Edward Said, for instance, writes of Swift's style and misanthropic view of the world that:

We would not be wrong in saying that a significant aspect of Swift's coherence as a writer is the intellectual and spiritual feat that sustained such a style as his, performing so drastic a transmutation of reality with such forceful negativity for such regrettably narrow ends.²⁴⁰

To thus criticize Swift is to condemn the whole mode of utopian fiction, a mode that distorts reality to, depending on the reader's own values, perhaps narrow-seeming ends. It is interesting that Sōseki criticizes the polemical nature of much of Swift's writing, whereas Said praises his role as an intellectual who was fully engaged with the world of politics. True to Sōseki's preference for what he describes as more emotionally-engaging types of allegory, it is not surprising that Sōseki is interested in those episodes of *Gulliver's Travels* that he feels reveal certain universals of human existence.

²³⁹ Quoted and translated in Matsui, 185.

²⁴⁰ Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 17. 75.

In contrast to Swift's misanthropic outlook, critics and readers often describe the literary wit of *I am a Cat* as light social satire. I believe, however, that Sōseki aspired to a more critical denunciation of the general weaknesses of humankind. In contrast with the feline characters of *I am a Cat*, who always speak and act *as they are*, human characters are presented as most conniving in the way they say things they do not mean, and alter their speech to fit the occasion. For instance, upon reading in his master's diary entries inconsistent with events he himself has witnessed, Mumeineko at one point comments:

No doubt human beings like my two-faced master find it necessary to keep diaries in order to display in a darkened room that true character so assiduously hidden from the world. But among cats both our four main occupations (walking, standing, sitting and lying down) and such incidental activities as excreting waste are pursued quite openly. We live our diaries, and consequently have no need to keep a daily record as a means of maintaining our real characters.

In its depiction of the foibles of human character, *I am a Cat* focuses especially on the duplicities of human language, as in the overly polite speech used by persons representative of the rising class of bureaucrats and entrepreneurs. In contrast to the exchanges noted above between standard Japanese and dialectal speech, the latter part of *I am a Cat* considers the smaller divisions among speakers of polite Japanese.

As Maeda points out, *I am a Cat* illustrates the force of language in cementing social relationships and norms. This is seen clearly in the language used by member of the nouveau riche Kaneda family. In one instance, the mistress of the Kaneda household,

nicknamed Hanako, goes to visit Mumeineko's master, a professor, to talk about prospective marriage arrangements between her daughter and one of his students, Mizushima Kangetsu. She intimates that it would go well for Kangetsu's marriage proposal if the teacher could see fit to grant him his doctorate degree in order to level out the gap in status between the two.

In speaking with the professor, Hanako uses only a few polite phrases, many of which work more to aggrandize her own status than to show respect for his. On learning that a third member of the meeting, Meitei, is the nephew (or so he says in jest) of a Baron, Hanako suddenly switches to very polite speech: "Oh, you are Baron Makiyama's . . . That I didn't know. I hope you'll excuse me."²⁴¹ Engaging again in conversation with the professor, Mumeineko relates, she then quickly returned to her former style of vulgar (*zonzai na*) speech. Although at times indistinguishable from the method of the novel in general, these conversations are all presented from the viewpoint of the feline characters who, like the protagonists of so many utopian novels, comment on the peculiar manners, circumstances, and, in this instance, use of language, in this parallel world.

²⁴¹ Sōseki, 170. The translated version of this dialogue hardly does justice to the verbose and overly-polite original lines, "oya, anata ga Makiyama-sama no . . . nan de irasshaimasuka, chittomo zonzimasende, hanahada shitsurei itashimashita . . . Makiyama-sama niwa shishū osewa ni naru to, yado de tabitabi o uwasa o itashite orimasu."

The professor and his friend Meitei obviously consider it beneath their characters, as aesthetes and intellectuals to respond in kind to Haneko's at times obsequious and other times haughty and vulgar language. Largely through her use of language, Hanako is thus cast as a vulgar upstart who has not yet mastered the niceties of refined language. Sōseki emphasizes the duplicitous side of her nature through observations Mumeineko makes on his clandestine visits to the Kaneda household, such as that they use altogether less refined types of language amongst themselves and with their social inferiors.

The theme of the natural duplicity of the human species is addressed in more critical terms when in a latter chapter of this long serial novel Mumeineko observes the transformation that occurs when humans put on clothing. This scene, set in a bathhouse, is quite reminiscent of Sanba's *Bathhouse of the Floating World*, save that Sōseki uses the state of undress more explicitly as a more metaphor of shedding class distinctions:

A member of this species does not go around shouting aloud that he or she differs in himself (or herself) from others of the species: instead each one goes about wearing different clothes. From this observed behavior a major psychological truth about this race of forked destroyers may be deduced: that, just as nature abhors a vacuum, "mankind abhors equality." Being thus psychologically determined, they now have no choice whatever but to continue enveloping themselves in clothes and would regard a deprivation thereof with as much alarm as they would face a cutting off of flesh or the removal of a bone. To them it would be absolute madness to cast their various cloths, a ripping away of their essential human substance; and as unthinkable to attempt to return to their original condition of equality.²⁴²

²⁴² Sōseki, 238.

Such remarks seem very similar, and perhaps are even a parody of, reports by Gulliver, Hyōei, Candide, and the protagonists of other utopian travel narratives upon the circumstances in the distant or fantastic land. In using the “alien-in-our-midst” narrator of a talking cat, Sōseki does away with the need to pretend, as seen in the fantastic setting of many more conventional utopian works, that the true object of his satire is anything other than the author’s own society. In recreating in the personalities, speech and pastimes of the various feline characters traits that are representative of various classes of society, Sōseki is able to create an allegory, nevertheless, that points out the failures of the contemporary social hierarchy.

In its negative depiction of human nature and of the new social hierarchies of Tokyo, dominated by bureaucrats and the *nouveau riche*, *I am a Cat* perhaps demonstrates once again of a predilection for dystopian views of society. On the other hand, it represents a clear departure from the more narrowly allegorical works of political utopian fiction seen in the earlier Meiji period. As such, it might be seen as the accomplishment of the emphasis both Sōseki and Roan place on the importance of “literary qualities” in allegorical fiction. As opposed to the “empty container” of strictly political utopian fictions, the main focus of *I am a Cat* is upon the personalities and foibles of the characters themselves.

Although my study finishes with Sōseki's late-Meiji period work *I am a Cat*, in the Taishō era and later, one finds that many writers revisit the preoccupations of earlier types of utopian fiction. Under the continuing spread of the colonial enterprise and militarism in Japan, for instance, one finds repeated examples of the sort of expansionist utopias seen after the Sino-Japanese war.

More progressive utopian fictions also emerged, inspired in part by translations of Morris's socialist utopian work *News from Nowhere* as well as by the fledgling socialist movement in Japan. On the literary front, writers such as Mushakōji Saneatsu and Arishima Takeo propounded their dreams of an communal village, or "atarashiki mura." Among writers more interested in worlds of the imagination than in such literal utopias, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, who was in fact Sōseki's most famous protégé, borrows from *Gulliver's Travels* and from the Japanese myth of a land of water nymphs in his utopian novel *Kappa* (1927). Edogawa Ranpo and Yumeno Kyūsaku create their own peculiar utopias of the macabre and the grotesque. By this date, Japanese readers and writers alike had come to acknowledge utopian fiction as a genre both political and literary expression.

Bibliography

*The bibliography is divided into two sections:

- I. Sources in English
- II. Sources in Japanese

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