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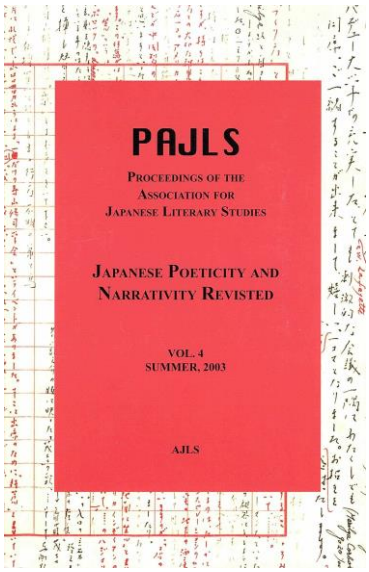

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FROM THE PAGES OF CLASSICS TO FANTASTIC TALES
KYOKUTEI BAKIN AND THE SEVEN RULES OF FICTION

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In 1842, Kyokutei Bakin (1767–1848) published the last volume of the historical fiction he had been writing for twenty-eight years. His book, *Nansō Satomi Hakkenden* or The Chronicle of the Eight Dog Knights of Satomi Family at Nansō is the masterpiece of the genre called *yomihon*, which developed in Edo or present-day Tokyo in the eighteenth century. The genre of *yomihon* or Reading Books was the last stage in the tradition of Edo narrative stretching from the Red Books (*akahon*) and the Black Books (*kurohon*), via the Blue Books (*aohon*) and the Yellow Cover (*kibyōshi*), to the Combined Tomes (*gōkan*) and the Reading Books. Marking the final stage of Edo fiction, *yomihon* are distinguished both for their sheer length and for the maturity of narrative technique they reached with Kyokutei Bakin. Through the comprehensive assimilation of contemporary cultural and artistic expressions, Bakin achieved his own original textual and cultural synthesis in order to tailor the genre of Reading Books to suit his own narrative ends. By examining social and artistic situations surrounding *Hakkenden*, it becomes clear what Bakin conceived of as textual organization.

Nansō Satomi Hakkenden (abbreviated as *Hakkenden*) occupies the key position in the evolution of Bakin's narrative methods. In the preface dated August 12, 1835, Bakin published his seven rules of historical fiction. It was unprecedented in the history of Japanese narrative to state so clearly the method of fiction through numbered rules and thus to show a theorizing and analytical drive that ever since its publication has provided much subject of debate. The list of Bakin's seven rules of fiction is drawn up for the first time in his preface entitled "Additional Comment for Part Nine, Middle Section" (*Kyūshū Chūchitsu fugen*.)[1] Bakin was no silent thinker in his methodological quest. On numerous occasions, the author actively sought for dialogue with his readers to shape his thoughts, and while writing *Hakkenden,* Bakin kept his readers informed of his newly found narrative method of the seven rules for historical fiction as well as its practice in the actual work of fiction.

[1] Kyokutei Bakin, *Nansō Satomi Hakkenden 6* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1990) 6–8.

Before starting our analysis of *Hakkenden*, certain issues of terminology must be clarified. The *Hakkenden* has a complex organization. The largest unit is "*shū*" (輯) and it is translated as "part." *Hakkenden* is divided into nine parts, and because Bakin was attached to the number nine as the largest one-digit number, he was seemingly determined to structure his work in nine parts in order to avoid the number ten, which he thought of as the completion of a cycle back to zero. Consequently, as his imagination expanded in the course of twenty-eight years, Part Eight, and especially Part Nine became much longer than the other parts. Only Parts Eight and Nine are divided into smaller units of "chitsu" (帙) translated as "Section." Sections are divided as "*jō*" (上) "*chū*" (中) and "*ge*" (下), or "beginning," "middle" and "ending" sections. Part Eight is divided into "beginning" and "ending" sections while Part Nine has "beginning," "middle," and "ending" sections. The next sub-unit after section is "*kan*" (巻) or tome, and each tome is divided into "*kai*" (回), translated as "chapter." Both tomes and chapters are numbered consecutively, and there are one hundred eighty chapters in *Hakkenden*.

Let us come back to the "Preface" to Part Nine, Middle Section. The first of the seven rules is "*shu kyaku*" or main and subordinate characters. Bakin compares the main and subordinate characters with *shite* and *waki* in Noh play, and with oriental chess *shōgi*. The main and subordinate characters are defined in terms of switching roles in different chapters: the main character in some chapters can come back later as a subordinate character. This phenomenon exists in western narrative, but it does not constitute a methodological rule to define the nature of characters in western novels. The character presentation in *Hakkenden* is structured as *lie zhuan* or biographies (列伝),a form set by Sima Qian in his historiography *Shi ji* or in Japanese *Shiki*. While Sima Qian placed biographies of heroes and famous historical persons at the end of his book, in the Ming vernacular historical fiction entitled *Shui hu zhuan* or *Suiko den* (*The Water Margin*) the biographies take up almost the whole book, which is as long as the *Hakkenden*. Bakin follows the structure of the *Water Margin*, and starts with biographies of his eight heroes.

While Bakin took the structure of the *Water Margin*, from the point of view of the main and the subordinate characters, he organized his biographies in an orderly fashion unlike the *Water Margin*. Bakin pairs knights in groups of two, and each Dog Knight takes turns to be the main character assisted by another Dog Knight. For example, the first of the eight knights whose biography is presented is Shino, and he is assisted by a service boy who turns out to be another Dog Knight, Gakuzō, who will

later change his name to Sōsuke. Sōsuke assists another Dog Knight, Dōsetsu, introduced dramatically in the scene of Shino's fiancé Hamaji's death as her brother and the master of the art of fire magic. Then Shino and Genpachi assist two new Dog Knights introduced in the story, Kobungo and his infant nephew Shinbei. Subsequently, Kobungo witnesses Keno's first appearance in the narrative where he avenges his parents in the guise of a beautiful itinerant dancing girl. The last of the Dog Knights to be introduced in the story, Daikaku is assisted by Genpachi, who happens to pass by a small village which is under the spell of a monster cat who takes the human shape of Daikaku's father. The methodical application of a single rule creates a sense of structure, and this means that the structure of narrative has something to do with a process of building readers' expectations.

The second and the third rules form a pair. They are called "*fukusen*" or foreshadowing and "*shinsen*" or a plot preparation for future incident. Bakin explains the way to distinguish foreshadowing from a plot preparation as follows: foreshadowing is a brief mention of a new incident or narrative device (*shukō*) which suggests some future incident. On the other hand, the plot preparation is a procedure to familiarize readers with reversals by arranging incidents so that they appear to happen as a result of natural evolution. Often, the plot preparation requires a longer span of chapters to take effect, and it makes fictive incidents look like unexpected coincidences. In one of the best explanations of Bakin's seven rules of fiction, Asō Isoji explains that foreshadowing constitutes a cause and effect relationship, while plot preparation concerns two incidents bound in accidental relationship and is comparable to a base paint applied as a foundation for an over-coat so as to enhance the final narrative outcome.[2]

Foreshadowing and especially plot preparation work as devices to create suspense. That is why in the preface to tome thirty-six, where Bakin stipulates "five prohibitions for readers," he explicitly states that readers should not ask whether Bakin is forgetting to follow a certain character or to conclude a certain incident introduced previously.[3] In *Ken'i hyōban-ki*, in response to Rekitei Kingyo's question of why two out of eight Dog Knights, Shino and Keno, are at first introduced in the story as female, Bakin answers the first question about Shino because he already wrote and published Shino's biography by the time of the

[2] Asō Isoji, *Edo bungaku to Chūgoku bungaku* (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1972) 454–456.
[3] Kyokutei Bakin, *Nansō Satomi Hakkenden 9* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001) 162.

question, but refuses to answer about Keno because his biography is forth-coming, and he will ruin the effect of his story if he answers prematurely.[4] Kingyo's question deals with plot preparation rather than foreshadowing, but both rules function as devices to draw readers into Bakin's world by creating suspense.

Of the remaining rules, the sixth is "*shōhitsu*" or an abbreviated description for economy of words. Bakin explains that he uses protagonists' speeches and eavesdropping to spread the vital information among his protagonists in the story so that he can avoid redundant descriptions. Of all the rules, the fourth, fifth, and seventh are the most problematic ones. As for the fourth and the fifth terms, "*Shōō*" or correspondence and "*hantai*" or opposition, Bakin either coined them by himself or completely redefined terms used in Chinese criticism of vernacular fiction, and therefore these two terms, especially the fourth term correspondence, show Bakin's originality.[5] The fourth and fifth rules are paired notions, and both refer to contrasting incidents occurring in a narrative sequence, where the incidents are related either by associative correspondence or by opposition. Tokumaru argues that Bakin created an ambiguity in the meaning of correspondence. For, his definition is not always respected by Bakin himself when applied to the analysis of his own works. Let us listen to Bakin's explanation of correspondence and opposition from the afore-mentioned "Preface."

In the Preface to the Middle Section of Part Nine, Bakin cautions his readers that "*shōō*" should be distinguished from "*chōfuku*" or repetition in that repetition is a careless mistake committed by authors who inadvertently repeat identical incidents. Bakin criticizes both the *Water Margin* and *Xi you ji* (*The Journey to the West* Japanese name *Saiyūki*) for their repetitions, and he argues that, in the case of the *Water Margin*, there are too many characters, one hundred eight in all, to devise different incidents for each person, while *The Journey to the West* has too few characters, only four, to create variation. Bakin justifies his *Hakkenden* as a story with an ideal number of characters, nineteen in all: eight heroes with eight heroines, Satomi Father Yoshizane and Son Yoshinari to whom the Dog Knights pledge loyalty, and Monk Chudai, who is the spiritual father of the eight Dog Knights.[6] Thus Bakin defends his composition under the pretext that what might look like repetitive

[4] Kyokutei Bakin, *Ken'i hyōban ki*, middle tome (Edo, Sanseidō1818) 14–15.
[5] Tokumaru Tomoko, "Kyokutei Bakin no *haishi* hōsoku – chōfuku kara shōō e" in *Kokugo kokubun* (May 1992), republished in *Bakin*, ed. Itasaka Noriko (Tokyo: Wakakusa Shobō, 2000) 180–201.
[6] Hakkenden 6, 6.

incidents in the *Hakkenden* are in fact carefully arranged to make them correspond, and the heroes and heroines he chose are just the right number to sustain his narrative scheme of correspondence.

It is not always clear how correspondence differs from opposition in Bakin's scheme. For example, according to Bakin, the two scenes of wild bulls attacking two Dog Knights have quite different meanings but successfully evoke an association because both scenes involve the same wild animals. On the other hand, opposition links a pair of incidents with opposed attributes, for example Good and Evil, Divine and Occult, or Justice and Injustice.[7] However, Bakin is ambiguous in his definition of opposition in the "Preface": he quotes the example of Shino who is involved in two incidents, and explains that this example stands for opposition because in the first incident Shino is chased by another Dog Knight Genpachi commissioned by his lord to arrest Shino, while in the second incident Shino, with the help of another Dog Knight Dōsetsu, chases Genpachi.[8] Bakin does not go into details about the nature of these incidents, but it appears that Bakin categorizes Shino's example as opposition because of the reversal of roles between Good and Evil. In the first instance, Shino offers a fake sword to Shino's father's and Genpachi's lord by representing it as a family treasure. So, clearly Shino is wrong even though he does not know that his aunt and her husband stole the true sword and replaced it with a fake one, and thus in truth Shino is not responsible for his mistake. In the second instance, Genpachi was mistook by Shino and Dōsetsu as a thief running into the boat where two Dog Knights were taking rest. In this case too, Genpachi looks Evil whereas in truth he was not. With this ethical judgment entailed in the definition of opposition, we are ready to approach the last rule *imbi* (隠微). For *imbi* is traditionally understood as ethical judgment of Good and Evil.

More than correspondence and opposition, *imbi* has become the subject of debate in Bakin criticism because Bakin does not define it clearly even in his "Preface." *Imbi* has been understood as Bakin's staple principle that "good guys win and bad guys lose" or *kanzen chōaku*, but the use of *imbi* in Bakin's writing does not always fit this interpretation. Why then is *Imbi* interpreted as a principle of Good and Evil? One of the places where Bakin could find the word *kanchō*, short-hand of *kanzen chōaku*, along with *imbi* is in the preface of *Shi ji zhuan* (詩集伝) or the *Collected Annotations of the Book of Odes* by Zhu Xi (朱熹). In this

[7] Tokumaru, 184.
[8] Hakkenden 6, 7.

preface Zhu Xi prescribes the Neo-Confucian eclectic use of literature as a guide to orient people to the good and correct way. Bakin owned this book and quoted it in *Gendō hōgen* (玄同放言) published in 1820.[9]

Nakamura Yukihiko argues against attributing Bakin's Good and Evil principle to Neo-Confucianism alone.[10] According to him, in an early stage of the *Hakkenden*, Bakin singles out human emotion and feeling as an important narrative aim.[11] For Nakamura, the largest difference between Bakin and the Neo-Confucians is that Neo-Confucianism takes literature as a tool of philosophy, whereas Bakin uses the Neo-Confucian idea of Good and Evil as a literary device. *Imbi*, which can be translated as allusive symptom, is a way for Bakin to insinuate his logic of life, including the Good and Evil principle, into his fiction so that literature acquires a higher status than a simple leisure activity or pastime.[12]

Perhaps the best definition of *imbi* is provided by Hattori Hitoshi, who summarizes it as a "meaning hidden by the author so that it is not evident to readers."[13] *Imbi* is arguably a type of authorial intention to plot a work of fiction by combining multiple sources as diverse as the inspirations derived from the Heian Classics, Japanese medieval military tales, Chinese vernacular tales, scientific treatises, encyclopedia, theater, poetry, woodblock printed illustrations, and any associations with these matters which cross the author Bakin's mind. In Bakin's writings, *Imbi* is often combined with the word *sakusha* or the author to make "*sakusha no imbi*" which means literally "the symptom hidden by the author," which tends to justify Hattori's definition. Thus defined, it makes sense for the first time that *imbi* is used as "*imbi* of shōō" or hidden correspondence between incidents, "*imbi* of hantai" or hidden opposition, "*imbi* of shinsen" or hidden plot preparation. *Imbi* can be present in any feature of fiction as long as it is a hidden authorial intention to plan fiction, since *imbi* is close to what Bakin also called "*sakusha no yōi*" or the author's careful preparatory consideration.

The very fact that allusive symptom can be used in combination with the other six rules demonstrates its special status in Bakin's system. Of the seven rules, the first six are classified by Asō Isoji as techniques of

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[9] *Nihon zuihitsu taisei* series 1 volume 3 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1927) 11.
[10] Nakamura Yukihiko, *Nakamura Yukihiko chojutsu shū*, volume 1 (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-sha, 1982) 316–17.
[11] Ibid. 298–99.
[12] Ibid. 315. See also Nakamura, volume 12, 344.
[13] Hattori Hitoshi, *Kyokutei Bakin no bungaku-iki* (Tokyo: Wakakusa Shobō, 1997) 129.

emphasis,[14] and by both Nakamura Yukihiko and Mizuno Minoru as rules about structure.[15] Putting aside this critical peculiarity to spot plot structure only in binary opposition of characters, foreshadowing, and incidents, which differs so much from Western notions of structure but conforms to criticism of Chinese vernacular historical fictions, we can now examine *imbi* as a mechanism to differentiate between readers. In this respect, *imbi* is a sort of riddle: for Bakin, "*imbi* is a deep intention unsaid in the story, and it is made to be understood one hundred years after the fiction was written by the arrival of a real friend."[16] According to this passage, *imbi* can also be translated as "deep intention" (深意) as well as "hidden symptom," and as such *imbi* is a device to turn every feature in fiction into a riddle to challenge Bakin's readers over time.

If *imbi* still works as a riddle posed by Bakin's narrative to the readers, this is due to the generative situation specific to Bakin's seven rules of fiction. For Bakin's rules are the product of his correspondence with specific readers who challenged him with their criticism and queries while he was writing the *Hakkenden*, and he tried to answer them in *Ken'i hyōban-ki*. The eager readers to whom Bakin owes his reflections on writing and its methods are Kimura Mokuan, who was the elder of Takamatsu domain stationed at Edo, Ōzu Keisō, and the two brothers Tonomura Jōsai and Rekitei Kingyo, of whom the latter is listed as the editor of *Ken'i hyōban-ki*. All four were sufficiently knowledgeable and well read to challenge Bakin on the validity and appropriateness of his source books and even to question the logic of his hidden meanings.

The riddles posed by Bakin's work continue to exercise criticism today. Hattori thinks that the "two greatest *imbi* of *Hakkenden*" are the secret of the peony-shaped spot on the fur of the dog Yatsufusa, and the corresponding peony-shaped birthmarks which the eight Dog Knights carry with beads, marks which help them to identify each other but strangely disappear after their marriage with the eight Satomi princesses in the climax.[17] For Takada Mamoru, the riddle is that the dog's name Yatsufusa evokes plum flowers in poetry, and the dog and cherry blossoms are a paired association in Edo poetry of *haikai*, but the peony does not have any formulaic match either with dogs or with warriors.[18] Then, why are peony-shaped spots combined with the dog and Dog

[14] Asō Isoji, 462.
[15] Nakamura, volume 5, 372; Mizuno Minoru, *Edo shōsetsu ronsō* (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-sha, 1974) 224.
[16] *Hakkenden 6*, 8.
[17] Hattori, 135.
[18] Takada Mamoru, *Hakkenden no sekai* (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-sha, 1980) 111.

Knights? Takada proposes that the answer lies in *karajishi botan*, because the sacred dog *komainu* (Dog from Korea) alias *karajishi* (Chinese lion) in Part Eight of the *Hakkenden* is associated with peonies, and *karajishi* may be the model of the sacred dog Yatsufusa.[19]

The dialogue between Bakin and his readers continues today, and as Takada's example shows, the critical challenge to discover the author's hidden intention entails a complex network of cultural phenomena whereby Bakin invented the logistics of his narrative. Therefore, the source study of Bakin's fiction is more than a simple case of antiquarianism. To prove the point, first we have to appreciate the polyphony of Edo culture.

Tagaki Gen describes Edo Reading Books as a genre devoted to Chinese-style fictive historiography, where that obviously foreign inspiration is appropriated to the native category of *jidai mono* or the adaptation of Japanese medieval military tales.[20] Takagi's remark warns us against the exclusively philological study of Bakin's seven rules. With some exceptions, we may find all seven terms used by Bakin to name his seven rules in Chinese criticism written in the margins of vernacular tales, notably in the criticism of Jin Shengtan (金聖歎) to whom Bakin refers most frequently.[21] Yet Bakin transplants each term into an entirely different cultural context. As Kaizuka Shigeki observed, Japan invited Chinese culture rather than passively receiving it,[22] and there must have been an internal mechanism and functionality to make that invitation auspicious.

To designate historical fiction, Edo Reading Book authors used a term taken from Chinese vernacular fiction, *bai shi*. Bakin's seven rules are officially the seven rules to designate *bai shi* read in Japanese as *haishi* (稗史). In Bakin, the term *haishi* takes quite a broad meaning, and it is used to encompass Japanese literature. In the preface to Tome Thirty-three from Part Nine of the *Hakkenden*, under the rubric of "*haishi*," Bakin refers to *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*, *The Tale of Genji*, *The Tale of Utsuho* from the Heian period, and *The Tale of*

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[19] Ibid. 96.
[20] Takagi Gen, *Edo yomihon no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Perikan-sha, 1995) 13.
[21] For the relationship between Bakin's terminology and Chinese texts, see Hanada Keisuke, "Bakin no shosen *haishi* shichi hōsoku ni tsuite" in *Kokugo kokubun*, volume 28, number 8; and Tokuda Takeshi, "Bakin no *haishi* shichi hōsoku to Mōseizan no 'Zoku Sangoku-shi' hō" jō and ge in *Bungaku* volume 48, numbers 6 and 7.
[22] Kaizuka Shigeki, *Nihon to Nihonjin* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū Shinsha, 1965) 33.

Urashima from the medieval folktales.[23] Bakin's definition of *haishi* is obviously different from that of *bai shi* in Chinese vernacular fiction. Bakin sees *haishi* in all works which use names of historical, legendary and mythological people if their events and lives are imaginatively created in stories.[24] In order to make it clear that the historical names are only a pretext, historical fiction in Bakin's definition does not specify dates and, in some cases, even intentionally alters historical dates to make it explicit that it is an invention.[25] Bakin sets one rule to limit freedom of imagination. The historical fiction should not describe historically righteous people as evil.[26] In order to judge who is truly righteous in history, authors need "*daigakumon*" or great scholarship. In some historical cases, good people were punished and evil people prospered, and in order to straighten up history, writers of *haishi* should identify what was truly good without being deceived by the actual historical outcome. Bakin's historical narrative is a historical idealism, and this idealism is the guiding force of the hidden authorial intention which constitutes *imbi*.

Bakin does not claim any originality for his seven rules. In the "Preface" in which Bakin stated his seven rules for the first time, he began his statement with the observation that "there naturally exist rules in *bai shi* written by talented Chinese of Ming and Qing periods."[27] The difficulty to define Bakin's seven rules resides in the scission between his theory and its practice, and that difficulty, at least in part, originates in the ambiguous location of agency. Bakin's knowledge of Chinese classics and vernacular tales is entirely based on books. His rules are extracted from his solitary reading of Chinese historical fiction. Bakin singles out the *Water Margin* as the source text to induce his notion of hidden intention or allusive symptom. Without doubt, Bakin needed to practice his interpretative skill in order to read ethical correctness in the deeds of one hundred eight bandits gathering in the marsh of the *Water Margin.* Other representative vernacular historical fictions were not as challenging as the *Water Margin* to test Bakin's understanding. For example, another of Bakin's sources, the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* boasts the character of Liu Xuande, with whom the anonymous author or authors sympathize most, because he is a Han royal family member and therefore has a right to claim the throne even if he

[23] Hakkenden 9, 3.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 4.
[26] Ibid., 6.
[27] Hakkenden 6, 6.

did not win in history. The logic to compensate history through the idealized figure of Kong Ming is evident in the plot, and therefore this historical fiction completed its task without *imbi* from Bakin's point of view.

What Bakin is doing with his reading of Chinese vernacular historical fiction is to develop a view of East Asian fiction on a scale never achieved before him, under the name of *haishi*. Bakin acknowledged that the notion of hidden intention did not come from Chinese criticism while the other six rules describe working notions discovered within Chinese vernacular criticism. Maybe it does not matter which idea best proves Bakin's originality. Bakin lived at a time when the notion of originality in use today did not exist, and therefore no one cared about it. Instead, what I would like to emphasize in Bakin's seven rules is his location of agency. Even in the last of the seven, Bakin attributes the idea of hidden intention to the original text of the *Water Margin* albeit undetected by Chinese critics and readers. Bakin is proud of his discovery, because he claims to have understood better than anyone else the original Chinese story.

Locating his concepts in the original Chinese fiction itself, Bakin cut through the complex and often obscure tangle of Chinese critical terminology.[28] What then did Bakin accomplish? Bakin never locates the agency of his ideas in himself, even those ideas that are most properly his own. I would like to invoke here some critical notions taken from Julia Kristeva and Jean-François Lyotard. In *les nouvelles maladies de l'âme*, Kristeva talks about "*un dénominateur symbolique*" or "symbolic denominator." As a sign of globalization, the symbolic denominator manifests itself in art, philosophy, and religion as cultural memories forged by an intricate combination of history and geography.[29] The *Water Margin* can be that symbolic denominator which groups the geographic zone of East Asia in one narrative history. In *Moralités postmodernes*, Jean-François Lyotard describes his overview of metaphysics by analogy to cities. Truth and transcendentalism correspond to the old cities "at the heart of which beautiful metaphysic edifices and arrogant downtown are preserved as museum pieces." Urbanization, which plans the city without a center, is the task of current metaphysics. That new zone is the place

[28] See for example the argument on the classification of parallelism in paired incidents in *How To Read the Chinese Novel*, ed. David L. Rolston (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) 100.
[29] Julia Kristeva, *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme* (Paris: Fayard, 1993) 298.

where "all cultures are suspended between their elsewhere and our here, which is itself the elsewhere of their disappeared here."[30]

If Bakin had located his seven rules in his own agency and argued for their general validity, he would have constructed his agency and his rules as museum pieces. By attributing the agency of his ideas to the other, Bakin anticipated Lyotard's dynamic of elsewhere and here: he suspended *haishi* on the cross-road of mutual positioning by leaving his own agency for the sake of the other's. There is no real Chinese vernacular historical fiction, but there is an alternative of Bakin's fiction in an imaginary space called *haishi*. That is why Chinese vernacular historical fiction acquired for the first time with Bakin its East Asian validity.

Lyotard continues that "objects lose value and there is only style" and that when "style becomes value," it feeds into markets in order to create desire.[31] The object exists in its way to present itself, and that is the only way for Bakin's *haishi* to exist. Theories may allow an inter-subjective field to grow, but styles are individual and local. Thus *baishi* and *haishi* are endowed with respective local and individual styles.

In a picture of cultural dynamics, the two countries of China and Japan reserve different positions for historical fiction. Andrew Plaks summarizes the relation of Chinese fiction to historiography as follows: "the question of how to define the narrative category in Chinese literature eventually boils down to whether or not there did exist within the traditional civilization a sense of the inherent commensurability of its two major forms: historiography and fiction."[32] Because historiography is the most respected form of prose narrative in China, all other prose forms are positioned in relation to history. A completely different scheme is in order for historical fiction in Japan, where history has never acquired a prominent genre status superseding literature. When a question is posed on the superiority or inferiority of fiction to historiography, as in the Firefly chapter of *The Tale of Genji*, it is a literary custom to give credit to the idea that fiction conveys human truth better than history. In fact in the history of prose writing, historiography gave way to fiction very early on, right after Murasaki Shikibu's life time in the early eleventh century, and was replaced by historical narrative tales starting with *The Tale of*

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[30] Jean-François Lyotard, *Moralités postmodernes* (Paris: Galilée, 1993) 33. My translation.
[31] Ibid. 30, 33.
[32] Andrew Plaks, "Towards a Critical Theory of Chinese Narrative" in *Chinese Narrative, Critical and Theoretical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) 311–12.

the Flowering Fortune, and that tradition was continued by military tales and historical epics of which the first representative example is *The Tale of Heike*.

Naturally, the Urtexts which Bakin used to construct his historical fiction include a large number of Japanese historical narratives written prior to him, and to count only a few, Bakin's *Hakkenden* registers important structural notions taken from *Taiheiki* or *The Great Peace*, *The Pillow Book* and *The Tale of Genji*. *The Great Peace*, which was Bakin's beloved reading, was long adapted as one important *sekai* in puppet theater (*ningyō jōruri*) and *kabuki*. *Sekai* is originally a term from the theater and it is divided into two major categories, *jidai mono* or historical repertoire and *sewa mono* or contemporary repertoire. Historical repertoire groups theatrical pieces with historical personages of certain periods, who were constructed according to specific sets of character prototypes. In order to avoid formulaic cliché, the variation within *sekai* was ensured by a device called *shukō*, or a new turn of interpretation.

Hakkenden follows this format and applies the method first used by puppet theater to adapt history to theatrical pieces. That method is summarized by Ishikawa Hidemi as follows: "the basic attitude to compose historical repertoire in puppet theater is to clarify truth hidden behind known history and legend. It means to exercise modern interpretation of ancient and medieval narrative epic."[33] Ishikawa argues that this method was used by Bakin to transplant historical fiction from theater to literature, which created a new genre of narrative called Reading Books.[34] In order to vary his *sekai*, Bakin crafted various devices, and he adapted the *Water Margin* as one *shukō* or device to add a new dimension to historical repertoire. Even this use of *Water Margin* is not original to Bakin. Bakin's master Santō Kyōden adapted the *Water Margin* to create the genre of Reading Books in his *Chūshin Suikoden*, in which he combined the *Water Margin* with Edo's greatest theatrical hit, *Chūshin gura* or The Loyal League, and published it from 1799 to 1801. So how are we to understand Bakin's achievement? Bakin's seven rules of historical fiction are a succinct formula of how he worked to adapt the *Water Margin* to *Hakkenden.* This adaptation established his method of writing in the genre where he excelled the most among all the different

[33] Ishikawa Hidemi, "Shiden mono no seiritsu - Bakin yomihon to jidai jōruri" in *Bakin* 97.

[34] For a more detailed list of Bakin's characters and incidents taken from theatrical pieces, see Kawai Masumi, *Kinsei bungaku no kōryū – engeki to shōsetsu* (Osaka: Seibundō, 2000) 301–351.

genres he practiced in his long career as a writer. Because the adaptation was on the level of organization, Bakin's case was unique, and *Hakkenden* stands both at the cross-roads of his career and at the heart of Edo fiction.