“Another Travel of a Genre: *Kajin no kigū* as an Intersection of the Political Novel of the West and the Tradition of *Kanshibun*”

Atsuko Sakaki

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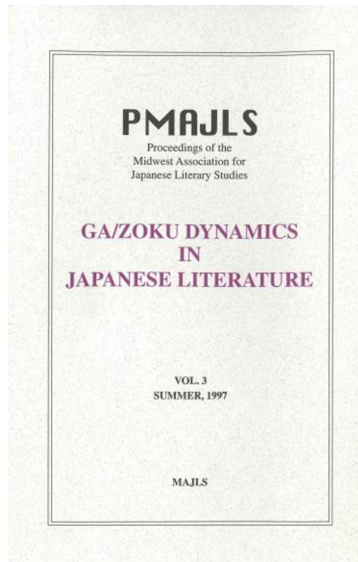

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Another Travel of a Genre: *Kajin no kigū* as an Intersection of the Political Novel of the West and the Tradition of Kanshibun [1]

ATSUKO SAKAKI
Harvard University

For "Us" to Take the Seiji Shōsetsu Seriously

I wonder how many of us present here today have ever read any seiji shōsetsu, for pleasure or instruction. It is my impression that this subgenre of shōsetsu--the political novel--has been largely forgotten except in literary histories of Japan. At least, it does not seem to be dealt with in the scholarly literature or in college courses as often as other types of shōsetsu which deal mainly with human emotions or relationships, such as Sōseki's *Kokoro,* Shiga's *An'ya kōro,* Kawabata's *Yukiguni,* Tanizaki's *Sasameyuki,* and so on. They are seldom available in paperback versions in Japanese, and thus readers of today do not have easy access to them. There is no English translation of any seiji shōsetsu available, except for John Mertz' partial translation of *Keikoku bidan* (1883-4) [lit., *Commendable Tales of Statemanship*] by Yano Ryūkei (1850-1931), one of the most widely-known seiji shōsetsu, as an appendix to his dissertation on the subgenre.[2] It seems that the Meiji political novel genre has been excluded, both within and outside of Japan, from what has come to be seen as the "mainstream" of modern Japanese

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[1]The main title of this paper is inspired by Mary Layoun's *Travels of a Genre: The Modern Novel and Ideology.*

[2]There are a few Ph.D. dissertations written on seiji shōsetsu: Horace Z. Feldman, "The Growth of the Meiji Novel"; Catherine Vance Yeh, "Zeng Pu's *Niehai Hua* as a Political Novel--a World Genre in a Chinese Form"; and John Pierre Mertz, "Meiji Political Novel and Origins of the Literary Modernity.'

literature.

It is true that the seiji shōsetsu do not necessarily entice their readers with romantic plot developments, as the novels listed above do. Furthermore, seiji shōsetsu tend to be allegorical, rather than descriptive, portraying people's temperaments so as to represent specific political stances or concepts, rather than individuals. Characters in seiji shōsetsu tend to speak like politicians giving public speeches. They are also often named after politically resonant concepts, such as Kunino Motoi [lit. "foundation of the nation"] or Tomino Haru [lit. "spring of fortunes"] in *Setchūbai* [lit., *Plum in the Snow*] (1886) by Suehiro Tetchō (1849-96).[3] Such stereotyped portrayals fail to fulfill modern criteria of the psychological novel developed under the aegis of individualism, and have been considered by critics since Tsubouchi Shōyō to be pre-modern, something to be discarded in the search for modernity.

If seiji shōsetsu are so unengaging, old-fashioned and uninteresting, however, then why were they so popular when they were published? The political novel subgenre flourished prior to the inauguration of the Parliament in Japan in 1890, and, as many scholars note, enjoyed commercial success and immense popularity. The gap between the reception of the genre in late Meiji and now suggests that any explanation will require that we historicize our notion of literature or literariness.

In this paper, I hope to suggest that study of a particular seiji shōsetsu, entitled *Kajin no kigū* [*Unexpected Encounters with Beauties*] (1885-1897; incomplete) by Shiba Shirō a.k.a. Tōkai Sanshi (1852-1922), opens up a set of questions relevant to this task, namely, "what is literature?"; "what is the Japanese language?"; "what goals should the authors of literary works strive to achieve?"; "what were the expectations of Meiji readers

[3]Seki Ryōichi, 9.

in reading literature?"; and "what effects might this reading have had on them?"

Meiji views of Seiji Shōsetsu

The answers that have been offered to date to these questions, which have been quite prominent in modern Japan, seem generally to follow along the lines laid down by Tsubouchi Shōyō, in his *Shōsetsu shinzui* [trans., *The Essence of the Novel*], published in September, 1885. For the sake of discussion, let me summarize his view, at the cost of oversimplification. Shōyō advocates the genre of shōsetsu over other genres, the style of gazoku setchū-tai or gesaku buntai over other styles, the theme of ninjō [human emotions] and seitai [customs and manners of the society] over other topics, and the mode of mosha [mimetic representation] over that of shūji, or rhetorical control over characters, incidents, and settings.

It was in November of the same year that Tōkai Sanshi published the first volume of *Kajin no kigū*; thus Shōyō could not have seen it before the publication of *Shōsetsu shinzui*. However, Shōyō's work seems to function as a critique of the novel in regard not only to its choice of theme, but also its genre, mode of representation, and style. Before contrasting Shōyō's theory and Tōkai Sanshi's practice, a brief summary of the story may be in order.

Kajin no kigū features four nationalists from four nations who happen to become friends in Philadelphia: a Japanese man who goes by the quasi-Chinese pseudonym of Tōkai Sanshi [lit. "unemployed literatus from the eastern sea"]; a Chinese man (Ding Fanxing), a Spanish woman and an Irish woman. The Spanish and Irish women's names--identifiable respectively with "Jolanda" and 'Colleen"--are represented by Chinese characters whose Japanese readings ("Yūran" and "Kōren" respectively; the

latter reads in Chinese "Honglian," which could not stand for "Colleen") may be phonetically similar enough to the Western female names, but the net effect on the page is that they seem to be Chinese women's names: "mysterious orchid" for Jolanda, and "crimson lotus" for Colleen.

The story evolves around the four nationalists' partings and meetings-- through family or national emergencies, participation in revolutionary activities, subsequent arrests, and so forth. The fictional characters' stories are also generously interspersed with surveys of historical incidents in Spain, Ireland, Italy, Turkey, Egypt, and Korea.

Kajin no kigū is thus generically heterogeneous. Seki maintains that it could be labeled as autobiography, prospectus of political measures, or scholar-beauty romance [saishi kajin shōsetsu/ caizi jiaren xiaoshuo].[4] Many have noted autobiographical elements in the first volume of the novel which is set in Pennsylvania, where Shiba Shirō lived while earning a Bachelor of Finance from the University of Pennsylvania, while the element of political manifesto appears in the strong tone of voice in which each character surveys the histories of nonhegemonic nations and proposes resistance to colonizing nations, while, finally, potentially romantic relationships between the Japanese intellectual and European beauties are comparable to those seen in medieval Chinese romance. None of these genres accords with Shōyō's notion of the modern novel, which is seen as the most advanced form in a linear history of literature that he conceives within a Darwinist framework. Even if one were to admit that Tōkai Sanshi's work bears some resemblance to the novel, its theme is not the human emotions or affairs with which Shōyō feels the novel should concern itself, but rather the political history of the world, a topic that,

[4]quoted in Ochi (1986), 126, without source mentioned.

in Shōyō's taxonomy, falls somewhere beyond the pale of literature.

Moreover, the diction that *Kajin no kigū* employs is kanbun kundoku (kaki kudashi)-tai, or Japanized literary Chinese--more specifically, the parallel prose in 4 and 6 characters [shi roku benrei tai] established in the Six Dynasties and adapted in Japan, and thus does not transcribe colloquial Japanese discourse of 1880s "naturally." The style is not descriptive, but rhetorical, geared less to the mimetic portrayal of people and things, than to following rules of shūji [rhetoric] and elaborating themes into bibun [purple passages]. The text is generously studded with conventional rhetorical phrases, whose sources may be traced to Qu Yuan's *Lisao* [trans., *Encountering Sorrow*], Tao Qian's *Taohuayuan-ji* [*An Account of the Peach Blossom Spring*], *Yusenkutsu/Youxianku* [trans., *The Dwellings of Playful Goddesses*], *Shikyō/Shijing* [*The Classic of Poetry*, and old-style poems collected in *Monzen/Wenxuan*, to name only a few.[5]

While Shōyō had not had a chance to read *Kajin no kigū* by the time he published *Shōsetsu shinzui*, Tokutomi Sohō had, when he published "Kinrai ryūkō no seiji shōsetsu o hyōsu" [A Criticism of the Political Novels Recently in Vogue] in 1887. As Donald Keene sums up articulately in a series of categories, Sohō criticizes works in the seiji shōsetsu genre for their lack of "literary qualities," poorly-structured plots, and flat, stereotypical characterization.[6]

While Sohō's criticisms were addressed toward the genre as a whole, and not specifically toward *Kajin no kigū*, the specific work must have been on his mind to some extent, as its fame and commercial success were unsurpassed by most other seiji

[5]See, Fujikawa Shin'ichi, 105-109, and Yanagida Izumi (1967), 392.
[6]Donald Keene (1984), 86-87.

shōsetsu. The "kaisetsu" or "guide to reading this work" in the Kaizōsha version of *Kajin no kigū*, written by Kimura Tsuyoshi, quoting from an earlier review by Kojima Seijirō, that characters in this novel are nothing but puppets of concepts, and lack individual characteristics.

One aspect of the novel which few critics have failed to critique is its inaccuracy in representing ethnic diversity. Though, as noted above, the author had studied in the United States for several years before writing this novel, this does not seem to imply that he was discursively intimate with Western culture. A Japanese, he had to draw upon Chinese literary discourse to present the foreign. It may also be the case that, given the literary background of the prospective audience, he felt he should narrate his story in a discourse heavily imbued with Chinese.[7] Thus, the appearance of two women is depicted in Chinese rhetorical terms, and through association with famous Chinese beauties: Wang Zhaojun and Yang Guifei, among others. The following excerpt describes the way Colleen and Jolanda first appear to the Japanese male protagonist:

> Sanshi would always regret that Americans lacked aesthetic taste, and miss friends to talk about blossoms and the moon. However, now as he met these ethereal ladies who sang and played stringed instruments among blossoms in late spring, he admired the refinement and aesthetic atmosphere about them, and was eager to float on the ripples

[7]Note that two levels of discourse coexist in the text. When the protagonist talks directly to one of the beauties, Colleen of Ireland, he compares her to Helen of Troy and Jane, Queen of Scotland--apparently in consideration of the nature of the reading knowledge of his addressee. Then the author adds in parentheses an annotation to each of the references: "Greek beauty," or "Queen of Scotland who outrated the others in her beauty and intelligence," presumably for the sake of his readers in Japan of 1880s. See Tōkai Sanshi, *Kajin no kigū* (1965), 90. The quotations from *Kajin no kigū* are drawn upon this edition. All the translations are mine unless otherwise noted

> to convey his feelings to them on the other shore. He thus thought to himself: Once Wang Zhaojun's fortunes declined in the infinite dessert of the Hun and saddened the heart of the Emperor of Han, and when Yang Taizhen passed away as transiently as a dewdrop in Mawei, the Emperor Ming dreamt of past romance in the Pavilion of Longevity. Such things happened for good reason.[8]

Aesthetic appreciation of the moon and blossoms on appropriate occasions alone seems suggestive of East Asian literary tradition. More specifically indicating indebtedness to Chinese literature are the mentions of Wang Zhaojun and Yang Guifei [Taizhen]. The former, a beautiful lady-in-waiting at the court of Emperor Yuan of the Han Dynasty failed to bribe a painter and was thus misrepresented by him in a portrait, on the basis of which had the Emperor chose her as a gift to the Xiongnu-- much to his regret when, too late, he found her to be an extraordinary beauty. The latter was a consort of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty who indulged his lust for her to the extent of neglecting his duties as ruler and bringing on the catastrophic An Lushan rebellion. For another example of misleading portrayals of the Western women, the Spanish and Irish women compose gushi or old-style poems in classical Chinese without the help of an interpreter. On occasion they put Chinese and Japanese men to shame, proving quicker than their East Asian male counterparts in improvisational composition (Chapter 2).[9] A composition of Yūran (Jolanda), the Spanish woman, on her four emotions --homesickness, longing for her father, hope to see Japan, and attachment to a Japanese man (Tōkai Sanshi)-- is a pastiche of a four-poem sequence entitled "Sichou shi" [Poems on Four Sorrows] by Zhang Heng (78-139)

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[8] *Kajin no kigū*, 90.
[9] *Kajin no kigū*, 103-4.

collected in the *Wenxuan* (531).[10] It is entirely unrealistic for European women living in the 1880s to have acquired this level of knowledge and skill by their early twenties; this scene thus serves only the purpose of constructing a vision of international bonding among intellectual nationalists.

Thus *Kajin no kigū* is not only deficient as literature, but also unreliable as history. It might be worthwhile noting that, while literature and history had been distinguished from each other as disciplines in Meiji Japan, both were assumed to aim for a scientific description of truth. This was the irony that works like *Kajin no kigū* had to endure. Its rhetorical presentation of conventionally perceived essence, termed hon'i in classical Japanese and its mythical plot configuration were both considered anachronistic, and thus unacceptable, either as literature or as history. In the words of Donald Keene,

> *Chance Meeting with Beautiful Women* possesses little novelistic merit. At times the plot can hardly be followed because of the digressions and interpolations, and no attempt is made to create believable characters or to describe scenes convincingly. The language is ornate, difficult, and exceedingly conventional, borrowing heavily from the stereotypes of Chinese fiction. The characters, regardless of their country, are constantly referring to events in Chinese history, using all the appropriate cliches. It could not have been very difficult for the distinguished scholar Liang Ch'i-ch'ao to make the Chinese translation of this work![11]

[10] *Wenxuan*, 638-640. Maeda Ai points out the pastische in "Nakano Shōyō": Maeda (1973), 98.

[11] Keene (1984), 85-86. C.T. Hsia, from the side of Chinese studies, rather wonders how accurate the Chinese translation could be, given that the translator did not know Japanese well: "But since he did not seriously study the language until after his arrival in Japan, one may well wonder if he knew enough Japanese at the time to translate the work even though its style was highly Sinicized." See Hsia, 235. In fact, the Chinese translation of *Kajin no kigū* by Liang Qichao [Ch'i-Ch'ao in Wade-Giles] (1873-1929), a distinguished politician and

While one may grant that Keene's critique is consistent with a specifically modern set of novelistic values, it is another story when we take into account the set of critical criteria that the novel's contemporary, that is, pre-Shōyō, audience brought to the work. What they considered to be literature--or "bungaku"--in terms of suitable styles and themes, and the goals of literary production, were radically different from the standards held by Shōyō, or by Keene.

Historicizing the Composition of *Kajin no kigū*

Yanagida Izumi, one of the leading scholars to date of seiji shōsetsu, defends the genre, though perhaps self-servingly, as follows:

> In addition to political enlightenment and propagandic missions, the genre persuaded people of the time that fiction deserves men's reading, and that fictional writing deserves a man's lifetime devotion--in short, it raised the status of literature. Also, while the content and form are accompanied with immature and clumsy parts, the genre introduced new seeds for new literature, free of hindering conventions of gesaku, that were common in the shōsetsu of the turbulent period.[12]

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literatus, not only became a bestselling novel in China, but also a subject of scholarly investigation in studies of modern Chinese literature. To combine and sum up what C.T. Hsia, Catherine Yeh and Hsü Ch'ang An relate on the matter, Liang Qichao came across the original novel in 1898, a year after the publication of its last part, on his way to Japan as a political refugee. He was particularly impressed, and published his translation serially in the *Qingpi pao,* from December, 1898, in thirty-five segments. Hsia's question about accuracy aside, Xu notices a process by which Liang departed from the original for a wilfully revised version, in order to erase the anti-Manchurian/pro-Han statements made by Ding Hanxing, the Chinese nationalist character. More surprisingly, the final version that is included in Liang Qichao's collected works has completely eliminated the Chinese character, leaving the Japanese man with two "beauties." See Hsia 235-236, Yeh, 135-136, and Hsü, 193-208.

[12]Yanagida (1928; rev., 1966), 30.

Etō Jun similarly contrasts novels descending from gesaku and those written by bunjin or literati. As he summarizes, there are two types of newspapers-- "ō shinbun" [major papers] in which seiji shōsetsu, stylistically more or less confined to kanbun, and "ko shinbun" [minor papers] in which remnants of gesaku were serialized. Etō argues that Tsubouchi Shōyō, despite the class he originated in, represented gesaku authors rather than literati in *Shōsetsu shinzui.*[13]

Nakamura Mitsuo also positively evaluates *Kajin no kigū* among other seiji shōsetsu, from an anti-Shōyō perspective. He begins with the frank-sounding remark that he enjoyed rereading the novel for the purpose of writing the "kaisetsu," and ends with noting possibilities for learning from the work so as to refresh the modern Japanese novel. In between, he suggests that Shōyō's views of literature were nothing more or less than a product of a particular historical period:

> The eighteenth year of the Meiji era [1885] was also the year in which Tsubouchi Shōyō published *Tōsei shosei katagi* [*The Essence of Contemporary Students*] and *Shōsetsu shinzui.*
>
> We need to reconsider the fact that Shiba Shirō, a complete amateur in literature both before and after the publication of this work, wrote such a novel just when the two works [of Shōyō] appeared that were considered by later generations to have marked one of the starting points of Meiji literature, that the novel was such an unprecedented success that readers yearned for sequels, and that, despite the above, the work remained isolated in the history of literature.
>
> It is only natural that the imaginative development of *Kajin no kigū* appears a hollow artifact, from the perspectives of the little perverse manifesto of mimetic

[13]Etō, 26.

> representation made in *Shōsetsu shinzui* which had been accepted in the contemporary understanding of literature.
> (. . .) Seiji shōsetsu not only chronologically preceded the novel of mimetic representation that Shōyō advocated, but also often, as in the case of this novel, experimented with potentials of literature in other directions simultaneously with Shōyō's pronouncements.[14]

Maeda Ai also notes the discrepancy between Shōyō's definition of literature and the conditions that would entitle seiji shōsetsu to be defined as literature:

> However, Tsubouchi Shōyō's *Shōsetsu shinzui*, published in the same year of Meiji 18 [1885] as the first volume of *Kajin no kigū*, nipped in the bud various kinds of potential in the historical literature of the teens of the Meiji period [1877-1886]. Suspicious of the standing of historical literature as ideological literature, Shōyō disrupted the blood-tie of history and literature, enshrined shōsetsu in the sacred area of Art, and proposed the novel of human emotions and customs as the path that new literature should take. (. . .)
> (. . .) Shōyō is among those who never doubted the authenticity of Darwinism. Thus, he justifies the superiority of the genre of the novel reflexively, drawing upon progressivist ideas, in *Shōsetsu shinzui*.[15]

Ochi Haruo and Seki Ryōichi also note, in a somewhat different way, differences in the definitions of literature of Shōyō and Tōkai Sanshi--though the latter did not explicitly theorize about literature. While Nakamura and Maeda look ahead into the modern era and see seeds of new literature in *Kajin no kigū*, Ochi and Seki look into the literary past, and situate the work in a genealogy of a literature that is distinct from the modern

[14]Nakamura Mitsuo, 398.
[15]Maeda (1976), 7-9.

Japanese understanding of (Western) literature. The samurai in the Tokugawa era, and the ex-samurai in the Meiji era, took bungaku as learning, or kanshibun. As Seki discusses at length, the term "bungaku" or "wenxue" meant studies of the Four Books and Five Classics, as opposed to mastery of martial arts:

> Since the importation of Chinese thought and literature-- especially Confucianism-- Chinese learning and kanbun had been authenticized, needless to say. However, this tendency was most predominant in the Tokugawa era. (. . .) What we call "literature" now consists of poetry, fiction and theater. In light of the negative view that Confucianism held of fiction and theater, it was thought that haishi, shōsetsu, jōruri, and kabuki should not be dealt with by respectful literati. Such an idea was also inherited into the modern era. In the above view, the history of modern Japanese literature can be described as the history of a movement to usurp and change this view of "literature," and to give "civil rights" to fiction and theater. (. . .)
>
> This is not to say, however, that the tradition of Confucian learning was irrelevant to modern "literature," nor does it mean that the tradition had only negative effects on it. Furthermore, it does not necessarily mean that the Confucian view of "literature" was incorrect. (. . .) The samurai in the Tokugawa era, and the ex-samurai in the modern era believed in the phrase of Cao Pi "Wenzhang jingguo zhi daye" [Literary works are the supreme achievement in the business of state.] in *Dianlun* [Authoritative Discourses], and tried to discuss all kinds of things. In their mind always lay such a view of writing, or "literature."[16]

Many authors in this genre were originally samurai, and had opportunities of visiting Europe and the United States before or

[16]Seki, 4-5. The translation of the line from *Authoritative Discourses* is based on Stephen Owen's translation of "Discourse on Literature"[the name of a section in the work in which the line appears], 68. See also Ochi (1967), 126.

after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, and of studying Western languages and literatures--especially British political novels, by Benjamin Disraeli and others. They became active as members of Parliament later. Indeed, for them, "literature" was not irrelevant at all to "the business of state."

Historicizing the Readership

While *Keikoku bidan* is written in gabun-tai, or pseudo-classical "indigenous" Japanese style, and *Setchūbai* in gazoku setchū-tai, or gesaku buntai, *Kajin no kigū* has chosen the kanbun kundoku tai, based on the parallel prose of China, and thus has invited further criticism for its alleged "anti-modernity" in expressing modern and Western content in premodern and Sino-Japanese form. As Morita Shiken argues in an essay called "Nihon bunshō no shōrai" [The Future of Japanese Writings] (1888),

> Chinese rhetorical expressions should be expelled from the modern Japanese discourse, according as the Japanese begin to think in a more complex manner.[17]

On the other hand, Kōda Rohan, a renowned sinophile, defines kanbun as a discourse aesthetically and intellectually engaging for the early Meiji literati.[18]

Is it really anachronistic to write of modernity or western-ness in kanbun? Literary Chinese was an established written discourse, used extensively by shizoku or ex-samurai, and perhaps might have been the most suited to describe Western thought and affairs at the time of 1880s--more articulate than wabun, more formal than gesaku buntai, and more intelligible than the early stage of the genbun itchi style. However old-

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[17]Hata Yūzō, and Yamada Yūsaku, eds, 68.

[18]See, for example, "Meiji shoki bungaku-kai" (1933) in which *Kajin no kigū* earns a brief mention: Kōda Rohan, 308.

fashioned kanshibun might appear to us today, it did not appear so to the contemporary writers and readers in early Meiji. The supposed incompatibility of kanshibun and modernity or westernness is only an illusion, created by a post-Meiji understanding of modernization as a linear development involving the negation of literary and cultural heritage, and of western-ness as an autonomous, homogeneous and tangible entity distinct from Chineseness or Japaneseness.

Let us examine the facts. The importation of Chinese books increased after the 1850s, and a larger readership developed for classical Chinese literature, as well as vernacular Chinese fiction.[19] The opening of the Japanese market was directed not only to the West, but also to East Asia. The only difference was that while the interaction with the former was almost completely new, that with the latter was an unprecedented broadening of an old relationship. If we shift our focus from the production of Chinese literary works to their Japanese reception, Chinese literature was a more significant part of Japan's reading experience in the early Meiji than ever. In fact, the gap between the authoring and reception of literature is also true of the genre of gesaku, or Japanese popular literature. Progress in printing techniques made possible a radical increase in the number of copies distributed, and thus the gesaku of the 18th and early 19th century had a larger readership at the end of the 19th century than when it was originally produced. This state of affairs resulted in a remarkable amalgam of readings--Eastern and Western, "low" and "high," oral and written, of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences--as Maeda Ai notes.[20]

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[19]See Maeda (1967), 298.
[20]See Maeda (1976).

The tradition of kanshibun was far from fading out in early Meiji. There was indeed a revival of kanshibun in 1881, as the government turned to Neo-Confucianism to check the civil rights movement [jiyū minken undō]. If we look at journalism, major newspapers were written in kanbun for intellectuals (i.e., shizoku, and rich commoners), while minor newspapers were written in gesaku buntai, or gazoku setchūtai, with illustrations--for the "undereducated.'[21] In short, many readers felt well at ease reading about a variety of contemporary issues in kanbun.[22] It did not strike them as odd to discuss modern and/or Western concepts, things, and people in kanbun which, though it originated in ancient China, had a long history of use in Japan in the 1880s.

Oral Performance within "High" Culture

While today's readers might find the kanji-filled text visually intimidating, and suited exclusively to semantic and silent reading, its contemporary readers are known to have taken to reciting the text of *Kajin no kigū*. As George Sansom notes,

> Its literary merit is negligible, but it is of value as evidence of the way in which patriotic Japanese minds were working after some twenty years of international intercourse. It is said that there was not a remote mountain village in Japan in which some young man had not a copy in his pocket, and the Chinese verses that so freely stud its pages were recited everywhere with great relish. Even its congested prose seems to have been imitated by younger writers, but no doubt its political complexion was what gave it most of its success.[23]

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[21]Seki, 5.
[22]Though Ochi does not fail to note that *Kajin no kigū* was probably so difficult for ordinary readers to comprehend that it was "vernacularized" as *Tsūzoku Kajin no kigū* : Ochi (1961a), 140.
[23]George Bailey Sansom, 414.

It is not clear where Sansom obtained the above information, but young students' passion for reciting *Kajin no kigū* is noted also in Tokutomi Roka's novel, *Kuroi me to chairo no me* [lit., *Dark Eyes and Hazel Eyes*] (1914), quoted in Maeda.[24]

While oral literature may perhaps tend to be regarded as "low-brow" or popular, this was not always the case. In fact, Tokugawa and Meiji literati used to begin their education with the memorization and recitation of the Four Books and Five Classics, or sodoku of Shisho gokyō, at the age of four or five, that is, before they were even able to understand what the text meant. Chinese literary discourse was thus primarily orally acquired, and then textually interpreted. Even after they passed this secondary stage, they would practice shigin, or recitation of poems, either in solo performance, or in group singing. Such performances took place in dormitories, and functioned to reaffirm friendly ties within a given group--college, or prep-school. This is an effect specific to oral reading, or ondoku, and not quite shared by silent reading or mokudoku. While commoners took pleasure in reciting famous passages from jōruri, and some samurai or ex-samurai often followed in their footsteps in doing so, the latter group of intellectuals also--and more publicly, proudly, and perhaps pedantically--were accustomed to orally performing kanshibun, which might appear to us, who have lost the practice of sodoku or shigin, the least oral and most heavily literate.

Interestingly enough, when it comes to the Japanese intellectual reception of Chinese literature, it was the so-called "high" literature, such as Confucian classics, historical records, and Tang Poetry, that was more orally received than "low" literature, such as ghost stories and romance. Scholars have been persuaded by the plausibility of an episode in Mori Ogai's

[24]Maeda (1969), 117.

fiction, *Vita Sekusuarisu* (1909) [trans., *Vita Sexualis* (1972),] that describes a kanbun teacher--usually identified with Yoda Gakkai (1833-1909), a teacher of the author-- caught red-handed by a student in the act of reading *Jinpingmei* (c. 1618) [trans., *The Plum in the Golden Vase*], a pornographic novel, under his desk.[25] This episode, along with the fact that students in a college dormitory (Tōkyō nōgakkō, later incorporated to the Imperial University of Tokyo as Faculty of Agriculture) were prohibited from reading Chinese vernacularfiction,[26] shows how addicted Meiji intellectuals were to such "obscene" stories, and how well, unofficially, it was understood among them that they all read such stories. But passages from those stories were not to be read aloud, especially in public, for the sake of propriety, unlike classical literary works. Also, Meiji intellectuals seem to have found it more difficult to read and recite Chinese vernacular fiction than the classics, due to lack of institutional training. These factors made the "low" literature a purely written discourse, while "high" literature remained a relatively oral discourse.

Undoing the Rhetorics

Part of the popularity of caizi jiaren xiaoshuo may be accounted for by the fact that Meiji Japan witnessed the emergence of social conditions which were, in part, similar to premodern China's, as Maeda Ai says.[27] The Chinese-style civil service examination had never been firmly rooted in the Japanese bureaucracy, despite its early introduction, until the Meiji era. The loosening of the rigid social hierarchy, resulting from the Meiji Restoration, left young intellectuals in an unreliable yet flexible world, in which they must prove their talent or perish.

[25]Maeda (1965b), 76.
[26]Maeda (1969), 112.
[27]Maeda (1965a), 123.

Thus it was in a sense natural that romances involving scholars and beauties became popular in the early Meiji, including Shōyō's own *Tōsei shosei katagi*, and *Setchūbai*, a political novel that I mentioned above. The title and occasional romantic scenes in *Kajin no kigū* can also be accounted for by this trend.

There are moments at which the work trespasses rhetorical requirements governing plot and characterization. Let me mention one example here. When Ms. Parnell, a historical figure, an activist in the Irish Independence Movement in the US, humbly describes herself as a woman whose prime of beauty has passed, Tōkai Sanshi demurs, challenging the conventional expressions "san-go, ni-hachi"-- three-five, that is, fifteen, and two-eight, that is, sixteen-- which defined the years at which women were considered most attractive. This is not exclusively realistic observation, but an observation justified in rhetorical terms, for the moon is full when it is fifteen days old, and nearly full when it is sixteen days old. Women were often associated with the moon, and hence, they must be fifteen or sixteen years old to be most beautiful.

Tōkai Sanshi, however, maintains that age is not an issue in the discussion of female beauty. He claims that he would recognize beauty in women's intelligence, experience, and social awareness, rather than in youthful physical appearance, as the former are the qualities that make women delightful conversational companions. He then lists all the aging or aged women from East and West who were known to be beautiful: Helen of Troy, Cleopatra, Wu Zetian, The Queen Mother of the West, and Mrs. En'ya in *Chūshingura* [trans., *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*] (1748). Though the choice might not be readily accepted by every reader, as many are known to have caused trouble to the nation, rather than to have delighted their friends, the logic itself is flattering to women, and strikes us thus as

modern.

Toward the "Third World" History

Another "enlightened" aspect of Tōkai Sanshi's views reveals itself in his understanding of the West as heterogeneous, and his challenges to the hierarchy often hypothesized between the "civilized" or hegemonic nations (Britain, France, Russia) and the "under-civilized" -- those nations whose independence was threatened by the imperialist nations. Tōkai Sanshi is more concerned with affinities between Japan and non-hegemonic nations, than with the much emphasized differences between the West and the East (or Japan). Thus, he does not advocate Japanese uniqueness, nor does he simplify Western-ness as one distinct entity. His sympathy with marginal nations seems to suggest multiculturalism based upon culturalism--international friendship and a recognition of the beauties of each culture. As Keene suggests:

> The Wanderer of the Eastern Seas is so proud of being a Japanese that he is moved to copious tears when he hears praise of his country, but there is no suggestion that he finds the Irish, Spanish, Chinese, or Hungarian people he encounters alien from himself, nor does the wanderer suppose, as many Japanese still suppose, that foreigners, by definition, are incapable of understanding the grief of a Japanese. For all its childishness, this novel (like *Inspiring Instances of Statesmanship*) is deeply appealing in its idealism, especially its faith in the emergence of Japan as a strong, compassionate, and democratic country.[28]

Maeda Ai emphasizes different views of the case of Ireland, taken by Katō Hiroyuki (1836-1916), an enlightenment thinker, and Tōkai Sanshi, which puts the latter in a positive light as he

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[28]Keene (1984), 86.

stands by the non-hegemonic, and the anti-imperialist:

> Tōkai Sanshi's *Kajin no kigū* is a book of accusation, on the largest scale, of the Darwinist progressive views of civilization which had captivated "enlightenment" thinkers, ranging from Fukuzawa Yukichi to Katō Hiroyuki. Sanshi has political refugees from Spain, Ireland, Hungary and other countries narrate the tragic history of their nations deprived of independence, and forms a long list of crimes that Europeanhegemonic nations had forcibly committed in the name of civilization. (. . .)
> (. . .) Contemporary readers must have naturally sensed another history, contrasting with that seen from progressive perspectives. While they studied in classrooms Parley's [i.e., Samuel G. Goodman's] and [William] Swinton's History of Nations, which traces [François] Guizot and [Henry Thomas] Buckle's history of civilizations, *Kajin no kigū* demonstrated for the readers another possible version of world history, narrated from the viewpoint of the non-European world.[29]

While Maeda and others do not forget to lament the increasing inclination toward an imperialist stance implicit in later volumes of *Kajin no kigū*, the novel nonetheless embodies a radically different vision of world history from the "official" versions taught in the classrooms of early Meiji, and thus suggests other paths that could have been taken by modern Japan. Thus, in *Kajin no kigū* we see unexplored possibilities not only in modern Japanese literature, but in history as well.

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[29]Maeda (1971), 14-5.

provided. She also has learned that Guohe Zheng of Ohio State University is currently working on a Ph.D. dissertation dedicated to *Kajin no kigū*, focusing on historical representation and change in ideological stances of the author--a work that is eagerly anticipated.

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