

EARLY MODERN JAPAN

An Interdisciplinary Journal

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The editors welcome preliminary inquiries about manuscripts for publication in Early Modern Japan. Please send queries to Philip Brown, Early Modern Japan, Department of History, 230 West 17th Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210 USA or, via e-mail to brown.113@osu.edu. All scholarly articles are sent to referees for review.

Books for review and inquiries regarding book reviews should be sent to Glynne Walley, Review Editor, Early Modern Japan, 2661 Portland St. #6, Eugene, OR 97405. E-mail correspondence may be sent to tgwalley@gmail.com. Readers wishing to review books are encouraged to specify their interests in an e-mail to the Book Review Editor, Glynne Walley.

From the Editor:**編集者のメッセージ**

1) A Call for Manuscripts: Early Modern Japan, The State of the Field 2010. In Spring, 2000, *EMJ*, with support from the East Asian Studies Center and the Center for Japanese Studies at The Ohio State University, sponsored a conference on the state of the field of Early Modern Japanese Studies. Participants assembled in Columbus, Ohio, to explore developments in the field, primarily since it began to occupy considerable interest in the 1970s and 1980s. Essays and bibliographies from that conference were published in *EMJ* over three issues in the Spring and Fall 2002 and Spring 2003 issues. At the time, *EMJ* was a strictly print journal, but each of these issues sold very well – about 700 copies each. (Digital copies of the essays and bibliographies are available on-line along with all *EMJ* back issues at

<https://kb.osu.edu/dspace/handle/1811/583>)

Ten years have elapsed since that time, and a number of colleagues have expressed interest in seeing updates to those essays.

EMJ would be pleased to receive proposals for essays to review the State of the Field from interested authors. While broadly conceived essays on the order of the original collection would be ideal (religion and thought, art history, literature and the performing arts, socio-economic history, political history, and foreign affairs), proposals for somewhat more narrowly focused essays are also welcome. Interested authors, please contact *EMJ* editor Philip Brown at brown.113@osu.edu.

2) Some reminders for other potential submissions:

a) *EMJ* has a long-standing interest in proposals for thematically linked essays and welcomes thematically linked submissions of multiple manuscripts. Note, however, that each manuscript will be individually evaluated by referees.

b) As always, we welcome submission of individual scholarly articles, but in addition, we are also interested in translations, discussions of teaching, and other professionally oriented materials that do not normally appear in scholarly

journals. Authors should feel free to contact the editor at brown.113@osu.edu with inquiries.

EMJNet at the AAS. The Early Modern Japan Network was first formed to support the presence of panels and papers on early modern Japan at the Association for Asian Studies. To that end, we act as sponsors for panel proposals submitted to the AAS Annual Meeting Program Committee as well as sponsoring our own meeting in conjunction with the AAS Annual Meeting. People interested in having EMJNet support for proposals submitted to the AAS or proposing panels at the EMJnet meeting held in conjunction with the AAS should contact Philip Brown (brown.113@osu.edu) early in the process of developing the panel proposal. For our own meeting we have typically sponsored one or two panels, but we have had as many as four or five in the past.

This year's three programs focus on status in Tokugawa society, explorations of Edo-period literature and the blurring of genres, and case studies of information networking in the realm of Western Science (*rangaku*). Panels will be held on Thursday afternoon (March 25) and Friday evening (March 26, details noted below, including panel and paper abstracts).

PLEASE MAKE A NOTE OF THE DATE, TIME AND PLACE. Like all "meetings in conjunction" this panel will not be listed in the formal AAS Program (announcements listing the panel will be available at registration).

Panel I: Rethinking Status and Society in Tokugawa Japan: Executioners, Firefighters, and Outcaste Soldiers in the Bakumatsu Period

Organizer: Steven Wills, East Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University

Chair: Scott Lineberger, Modern Languages and Literatures, Beloit College

Place/Time: Thursday, March 25, 1:30 p.m., Marriott Hotel Rm. #501, 13:30

This panel presents a new view of early modern Japanese society by examining the strategies marginal groups used in their attempts to manipulate the Tokugawa status system to their own benefit. The three papers show how low-status groups struggled to improve their social standing, both their successes and failures shedding light

on the degree to which early modern society allowed for innovation and flexibility. While the social history of Japanese outcastes has often been relegated to its own historiographical niche, this panel juxtaposes the experience of outcastes with that of the day laborers who fought fire in Edo in an effort to engage in a more inclusive discussion of marginality and discrimination. Maren Ehlers examines the complex arrangements between officials in the domain of Ōno and the *hinin* they employed as torturers and executioners, demonstrating how the *hinin* negotiated the terms of their service. Steven Wills picks up the theme of frustrated aspirations in his discussion of disputes between firefighters and Tokugawa officials in Edo, where the firefighters' desire for greater social recognition conflicted with officials' interest in maintaining the status quo. Colin Jaundrill looks at military reforms in Chōshū in the mid-1860s, when the domain organized infantry companies of outcastes who joined the fight against the shogunate in hopes of achieving their own emancipation. During this short window of opportunity, outcastes pursued social mobility by taking on military duties, yet domain authorities found ways to impose limits on the social consequences of their military reforms. Collectively, these papers seek a deeper understanding of the contested process by which groups in early modern Japan demarcated the boundaries of social status.

Employing Executioners: *Hinin* Duty and the Flexibility of Local Status in Tokugawa Japan, Maren Ehlers, East Asian Studies Department, Princeton University

In early modern Japan, the *hinin* (beggars) were put in charge of important public functions, such as town patrols and police investigations, torture, execution, and the management of beggar relief. But even though the *hinin* constituted one of the major status categories in the Tokugawa order, there was no countrywide uniformity in the tasks they performed. This was because these tasks were taken on separately by local groups of *hinin* as duties (*goyō*) for local domain or bakufu authorities, delivered in exchange for begging privileges and recognition of their role as beggar bosses. Changes also occurred over time: even as late as the Bakumatsu period new elements were

added to the set of duties assigned to individual groups of *hinin*.

This paper explores the local negotiation of *hinin* duty by highlighting both its flexibility and limitations. The example of the *hinin* association of Ōno domain in Echizen province, known collectively as the “Koshirō,” is particularly instructive. During the 1840s and 1850s, the Koshirō renegotiated their duty as torturers and were employed as executioners for the first time. The domain also implemented a scheme to increase the membership of the Koshirō group to enable them to cope with their expanded burden. But the means by which the domain achieved these objectives were anything but straightforward. Domain employment of the Koshirō came to require a complex set of arrangements involving generous incentives and trade-offs with other status groups. These transactions reveal the extent to which even a reform-minded and innovative domain of the Bakumatsu period was bound by the principles of status rule in its local administration.

A Line in the Ashes: Negotiating the Boundaries of Firefighter Status in Nineteenth-Century Edo, Steven Wills, East Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University

Edo's townsman firefighting brigade, the *machibikeshi kumiai*, was established in 1718 as one of the reforms of the Kyōhō period (1716-1736), and by the end of the eighteenth century these commoners were primarily responsible for protecting the shogun's capital from fire. Day laborers of humble origins and limited skills, the firemen belonged to the lower stratum of Edo society, but they learned to use the city's reliance on their services for leverage as they fought for material benefits and greater social recognition. Their story provides new insight into the nature of Tokugawa society, highlighting the malleability of status boundaries and the ways that marginal groups attempted to exploit the flexibility of the early modern status system.

Townsmen firefighters were notorious for fighting in the streets, but their non-violent methods for addressing grievances and negotiating settlements have drawn little attention. This paper examines two cases from the mid-nineteenth century involving disputes between representatives from the townsman brigade, officials from the

neighborhoods they served, and bakufu administrators. Showing a sophisticated understanding of Edo bureaucracy, the firemen struggled to define the privileges to which their work entitled them, but both incidents demonstrate that the limited gains they won for themselves could be contested or renegotiated at any time.

Three Bushels of Rice: Outcaste Status and Soldiering in Bakumatsu Chōshū, D. Colin Jaundrill, History, Providence College

In the mid-1860s, Japan's samurai lost their centuries-long monopoly on the profession of arms, as men of non-warrior status began serving in the ranks of shogunal and domainal armies. A combination of foreign pressure and impending domestic political crisis drove far-reaching military reforms on both the central and regional levels. One domain that experimented with new kinds of military organizations was Chōshū, which famously employed volunteer units composed of a mix of samurai and commoners. Although peasants had occasionally served as military auxiliaries and menials in the past, their use on the front lines transgressed prevailing notions on the proper social status of fighting men. But Chōshū's reforms went further: in 1864, the domain's political leadership organized volunteer infantry companies composed of outcastes (*eta* and *hinin*). Hundreds of outcaste men fought in Chōshū's rebellion against the Tokugawa shogunate, with the hope that battlefield service might earn them emancipation. Their enlistments marked the only major military use of outcastes until the Meiji government's 1873 Conscription Ordinance. By that time, military service was no longer seen as a path to advancement, but rather as an obligation for all male subjects of the young nation.

This paper uses outcaste soldiers as a window into a moment of illusory social mobility in the mid-1860s. The impending collapse of the Tokugawa status system, combined with a pervasive sense of emergency, authorized political authorities to stretch the boundaries of the profession of arms in order to recruit men from the margins, be they commoners or outcastes. But the same authorities found ways to mitigate the consequences of reform, whether by assuming more direct control over their fighting men or inscribing old

status distinctions in new terms. Like other non-samurai who took up arms in the mid-1860s, Chōshū's outcaste soldiers pursued a mobility that was made possible—then made superfluous—by the disintegration of the Tokugawa status system and the Meiji state's efforts to produce national subjects.

Discussant: Amy Stanley, History, Northwestern University

Reading Between the Lines: Tokugawa Texts as Performance

Organizer: Satoko Shimazaki, Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Colorado, Boulder

Chair: Scott Lineberger, Modern Languages and Literatures, Beloit College

Place/Time: Thursday, March 25, 3:30 p.m., Marriott Hotel Rm. #501

The Tokugawa period witnessed a sudden explosion of literary production in various forms and genres: *kanazōshi*, collections of *waka* and *haikai*, *yomihon*, *kibyōshi*, *gōkan*, *kokkeibon*, as well as a variety of texts connected to performance and the theater, from *jōruri shōhon* to narratives based on the *kabuki* stage. Many of these do not fit comfortably within the parameters of the modern notions of *bungaku* or literature, and can be interpreted only inadequately through approaches based on the practice of "reading" as it is generally understood. Tokugawa-period texts often seem bewilderingly allusive by contemporary standards, for instance, precisely because they emerged in a cultural field with unstable boundaries between art, ritual, theater, literature, history and other cultural discourses. The three papers in this panel set out different methods of analyzing and discussing Tokugawa-period texts that participate in and draw on various genres and practices. Moving beyond notions such as "literature," "poetry," and "drama," we attempt to situate Tokugawa-period texts in contexts more firmly grounded in ways of seeing characteristic of the particular times and places that produced them. Scott Lineberger will show how notions of ritual can augment our understanding of Matsunaga Teitoku's *haikai*; Janice S. Kanemitsu will explore the intersection of text, print, and history

in a period piece by Chikamatsu Monzaemon; and Satoko Shimazaki will interrogate the boundary between “literature” and “drama,” reading and viewing, in early nineteenth-century Japan.

Haikai as Ritual: Matsunaga Teitoku and Kyoto Artistic Salons at the Dawn of the Edo Period, Scott Lineberger, Modern Languages & Literatures, Beloit College

Modern scholarship on Matsunaga Teitoku (1571-1654) is rife with contradictions and paradoxes. Literary histories extol Teitoku’s seminal role in creating haikai poetry, however this praise is predictably tempered by a caveat that little, if any, of his poetry—much less his other writings—is worthy of scholarly attention. He is lauded as an enlightened thinker for his efforts at educating the merchants and artisans of Kyoto, but conversely he is maligned for his role in propagating elitist medieval secret poetry transmissions. Furthermore, he is depicted as an innovator for experimenting with comic *kyōka* poems, but belittled for his hackneyed and uninspired *waka*. By exploring these incongruities this paper will uncover the combination of false assumptions that have distorted our understanding of Teitoku, his era, and by extension the evolution of haikai poetry. In particular, starting from Masaoka Shiki’s provocative suggestion that while “hokku is literature, linked verse (*renga*) is not,” I will discuss the advantages of viewing the kinds of linked verse Teitoku composed as ritual rather than as “literature.” By delving into the sometimes murky social-historical conditions of Kyoto’s cultural salons during the late-Momoyama and early-Tokugawa periods, this paper provides a vivid picture of Teitoku’s eventful life and colorful character and a richer hermeneutic model for understanding Teitoku’s writings.

Courtesans, Christians, and Catastrophe: The Shimabara Uprising Retold, Janice S. Kanemitsu, Asian Studies, Cornell University

Every narrative provides a journey. Written by Chikamatsu Monzaemon for the puppet theatre, *Keisei Shimabara kairu kassen* (Courtesans at the Shimabara Toad War, 1719) offers both spectators and readers fresh delights and surprising insights as they travel through a landscape of changing social expectations. This period piece is

a satirical revisit of the Shimabara Uprising quelled in 1638, set within the fictional universe of the Soga Brothers. While introducing the newly literate urbanite to theatrical and literary allusions, historical legend, and urban hearsay, it simultaneously tickles the savvy bone of even the most knowing connoisseur. Benefiting from the availability of historical narratives, theatrical scripts, and other printed texts, *Keisei Shimabara* frazzles — with an innovative intensity — the boundaries of text, theatricality, and historical veracity.

This paper begins by examining Chikamatsu’s construction of a Soga-based fictional universe during a time predating the established notion of *sekai*. After exploring the playwright’s approach to spectacle and narrative in his post-kabuki years as exemplified by the characterization of the youthful Christian martyr Amakusa Shirō, I hope to demonstrate the tremendous extent to which Chikamatsu’s period pieces served to both entertain and educate their audiences — plays for the puppet theatre, such as this one, formed a most powerful socializing force.

All the Text is a Stage: Literature and Theater in the Tokugawa Period, Satoko Shimazaki, Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Colorado, Boulder

In the late Tokugawa period, kabuki productions, both real and imagined, were routinely used as material for illustrated booklets (*gōkan*) in the form of *shōhon utsushi* (literally “transcribed scripts”); in the Kamigata region, meanwhile, a type of publication in the style of a reading book (*yomihon*) developed that allowed readers to feel as though they were actually reading a kabuki script. These works, written by playwrights and *gesaku* writers, might reproduce or describe stage settings and depict actors in illustrations using the technique of the likeness (*nigaoe*), striving in a variety of ways to create an aura of theatricality on the page. Seemingly literary in nature, such works are meant to be read as though they belong to the world of the theater.

This paper considers the position of texts and writing in the theater, on the one hand, and the presence of the theatre in books, on the other. Focusing specifically on kabuki productions, scripts, and textual reworkings of Tsuruya Nan-

boku's (1755-1829) *Tōkaidō Yotsuya kaidan* (*Tōkaidō Ghost Stories at Yotsuya*, 1825) in *gōkan* and *yomihon* formats, I demonstrate that in the Tokugawa period the boundary between the theatrical and the literary was by no means clear and propose a more fluid model for thinking about early 19th century theater and literature as mutually implicated fields of cultural production.

Discussant: Scott Lineberger, Modern Languages and Literatures, Beloit College

Networks of Knowledge: The Dissemination of Western Science in Early Modern Japan

Organizer: Martha Chaiklin, History, University of Pittsburgh

Place/Time: Friday, March 26, 7-9 p.m., Marriott Hotel Rm. #401

Today scholars no longer regard early modern Japan as closed, despite the fact that their counterparts in the Edo period could not travel abroad, and had only the limited and variously talented Dutch East India Company servants to serve as teachers. The intellectually curious had to rely on other methods to learn and transmit knowledge. This panel examines the spheres of exchange employed by *rangakusha* to learn about and practice western science and convey that knowledge to others. Terence Jackson offers an in-depth look at one text, Ōtsuki Gentaku's *Rikubutsu shinshi* (New treatise on six things, 1786), to understand how incorporation of western knowledge was transmitted through publication. Anne Jannetta examines the significance of Japan's first medical journal, *Taisei mei-i ikō*, as a vehicle in the creation of new scientific community based on western knowledge. Federico Marcon looks at the dissemination of knowledge across social lines through personal contacts; and finally, Martha Chaiklin examines transmission of via analysis of the material culture of knowledge. As a whole, these papers offer concrete analysis of the amorphous concept of intellectual influence and enhance our understanding Japan's active engagement with the outside world during the early modern period.

Monstrous Medicine: Ōtsuki Gentaku's "Rikubutsu shinshi" Terence Jackson, History, Adrian College

Ōtsuki Gentaku's *Rikubutsu shinshi* (New treatise on six things, 1786) was instrumental in establishing his school of Dutch Scholarship (*rangakusha*) in Japan. It combined his knowledge of Japanese and Chinese-style medicines with information from newly imported European medical texts. While his treatise addressed six different medicines, the most celebrated sections discuss the uses of mermaid flesh (*ningyo*) and a debate about the origins of the Dutch-imported medicine, *ikkaku*: did it come from a unicorn or a sea creature? While modern observers would not view his approach to *materia medica* as scientific, and while Gentaku may not have fully understood what we refer to as the Scientific Revolution, he was applying new understandings of natural history learned from Western books. Historians have criticized Dutch studies scholars for never fully grasping the importance of the Western science; however, a comparative analysis of Gentaku's treatise with medical works by European contemporaries reveals significant similarities and indicates that he respected key elements of the Scientific Revolution. In *Rikubutsu shinshi* he utilized both the data and argumentation from Western works to explain the medical efficacy of unicorn horns (*ikkaku*), saffron, nutmeg, mumia, mushrooms (*epuriko*), and mermaid bones/flesh (*ningyo*). In *Rikubutsu shinshi*, Gentaku argues that European medical knowledge was essential to the future well-being of Japan and should be considered authoritative.

Translation and the Transmission of Medical Knowledge in Nineteenth Century Japan, Ann Jannetta, History, University of Pittsburgh

Medical knowledge had well-recognized routes of transmission in early modern Japan. These routes included an apprenticeship system, a medical lineage system, domain and private medical schools, plus the medical texts that were produced by and circulated through these institutions. The importance of Chinese language texts in the formal transmission of medical knowledge in Japan meant that translation was an integral part of medical learning. The great majority of Japanese medical texts were written in Chinese

kanbun style. This insured that the information contained in both native and foreign medical texts was limited to Japan's medical elite. With the arrival of and interest in Dutch medical texts in 18th century, Dutch texts also were translated into *kanbun*. This paper looks at the introduction of new translation practices with the publication of *Taisei mei-i ikō*, Japan's first medical journal, edited by Mitsukuri Genpō and published between 1836 and 1842. It explores the rationale for introducing new conventions in medical writing in the 19th century; compares the content and format of *Taisei mei-i ikō* to early European medical journals; and evaluates the significance of the publication of a medical journal as a conduit for medical knowledge.

Exchanging Goods, Trading Ideas: Commerce and Knowledge in Kimura Kenkadō's Salon
Federico Marcon, History, University of Virginia

Kimura Kenkadō (1736-1802), wealthy sake merchant and investor in the Osaka housing market, was also a respected amateur scholar and quite a gifted composer of poetry in Chinese. He was the generous host of the best minds of his time, most of whom he also maintained as patron. Painters like Yosa Buson, Uragami Gyokudō and Maruyama Ōkyo, men of letters like Ueda Akinari and Motoori Norinaga, thinkers like Minagawa Kien, rangaku scholars like Ōtsuki Gentaku and Shiba Kōkan, and naturalists like Ono Ranzan and Ōdaka Motoyasu, in short the best minds of the period were all part of his large network who regularly attended discussion meetings and very educated convivial events in his salon. He was, so to say, the engine that kept alive a small-scale Japanese "Republic of Letters" where gifted individuals freely met and exchanged ideas without any concern of status and class distinction.

Kenkadō was also a collector of exotic plants and animals, his "fantastic stones and shell" still in display at the Osaka Museum of Natural History. His wunderkammer was an attraction for curious of all social standing. This paper focuses on Kenkadō's passion for natural history (*hon-zōgaku*) and argues that his zeal for collecting and keenness for ordering his specimens in precise taxonomical charts was not at all disinterested and unrelated to his commercial activities, as it has often been claimed. On the contrary, the

case of Kenkadō suggests how the development of natural history, in early modern Japan as in early modern Europe, was strictly connected with the expansion of trade and the emergence of merchant capitalist dynamics.

The Cutting Edge: Western Medical Instruments in the Rangaku Community
Martha Chaiklin, History, University of Pittsburgh

Material culture is the physical expression of the human mind. Every object contains implied knowledge. In early modern Japan, where contact with the West was limited to bureaucrats who had contact with the few Servants of the Dutch East India Company and the books they brought, articles of European material culture had a special impact. The study of Western science in Japan began through interest in medicine. To practice techniques learned from the doctors or the books required Western surgical instruments and other tools. Western scientific knowledge was therefore implicit in understanding how to correctly utilize these instruments. This paper will present a "cultural biography of things" to understand the commodification of knowledge. It will show how information was conveyed through the import, application and production of Western medical implements. Dutch trade documents and the writings of Western and Japanese doctors will be utilized to demonstrate that even though Japanese doctors could soon obtain high quality domestically produced instruments, demand for imported items continued because of the implied knowledge they embodied.

Discussant: Michael Laver, History, Rochester Institute of Technology

(The Early Modern Japan Network is a sub-committee of the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies. To promote the field of Early Modern Japanese Studies it sponsors panel proposals for the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, holds its own independent panel sessions in conjunction with the Association, and publishes a refereed journal, *Early Modern Japan: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. For further information on any of these activities, contact Philip Brown, brown.113@osu.edu.)

When Eccentricity Is Virtue:
Virtuous Deeds in
Kinsei kijinden
(*Eccentrics of Our Times*, 1790)*

©Patti Kameya, Kent State University

As found in the Daoist classic the *Zhuangzi*, the term *kijin* (Ch. *jiren* 畸人) evokes a tradition that reveres difference and individuality.¹ In Tokugawa Japan Daoist ideas, particularly that of the *kijin*, enjoyed a great deal of popularity among literati (J. *bunjin*, Ch. *wenren*), people with scholarly, literary, and other creative aspirations. Merchant class scholar Ban Kōkei (1733-1806) aspired to be like a *kijin*, taking up a Daoist pen name, and many of his friends did the same.² Given this, one might conclude that in his biographical sketch collection *Kinsei kijinden* (*Eccentrics of Our Times*, 1790) Kōkei filled the pages solely with stories of crazy Daoist-style sages, or eccentric artists.

To the consternation of his friends, however, Kōkei devoted the opening chapter of *Kinsei kijinden* to the idea of virtue, rather than eccentricity per se, including many people known for their virtuous deeds (J. *tokkō*, Ch. *dexing* 德行) such as Confucian scholars Nakae Tōju (1608-1648) and Kaibara Ekiken (1630-1714). In his

* The present form of this work was completed in part with funds from the Research Council of Kent State University. Many thanks to Tim Scarnecchia and Tanya Maus, who gave helpful comments on this version of my project.

¹ See, for example, a reference to *kijin* (translated as "the man alone") in Martin Palmer, trans., *The Book of Chuang Tzu* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 54-55.

² Kōkei's name Kandenshi ("child of the fallow field") recalls the Daoist thought of Zhuang Zhou and Laozi celebrating the useless. The writer Ueda Akinari (1734-1809) used the name Senshi Kijin, and poet Chōmu (1732-1795) drew his name from a story of Zhuang Zhou dreaming he was a butterfly.

introduction, Kōkei recounted his friends' opposition: "This account . . . has many people of virtuous deeds (*tokkō no hito*) appearing one after another. We shouldn't call them *kijin*. Isn't this the standard way (*tsune no michi*) people normally follow? What do you mean by this?"³ Kōkei also interspersed stories of virtuous deeds throughout the remaining four volumes, lending the whole an air of reverence, rather than hilarity. Such stories accorded equal dignity to a range of classes and renown, from the Ōbaku monk Tetsugen (1630-1682) in the second chapter, to merchant Muromachi Sōhō (dates unknown) in the fourth, to a humble Yamashina farmer in the third. Since Kōkei wrote of virtuous deeds throughout the text, rather than only in the beginning, his writing suggests a personal commitment to ideas of virtue. Given this, readers cannot ignore the idea of virtuous deeds in *Kinsei kijinden*.

Considering the historical context of *Kinsei kijinden*, it might appear that Kōkei included the "virtuous deeds" stories to appease Tokugawa authorities. Without a doubt, Tokugawa intellectual and commercial concerns not only accommodated power, but also used it for its own purposes. In *Japan in Print*, Mary Elizabeth Berry explored how the creation of the "library of public information" negotiated Tokugawa authority on the one hand, and the market economy, which encouraged freedom on the other.⁴ This explanation seems appropriate since *Kinsei kijinden* appeared during the Kansei Reforms (1787-1793), a time when Chief Senior Councilor Matsudaira Sadanobu (1758-1829) overhauled government bureaucracy and finances. The reforms included the 1790 Proscription of Heterodoxy (*igaku no kin*) that required Song Confucianism in shogunal academies, and restricted publica-

³ Ban Kōkei, *Kinsei kijinden*, ed. Munemasa Isoo (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1972) [hereafter *KKD*], 9.

⁴ See Berry, *Japan in Print* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 160-173. For an extended discussion on the tensions between public and private spaces through art, see Mary Elizabeth Berry, "Public Life in Authoritarian Japan," *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 133-165.

tions that questioned the government or threatened public morals.⁵ Although the Kansei Reforms did precipitate incidents such as the 1791 punishment of comical prose writer Santō Kyōden (1761-1816), they did not create ideological uniformity among the populace. Since the intellectual landscape continued to foster multiple and often syncretic strains of Daoist thought, Confucianism, and Buddhism, we cannot explain the "virtuous deeds" stories in terms of a desire to conform to official policy. Furthermore, the Kansei Reforms and *Kinsei kijinden* fall within a tight time window, making a cause-and-effect relationship unlikely. Kōkei's introduction is dated the sixth month of 1788, suggesting that the manuscript was already complete twelve months after Sadanobu took office.⁶ Since Kōkei's writing reflects a great deal of care, he probably did not complete the entire manuscript in a year reacting to the newly restrictive environment. In each of the one hundred-plus stories, Kōkei used language styles to suit the individual in question, with more colloquial language for commoners and more formal prose for scholars.⁷ This suggests Kōkei's commitment to showing off the distinctive qualities of individuals, not ideological conformity.

A look at the field of biographical writing at this time suggests that *Kinsei kijinden* was a response to the official corruption and popular unrest that inspired the Kansei Reforms, rather than a response to the Kansei Reforms themselves. In 1789, Matsudaira Sadanobu commissioned a biographical collection that resembled the virtuous deeds stories in *Kinsei kijinden*. Thus, Kōkei and Sadanobu both collected stories of notable individuals in the recent past, with the implicit purpose of teaching their readers. Although the organizing principles of these collections differed, they both appealed to a common moral heritage. *Kōgiroku* (*Record of Righteous-*

ness and Filial Piety) compiled biographies of exemplary people — faithful servants, chaste wives, filial children. This collection saw print in 1801, eleven years after the publication of *Kinsei kijinden*. While *Kōgiroku* outlined the merits of people with righteousness and filial piety, rather than *kijin*, many of them had also appeared in *Kinsei kijinden*.⁸

Less than a decade before *Kinsei kijinden* was completed, another biographical collection appeared that also used stories of unusual people to recognize and recover a shared past. *Hōsa kyōshaden* (*Biographies of Nagoya Madmen*, 1779) celebrated difference and deplored the self-interested behavior of society. As it was never published, it did not enjoy the same influence as *Kinsei kijinden*, but in the introductions we can see a similar impulse to evoke the past.⁹ In his introduction, Ban Kōkei hinted at a nostalgic personal motivation to write: "[I will tell] only of my fond remembrances these days of things that stuck in my heart, the pathos and humor of people of old about whom I have heard over the years, and of my own friends."¹⁰ The author of *Hōsa kyōshaden* also wished to write of strange people in response to a changed world: "And so, why are there so many of those petty people over-running society with their honeyed words, acting like conventional worldly people in the decadent Final Age! I have strong feelings about this. Following those sentiments, I write this preface sighing and shedding bitter tears."¹¹

⁵ See *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, s.v. "Kansei Reforms," and *Heibonsha sekai daihyakka jiten*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Kansei kaikaku."

⁶ See *KKD*, 12.

⁷ See Furusō Masami, "*Kinsei kijinden*: Tayōna jinbutsuzō wo kaita gabun denki shū," in *Koten no jiten* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1986), 12:43.

⁸ *Kokushi daijiten*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Kōgiroku." For further discussion of *Kōgiroku* in relation to *Kinsei kijinden*, see Patti Kameya, "Paupers, Poets, and Paragons: Eccentricity as Virtue in *Kinsei kijinden* (*Eccentrics of Our Times*, 1790)" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2006), 212.

⁹ Nakano Mitsutoshi, introduction to *Kinsei kijinden* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2005), 13-14.

¹⁰ *KKD*, 10.

¹¹ Tajihiko Ikuo and Nakano Mitsutoshi, eds., *Tōdai Edo bakemono, Zaishin kiji, Kana sesetsu*, Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei 97 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000), 46. Translation referred to W. Puck Brecher, "Making Do with Madness: Applications of Aesthetic Eccentricism

By pairing *Hōsa kyōshaden* and *Kinsei kijinden*, we can understand a larger body of work that identifies a community defined by a shared heritage between writer and reader. The author of *Hōsa kyōshaden* branded his compilation with the place name of Hōsa, identifying a community blessed by the presence of "madmen." By dubbing his work *Kinsei kijinden*, Kōkei defined his community in terms of time, specifically "our times," a time shared between himself and his readers. *Kinsei kijinden* took its place in the catalogue of publisher Zeniya Sōshirō, among other works affirming a common culture through a range of artistic and intellectual activity. Although there are several works on *kyōshi* (comical Chinese poems), the bulk of the catalog is devoted to poetry and *sencha* (steeped tea). There are also a number of medical and Confucian texts.¹² Looking at Kōkei's work as a whole, we can also confirm Kōkei's concern with community identity, rather than light entertainment. Kōkei's other work is comprised largely of serious writing addressing two aspects of identity widely debated at this time, namely ethics and Japanese language studies. Kōkei headed a school of Japanese prose writing (*wabun*) and enjoyed fame in his time as one of the four best Japanese-style poets of Kyoto.¹³ In 1792 and 1793, he wrote two *kakun*, or household moral codes, demonstrating his commitment to ethical

issues.¹⁴

If ethics were Kōkei's main concern, why would he use the figure of the *kijin*? It is here that Kōkei departed from Sadanobu's *Kōgiroku*. While *Kōgiroku* was written to foster Confucian values, Kōkei wrote *Kinsei kijinden* to celebrate the idea of individual commitment to one's own values. In other words, Kōkei supported the idea of individualism, rather than conformity, as the main idea behind *kijin*. Kōkei reconciled ethics with the idea of *kijin* by pairing virtuous deeds with the idea of "wonder," an idea that inspired awe because of difference from the ordinary. In the following passages he linked virtuous deeds with the ideograph for wonder 奇 (J. *ki*, Ch. *qí*), rather than 崎 (J. *ki*, Ch. *jī*) of *kijin*, and encouraged his readers to understand virtue in terms of novelty. Thus, by connecting the ideas of virtue and individuality, Kōkei wrote *Kinsei kijinden* as an ethical text, and a fundamentally moral project.¹⁵ Concluding his account of Kaibara Ekiken, he wrote, "Before and after Jōkyō and Genroku [1684-1704] there were many famous Confucian scholars, and wondrous deeds and wondrous stories (*kikō*, *kiwa*); now with just these two teachers, Tōju and Ekiken, I make the opening move of this chapter on virtuous deeds (*tokkō no kan*)."¹⁶ To express the idea of "opening move," Kōkei used the characters 嚆矢, a term that is ordinarily read *kōshi* (heralding arrow) but was glossed as *hajime* (beginning). This term appeared in the context of a *Zhuangzi* passage that instructed to allow people to live freely and revel in their individual strengths:

[In response to the question, "If the world is not ruled, how can you improve people's hearts?"] Laozi said, "Take care

in Tokugawa and Meiji Japan" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2005), 440. See also Brecher's discussion on 149-50, 152-53.

¹² Sasaki Harutaka, comp., *Wakatakeshū* (Kyoto: Sasaki Chikuhōrō, 1975). For further discussion of the publisher, see Munemasa Isoo, *Kinsei Kyoto shuppan bunka no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Dōhōsha Shuppan, 1982), 45.

¹³ For Kōkei's *wabun* activity, see Kazama Seishi, "Ban Kōkei to *wabun no kai*" in *Ronshū kinsei bungaku*, vol. 5, *Akinari to sono jidai: kyōdō kenkyū*, ed. Takada Mamoru (Tokyo: Benseisha, 1994), 279-80. For Kōkei's poetic credentials, see Munemasa Isoo, "Shinninhō shin'ō wo meguru geibunka tachi," in *Nihon kinsei bun'en no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1977), 203-253.

¹⁴ For further discussion of Kōkei's *kakun*, see Patti Kameya, "When Businessmen Discuss Art: Communities of Arts and Ethics in Ōmi Merchant *kakun*," paper presented at the Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Chicago, Ill., March 28, 2009.

¹⁵ Nakano Mitsutoshi also addresses the ethical concerns of *Kinsei kijinden* in his introduction to *Kinsei kijinden*, especially p. 14.

¹⁶ *KKD*, 25.

how you play with people's hearts. People's hearts should not be shoved down or pushed up, for this yo-yoing up and down makes the heart either a prisoner or an avenging fury. . . . At rest, it is as deep as the abyss; when it is active, it is like a star in heaven. It races beyond anything that seeks to bind it, for this is in truth the heart of humanity!"¹⁷

Kōkei started *Kinsei kijinden* with Confucian scholars to celebrate their novelty, the wonder that they inspire. Thus, the virtuous teachers served to establish the concept of *kijin*, rather than stand as a foil for the more chaotic or "conventional" *kijin*.

By designating virtuous people (*tokkō no hito*) as *kijin*, Kōkei identified a moral crisis where virtuous deeds were rare. In this sense *Kinsei kijinden* shares its impulse with *Kōgiroku*. At the same time, in a departure from *Kōgiroku*, Kōkei raised a call to return to a more authentic time of following the "standard way" (*tsune no michi*) with *kijin* leading the way. In his introduction, Kōkei likened his society to a room full of drunks, where they have lost their ability to practice virtuous deeds. In this context, *kijin* appeared wondrous by being in touch with this lost past, and following the "standard way" of virtuous deeds: "[Considering people who do virtuous deeds is] like having a solitary sober person among people drinking into the night, forgetting the time and day. . . . [To] my own drunken eyes people devoted to the standard way (*tsune no michi*) appear wondrous (奇 *ki*). . . ." ¹⁸

In this way, Kōkei evoked an idea of individual virtue, where virtuous people followed their own paths as individuals, setting themselves apart from "people in society." In other words, their virtue itself made them individual and worthy of remark as *kijin*. Individual virtue encompassed not only attunement with an authentic "standard way," but also individual inclination. For Kōkei, initiative should arise not from promise of a reward, but from individual nature. In his introduction he continued, "compared to people in

society, regarding the elderly who work towards benevolence and righteousness, and the young who are loyal and filial, deeds of people like them ought to be called wondrous (奇 *ki*)."¹⁹

Since *Kinsei kijinden* identified the individual as a source of moral authority, the "virtuous deeds" stories cannot be explained in terms of yielding to Tokugawa authority. Rather than power, this study will focus on understandings of individual moral authority. This will help us understand why Kōkei and his contemporaries chose to write of both aesthetic and ethical topics, and how a community of readers negotiated between authority and freedom. While I cannot confirm how all readers responded to *Kinsei kijinden*, I would like to suggest that *Kinsei kijinden* became popular in part because it both affirmed individual nature and resonated with readers' anxieties about the moral climate of their times.

In much current scholarship on eighteenth-century Japan, the wondrous *kijin* figure often appeared as a way to propose societal alternatives. While such work did not exclude the problem of ethics, it tended to focus on *kijin* as outsiders or eccentrics in terms of artistic and intellectual expression. On the artistic side, Lawrence Marceau described the world of the "bunjin bohemian," and in his discussion of eccentric artists John Rosenfield translated the word *kijin* as "extraordinary persons."²⁰ In the intellectual realm Tetsuo Najita noted the intersection between Confucianism and Daoism, writing of Confucian-trained scholar *kijin* as seekers of alternative ways to know the world.²¹ W. Puck Brecher

¹⁹ *KKD*, 9. Translation referred to Lawrence E. Marceau, *Takebe Ayatari: A Bunjin Bohemian in Early Modern Japan* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2004), 262-263.

²⁰ Marceau, *Takebe Ayatari*; John M. Rosenfield, *Extraordinary Persons: Japanese Artists (1560-1860) in the Kimiko and John Powers Collection* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 1988).

²¹ Tetsuo Najita, "History and Nature in Eighteenth-Century Tokugawa Thought," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 4, *Early*

¹⁷ Palmer, 84. Wade-Giles Romanization has been converted to Pinyin.

¹⁸ *KKD*, 9.

wrote of aesthetic eccentricism as a way to "[make] habitable an uncomfortable world."²² While Brecher mentioned the idea of Confucian influence in writings on *kijin* and other strange people, his work focused on the aesthetic aspects of this problem, rather than on ethics.²³

This study will directly address the ethical implications of intellectual and aesthetic eccentricism. In it, I will examine stories of "virtuous deeds" (*tokkō*) in *Kinsei kijinden* to demonstrate the essential relationship between *kijin* and virtue in the thought of Ban Kōkei, where *tokkō* is an enactment of personal potency rather than conformity to a moral norm. Specifically, I will show that *Kinsei kijinden* arose from several traditions where virtue is individual, by tracing storytelling and intellectual traditions in both Chinese sources and contemporaneous Japanese intellectual trends. Kōkei drew his ideas of individual nature as virtue from an ongoing tension in Chinese tradition between virtue as an individual trait and virtue as a norm, in texts such as the *Analects of Confucius* and the anecdote collection *Lienüzhuan* (*Stories of Exemplary Women*, Liu Xian, c. 1 c. B.C.E., hereafter *Exemplary Women*). Kōkei negotiated these conflicting poles through the idea of sincerity. More immediately, *tokkō* in *Kinsei kijinden* emerged from a tradition where *tokkō* characterized a wide range of people found in the Wei-Jin anecdote compilation *Shishuo xinyu* (*A New Account of Tales of the World*, hereafter *Tales of the World*). This study closes by contextualizing the idea of virtue in *Kinsei kijinden* within Tokugawa Japanese thought, namely Confucian scholars Itō Jinsai (1627-1705) and Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728). These scholars associated virtue with the individual, and opened the discussion of virtue to diversity rather than conformity. This idea of virtue as personal power informed the "virtuous deeds" stories in *Kinsei kijinden*.

Given the long-standing tradition of virtue as individual in early Chinese texts and Tokugawa thought, Kōkei might have written of virtue in *Kinsei kijinden* as a matter of course, rather than

out of conscious choice. Kōkei appears to have been the first to connect the idea of virtue specifically to the figure of the *kijin*, which Kōkei's contemporaries associated with Daoist texts. Kōkei's unconventional stance provoked a considerable literary response in his own times. Kōkei's friends did not agree with his wide-ranging interpretation of *kijin*, and one *kijin*-related text directly parodied Kōkei's concept. *Tōsei chijinden* (*Fools of These Times*, 1795) was a collection of stories of foolish people, focusing on the Osaka pleasure quarters. The author, who wrote under the pseudonym Tengō Dōjin (Crazy Tortoise Daoist Adherent), wrote:

Matters of virtuous deeds (*tokkō*) we will not put in at all. We will not discuss skill in poetry, writing, calligraphy, or pictures either because they do not relate to the classy aesthetic of the pleasure quarters (*sui*). If you ask why, it is because it resembles [the biographies of recluses] *Honchō tonshi* and *Fusō in'itsuden*, and it might be disagreeable to boors (*yabo*).²⁴

The writer's objections point out a central tension lying in *Kinsei kijinden*: the opposition between hilarity of foolish behavior, and virtuous, contemplative, and often eccentric recluses. This underscores that *Kinsei kijinden* more properly belongs among the accounts of recluses from ancient to medieval Japanese history than with the loud boorish humor of the pleasure quarters, and further demonstrates that in the eyes of his contemporaries, Kōkei's work cannot be placed alongside that of Santō Kyōden. Writings such as this show a surprised response to Kōkei's pairing of virtue and eccentricity.

Instead of opposing ideas of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, this study will address how individu-

Modern Japan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 645-59.

²²Brecher, 25.

²³Brecher, 21-29, 108-10, 150-159.

²⁴ *Tōsei chijinden*, in *Naniwa suijinden*, ed. Kaneko Kazumasa and Ōuchida Sadao (Kyoto: Kamigata Geibun Sōkan Kankōkai, 1983), 70. *Honchō tonshi* and *Fusō in'itsuden* are biographies of recluses published in the early Tokugawa Period. For further discussion of the relationship between *Tōsei chijinden* and *Kinsei kijinden* see Kameya, "Paupers, Poets, and Paragons," 197-200.

als were seen as moral beings amidst the diversity of thought in eighteenth-century Japan. By investigating the intersection between virtue and individuality, we can learn how Tokugawa Japanese might have seen *kijin* as actors of individual possibility, and consider how difference in early modern times might have defined a community positively rather than negatively. This study seeks to attain a broader understanding of difference and community identity in early modern times, before powerful influences such as mass media, the modern nation-state, and technology-centered conceptions of historical progress.

Virtue as Personal Potency

Virtue as it appears in *Kinsei kijinden* comes from pre-Confucian tradition, where virtue appears as a power of the individual. Although many of the "virtuous deeds" tales seem to confirm moral norms, Kōkei emphasized the idea of individual commitment, where the individuals' beliefs gave them the power to do extraordinary things. In effect, the virtuous deeds emerged from the individuals' inner natures rather than from inculcated ideology. In other words, moral power arose from the self rather than from community ideals.

From the time of Confucius there coexisted two meanings of virtue, virtue particular to an individual, and prescriptive moral virtue. While Confucius is credited with taking the former and steering it toward the latter, we see evidence of both continuing until Kōkei's time. In pre-Confucian tradition the ideograph *toku* 徳 (J. *toku*, Ch. *de*) signified "potency," as opposed to its conventional translation of "virtue." *Toku* was a specific property and power defining a person or object so that it might be as various as there are people. Contemporary scholarship on Chinese classics has also observed this idea of virtue as personal potency. A. C. Graham explained, "*De* [J. *toku*], which has often been translated as 'virtue' (to be understood as in 'the virtue of cyanide is to poison' rather than in 'virtue is its own reward'), has been traditionally used of the power, benign or baleful, to move

others without exerting physical force. . . ."25 Later scholars also maintained this distinction between the pre-Confucian and Confucian traditions. In his translation of the *Analects*, Edward Slingerland used capitalization to differentiate virtue as a norm from Virtue as an individual quality, showing that both forms coexisted in the *Analects*.26

Both *Kinsei kijinden* and the *Analects* linked individual virtue with the ability to accomplish goals, demonstrating pre-Confucian virtue. In both texts, people responded positively to virtue as a personal inner quality. In one passage of the *Analects*, Confucius' disciples attributed his effectiveness to his individual personality: "Our Master obtains [information about foreign governments] by being courteous, refined, respectful, restrained and deferential."²⁷ Because Confucius looked inward to attain his goals, rather than at his own motives, he could learn carefully guarded information. Confucius was effective because he worked from his own strengths, not because he followed customary rules. In notes to his translation, Slingerland captured the essence of this passage with a quote by Qing Neo-Confucian scholar Lu Longqi: "The sage seeks things by means of virtue, unlike ordinary people who seek things with their minds."²⁸

To discuss this idea of personal potency, Kōkei gravitated towards the idea of sincerity or *makoto* as a kind of moral power. Instead of societal values, sincerity addressed the individual's sense of fulfillment. Through this idea of sincerity, *kijin* could invest their actions with their inner personalities, and enjoy personal effectiveness, as

²⁵ A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (Chicago: Open Court, 1989), 13, quoted in Nanxiu Qian, *Spirit and Self in Medieval China: The Shih-shuo hsin-yü and Its Legacy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 127. Wade-Giles Romanization has been converted to Pinyin, Japanese gloss added in brackets.

²⁶ Edward Slingerland, trans., *Confucius Analects with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), xvii.

²⁷ Slingerland, 4.

²⁸ Slingerland, 5.

did Confucius in the passage mentioned earlier. In Kōkei's accounts, sincerity inspired a response in the natural world, demonstrating the power of personal virtue. For example, the woodcutter Seishichi was described thus: "he epitomized the sincerity (*makoto*) of filial piety." Seishichi's sincerity was expressed in his satisfaction over his great efforts, and in nature's response to his filial behavior. In the story, Seishichi completed two people's share of labor to buy rich foods for his mother, who had served as a wet nurse in a wealthy household. One day, as Seishichi prepared to go to purchase quail, two quails fell to the ground outside his house as if Heaven were responding to his filial intentions.²⁹ Given the poverty of the woodcutter, it would have been a large enough feat to simply feed the two of them. Instead, Seishichi cheerfully exerted the extra effort to satisfy his mother. Kōkei wrote of Seishichi as a person who acted filial as a matter of course, and his power to move nature arose from his sincerity.

Along with nature, people also responded to the sincerity of *kijin*, underscoring the link between virtue and individual power. In Kōkei's portrayal of Kameda Kyūbei, filial piety was an essential part of his personal potency. To express the idea of sincerity, Kōkei described Kyūbei's inner qualities instead of his actions alone. According to Kōkei, Kyūbei's neighbors "felt his filial heart in his constant comings and goings" where Kyūbei visited his father two or three times a day from the break of dawn, and appeared at the sound of a cough. Kyūbei's neighbors could not but yield to the power of his "filial heart": they tore down the walls of a vacant house to make it easier for him to reach his father.³⁰ Just as people of foreign lands responded to Confucius' personality by giving him the information he needed, Kyūbei's neighbors responded to his filial nature by facilitating his activity.

In addition to sincerity, stories of women in *Kinsei kijinden* manifested the idea of individual virtue as physical power and mental acuity, in the

²⁹ *KKD*, 44-46. Although elsewhere in the text *makoto* appears as the character 誠, in this story the term appears in phonetic script.

³⁰ *KKD*, 49-50.

fashion of prescriptive Chinese biographical precedents. In these stories Kōkei featured wifely virtue and heroic deeds alike. Closing the account of warrior wife Nagayama Shōko, Kōkei asserted that "Shōko's wifely virtue (*fu-toku*) is like that of stories of clever women, chaste women, brave women, and so forth written up honorably in Chinese books — no, I would say it even exceeds that."³¹ Chinese literature abounds with stories of heroic women, ranging from dynastic histories to individual works such as *Exemplary Women*. Although the precise impact of *Exemplary Women* in Tokugawa Japan is not clear, Song Confucian-inspired Ming editions of this text enjoyed repeated publication in Tokugawa Japan.³² *Exemplary Women* merits discussion here because it offers fertile ground for comparison in the portrayal of women as individuals.

Exemplary Women upheld women as both individuals of sparkling intellectual virtue, and paragons of morality and chastity. While earlier editions emphasized the former, Ming (1368-1644) editions prioritized the latter.³³ *Kinsei kijinden* echoed both *Exemplary Women* themes of personal sacrifice and individual intellectual virtue. More importantly, it featured the idea of virtue as personal potency through the idea of sincerity, through the story patterns and the language used to describe the women. One such story was originally written by Andō Tameakira (1659-1717) in an almanac-like work, *Nenzan uchigiki* (*Nenzan's Hearsay*, 1713), and was copied by Kōkei almost verbatim.³⁴ Evidence sug-

³¹ *KKD*, 32.

³² Shimomi Takao, "Ryū Kō *Retsujoden* kenkyū josetsu," in *Hiroshima Daigaku bungaku kiyō* 47, special issue (Hiroshima: Hiroshima Daigaku, 1987): 26, 38. The same information reappears in Shimomi Takao, *Ryū Kō Retsujoden no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tōkai Daigaku Shuppankai, 1989), 28, 39-40.

³³ Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998), 137-38.

³⁴ For the original text, see Andō Tameakira (Nenzan), *Nenzan uchigiki*, in *Zuihitsu taikan*, vol. 6, Chinsho bunko, ed. Tanabe Katsuya, Inoue

gests that Kōkei chose to copy Tameakira's work because of his high regard for Tameakira as a person, and for his work. Kōkei praised Tameakira's writing in *Kinsei kijinden*, stating that his writing revealed the "gentle, respectful" nature of the writer.³⁵ Because in some instances he referred to other sources without copying them, we might imagine that Kōkei copied Tameakira's words because they moved him, and because the spirit of the account matched what he wished to convey.³⁶ In any case, this account demonstrated how Kōkei's ideas of personal virtue resonated with those of others in his times.

Like Kōkei, Tameakira used language that reflected the idea of sincerity, in order to stress a relationship between Shōko's personality and others' responses to her. His vocabulary emphasized Shōko's emotions so that her actions resulted from her will, rather than from social conditioning. In Tameakira's account, Shōko's sincere personality showed through her care for a child that her servant conceived by her husband. Shōko adopted the servant's child as her own, and according to the account the child saw Shōko as his real mother.³⁷ Although Tameakira did not use the word *makoto*, he did use terms such as "loving care" (*aiiku*) and "abundant capacity for empathy" (*kannō no kotowari munashikarade*). Here, *kannō* 感応 is a Buddhist term for a "sincere heart" that reaches the gods and Buddhas. This term resembles the idea discussed earlier of sincerity influencing nature and people.³⁸

Both Tameakira and Kōkei described a woman's success resulting from her personal power guiding her actions. While the original meaning of *toku* meant to persuade without force, in the case of women *toku* gave them the strength to carry out force when necessary. Shōko's power seemed to emanate from her will, and al-

lowed her to act effectively. Tameakira's word choices connected Shōko's inner qualities with her effectiveness in the vignette where she killed an amorous intruder while her husband was away. He used the words *isagiyoki kokoromochi*, which can be translated as either "pure intention" or "ready intent," expressing both Shōko's courage in physically fending for herself, and her readiness to explain the events frankly to her husband. This word choice underscored her personal power, where Shōko remained above suspicion of keeping a lover, and the household could continue life as before.³⁹ In a similar spirit, Kōkei explicitly connected *kijin* individual personality to effectiveness in the story of a peasant woman known only as the wife of the woodcutter Shichihei. With the term *kokoro kikitaru* (literally "heart-mind being effective"), Kōkei linked her quick thinking and her brave action. When she went to look for her husband in the mountain, she found his abandoned pack in the road and an enormous snake hanging overhead. Surmising that the snake swallowed her husband, she rescued him by cutting the snake open with a sickle as it swallowed her.⁴⁰

In one case, Kōkei used the word *toku* to describe a situation that showed personal potency in failure. By including this story, Kōkei emphasized its power to move the reader. Kai Kuriko was killed in the middle of a landslide, and her body was found holding the hand of her younger biological son while carrying her twelve-year-old adopted child on her back. Her story spread throughout the land because she protected the adopted household heir over the child that she bore. Kōkei's language reflected his belief that Kuriko acted out of sincerity, rather than out of social conditioning. Kōkei wrote, "Due to this disaster, can't we say that this virtue (*toku*) showed all the more?"⁴¹

The stories of virtuous women in *Kinsei kijinden* crystallized the idea of virtue as personal, rather than as a set of societal standards. Kōkei was drawn to these figures for their qualities as individuals, namely their sincerity and effective-

Yorinori, Inoue Yorikuni, Umezono Ken, and Murase Kentarō (Tokyo: Kokusho shuppan kyōkai, 1911).

³⁵ *KKD*, 217.

³⁶ For example, see Kōkei's handling of the story of Hyōta in Kameya, "Paupers, Poets, and Paragons," 144-146.

³⁷ *KKD*, 31.

³⁸ Nakano Mitsutoshi, notes to *Kinsei kijinden* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2005), 37.

³⁹ *KKD*, 31-32. See also Andō Tameakira (Nenzan), 22-23.

⁴⁰ *KKD*, 35-37.

⁴¹ *KKD*, 32-34.

ness. The next section will address the idea of virtuous action in biography, shifting the focus of this discussion from the nature of virtue, to virtue as used to describe individuals.

Tokkō as an Expression of Individuality in Biography

When Kōkei dubbed his first chapter the "virtuous deeds chapter," he drew from precedents that associated *tokkō* with people, the *Analects of Confucius*, and *A New Account of Tales of the World*. In his foreword to *Kinsei kijinden*, Kōkei's friend Rikunyo referred to both of these texts, indicating their impact on their intellectual world. These precedents approached *tokkō* with different emphases: the *Analects* on moral standards, and *Tales of the World* on individuals. *Tokkō* appeared in the *Analects* in the context of discussing Confucius' disciples, alongside other skills later dubbed the "Four Branches of Confucian Learning" (Ch. *Kongmen sike*). While these skills later appeared as titles for the first four chapters of *Tales of the World*, *Tales of the World* recognized multiple kinds of virtuous deeds, and as a result the individual rather than a single standard for virtue shone forth. As I will show, Kōkei's use of *tokkō* came closer to that of *Tales of the World*.

In its initial conception, the Four Branches appeared as a set of standards by which people can be evaluated. This idea of the Four Branches is preserved in the foreword to *Kinsei kijinden*, where Rikunyo stated that the *kijin* "from the core deviates from the Four Branches of Confucian Learning."⁴² In the section referring to the Four Branches, the *Analects of Confucius* listed *tokkō* alongside three other traits, each followed by the name of Confucius' disciples excelling in that trait. By discussing virtuous deeds as a "branch of learning" separable from others, the *Analects* advanced the possibility of *tokkō* as an area at which an individual may surpass others:

Those known for virtuous conduct (Ch. *dexing*, J. *tokkō*): Yan Hui, Min Ziqian, Boniu, and Zhonggong. Those known for eloquence (Ch. *yanyu*, J. *genko*): Zai

Wo and Zigong. Those known for administrative skill (Ch. *zhengshi*, J. *seiji*): Ran Qiu and Jilu. Those known for cultural learning (Ch. *wenxue*, J. *bungaku*): Ziyou and Zixia.⁴³

In later times the Four Branches appeared as a template for grouping individuals. In the Wei-Jin periods (220-420 C.E.), a time when Confucianism shared intellectual currency with Buddhism and Neo-Daoism, author Liu Yiqing (403-444) used the Four Branches as titles for the first chapters of *A New Account of Tales of the World*.⁴⁴ These four chapters also appeared in subsequent anecdotal collections such as Kong Pinzhong's *Xu shuo* (1158), and He Liangqun's *Yu lin* (1551). Such examples are recognized as imitations of *Tales of the World*.⁴⁵ Given that these four chapter titles did not appear as a tradition in other collections of tales, one can conclude that *Tales of the World* turned the discussion of the Four Branches in a new direction.

The use of *tokkō* in *Tales of the World* differed from the *Analects* in terms of emphasis. Emerging from an eclectic intellectual environment, *Tales of the World* focused on the power of individuals, rather than on any particular school of thought. *Tales of the World* arose from Wei-Jin elite literati culture, specifically the pastime of character evaluation. Like the *Analects*, *Tales of the World* linked individuals with a trait, and used the human figure as a role model. In *Tales of the World*, however, the author was concerned with the appeal of individuals, and resisted inflexibly defining traits and values.⁴⁶

While *Tales of the World* had been known in

⁴³ Slingerland, 112. Chinese and Japanese glosses added.

⁴⁴ See Qian, 126, and Wai-Yee Li, "Shishuo xinyu and Aesthetic Self-Consciousness in the Chinese Tradition," in *Chinese Aesthetics: The Orderings of Literature, the Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties*, ed. Zong-qi Cai (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 250.

⁴⁵ Qian, 194.

⁴⁶ Zong-qi Cai, "A Historical Overview of Six Dynasties Aesthetics," in *Chinese Aesthetics*, 5.

⁴² *KKD*, 3, 5.

Japan since the Heian Period (794-1185), it had a considerable impact on Kōkei and his peers. Along with Daoist thought, *Tales of the World* evoked an exotic world to which Tokugawa literati aspired. Tokugawa *bunjin* shared many values with Wei-Jin society, namely immersion in aesthetic pleasures, and the celebration of diverse strengths in the individual. In other words, Tokugawa *bunjin* embraced strangeness and uniqueness as a defining value for their community. Rikunyo asserted in his foreword that Kōkei's writing rivaled that of Liu Yiqing, most likely referring to his individual-centered writing.⁴⁷ Beyond Kōkei's circle, Tokugawa Sino-philosophers learned about Wei-Jin gentry life through Wang Shizhen's *Shishuo xinyu bu* (*Companion to A New Account of Tales of the World*, 1556), creating sufficient demand for this text to warrant the two known Japanese editions dating from 1694 and 1779.⁴⁸ One such man of letters, Hattori Nankaku (1683-1759), modeled his everyday life on the stories found in *Tales of the World*. Nankaku further demonstrated his interest in the text when he created a Heian/Kamakura Period (c. 9th-14th c. C.E.) version of *Tales of the World*, *Daitō seigo* (*Japanese Tales of the World*, 1750).⁴⁹

In the original Chinese *Tales of the World*, Liu Yiqing focused on the remarkable nature of the individual, departing from the *Analects'* use of *tokkō*. Thus, *tokkō* appeared as a way to discuss a variety of people, not as a single universal quality. While in the *Analects* *tokkō* appeared as a single pursuit at which certain disciples of Confucius excelled, in *Tales of the World* multiple kinds of *tokkō* received recognition.⁵⁰ For example, Wang Rong and He Qiao performed two kinds of filial piety. Given the extreme nature of the behavior, these stories were not intended to provide role models, but to celebrate their virtue as individuals.

Wang Rong and He Qiao experienced the loss of a parent at the same time, and

both were praised for their filial devotion. Wang, reduced to a skeleton, kept to his bed; while He, wailing and weeping, performed all the rites

[After the Emperor expressed concern about Qiao] Liu Yi [said to the Emperor], "He Qiao, even though performing all the rites, has suffered no loss in his spirit or health. Wang Rong, even though not performing the rites, is nonetheless so emaciated with grief that his bones stand out. Your servant is of the opinion that He Qiao's is a filial devotion of life, while Wang Rong's is a filial devotion of death. Your Majesty should not worry about Qiao, but rather about Rong."⁵¹

By including divergent stories and opinions in the *tokkō* section of *Tales of the World*, Liu Yiqing affirmed a range of behavior as virtuous without adhering to a single standard. While a later tale asserted that Wang Rong in fact violated propriety in his grief, this too was included in the *tokkō* section.⁵²

Similar to the stories in *Tales of the World*, Kōkei portrayed *kijin* in a way that celebrated individuality, rather than one idea of virtue. This appeared particularly strongly in stories of foolish people, where *tokkō* affirmed the ideas of the *kijin* rather than any particular social standard, and the *kijin* themselves seemed to benefit the most. Such stories demonstrated that individuality is by definition virtue. For example, Itō Kaitei (1685-1772), son of eminent merchant scholar Itō Jinsai, took extreme measures to satisfy his sincere desire to help others, even when the actual benefit to others was unlikely. Kōkei included many vignettes that highlighted his sincerity. In the account, Kaitei's younger brothers found that they could prevent him from finding out about their nighttime trips to the pleasure quarters by yelling, "Fire!" whereupon he would

⁴⁷ *KKD*, 3, 6.

⁴⁸ Qian, 323 and 476.

⁴⁹ Qian, 319, and *Nihon koten bungaku daijiten*, s.v. "Sesetsu shingo."

⁵⁰ Qian, 104-5.

⁵¹ Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, 2002), 9. Wade-Giles converted to Pinyin. The emperor that appears in the story is Emperor Wu (Sima Yan, r. 265-290).

⁵² Mather, 12.

rush to the roof and miss their late arrival. While Kaitei seemed to be deceived every time, he later explained that he knew the ruse, but wanted to act in case there actually were a fire. In another case, he pulled out a floorboard to search for a pair of fire-tongs, because he feared that someone might later hurt himself by falling through that floorboard, and accidentally stepping on them.⁵³ In this case, too, Kaitei himself seemed to benefit more than any other person.

Kōkei also included *kijin* who defied society by performing virtuous deeds for their self-fulfillment. Here, too, we see a dissonance between the individual's idea of virtue and those of society at large. Kōkei retold the well-documented story of the loyal servant Hachisuke of Sunpu, where Hachisuke refused to leave his master even after the family lost their fortune and dismissed the other servants. Kōkei stressed that Hachisuke acted not out of obedience, but out of his personal joy of service, "disregarding his own body by . . . living off of leftover rice and doing many other such things, for the pleasure of seeing joy on his master's face [*shu no yorokobi wo miru wo tanoshimite*]." ⁵⁴ Kōkei noted that when a local official berated Hachisuke for serving his worthless master, once again Hachisuke tearfully protested out of his desire for fulfillment: "if I am not there who will save him from starvation?" ⁵⁵ In this story, Kōkei described Hachisuke's personal potency to move the official with the term "attaining sincerity" (至誠), showing how his virtue had the power to influence others as well.

In the above discussion, I have traced the idea of virtue as a property of the individual between *Kinsei kijinden* and Chinese tradition. The best-seller status of *Kinsei kijinden* in the Tokugawa marketplace hints at the willingness of the reading public to embrace the idea of individualistic virtue. In the Tokugawa intellectual landscape, there emerged further strains of thought that confirmed the link between virtue and individuality.

Jinsai and Sorai: Virtue and the Individual

From the outset, *Kinsei kijinden* was a project that recognized and celebrated individual virtue as found in the human world rather than in universal norms. In his introduction to *Kinsei kijinden*, Kōkei encouraged his audience to accept diverse ideas of what is admirable or noteworthy, specifically to accept *tokkō* as wonder, a property of *kijin*. In this way, Kōkei upheld multiple ideas of good found in his society:

[My friends] responded forcefully, ". . . among [the *kijin*] there are also people who squandered their assets and steeped themselves in the mad aesthetic life, abandoning their homes and living as they please. You can't compare them with the wonder (奇 *ki*) in virtuous deeds (*tokkō*). I said, "Although there was wild and selfish behavior, I recorded instances among those with taste or things worth showing. It is like mixing gems and common stones, but this is one kind of wonder (奇 *ki*), and that is also wonder (奇 *ki*), and there is absolutely no need to split hairs. Only I did not include here unfilial and unloving people who drift in elegance and leave themselves to dissipation, or distrustful and disloyal people based in success and pursuing the ways of the world, not even if they were crazy stories that would make you chuckle."⁵⁶

By prioritizing loyalty and trust, Kōkei reinforced the idea of the self as a source of moral power, where virtuous deeds arise from inner personality, and are not done to satisfy a moral standard. This echoed not only debates in Chinese tradition, but also those in his own times.

As with that of Chinese precedents, Kōkei's intellectual climate was animated by a tension between virtue as prescriptive and virtue as individual. While Kōkei's use of *tokkō* was informed by early Chinese texts, it had its deepest reso-

⁵³ *KKD*, 37-38.

⁵⁴ *KKD*, 43.

⁵⁵ *KKD*, 43.

⁵⁶ *KKD*, 9-10. Translation referred to Marceau, 263, and Nakano, notes to *Kinsei kijinden*, 15.

nance with understandings of virtue articulated by Tokugawa thinkers Itō Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai, the forefathers of *kogaku*, ancient language studies in Japan. Although Kōkei lived after Jinsai and Sorai, he shared personal points of contact with both of them. Kōkei's close friend Rikunyo was a son of Jinsai's student Naemura Kaidō (1684-1748), who was featured in *Kinsei kijinden*. *Kinsei kijinden* included other members of Jinsai's school, like Jinsai's son Kaitei, and pupils of the school such as Namikawa Tenmin (1679-1718), Akō Incident poet Onodera Hidekazu (1643-1703), and eccentric scholar Konno Ransai (1650-1731). Jinsai's most prominent son Tōgai (1670-1736) also appeared in one story. Although Kōkei disliked Sorai and his school for their arrogance, they too shared overlapping circles. Sorai's pupil Hattori Nankaku and Kōkei were roughly contemporaries in Kyoto. Kōkei's friend Rikunyo also studied Chinese poetry (*J. kanshi*) under Nankaku's pupil.⁵⁷ These points of contact reinforced their strongest link, their common interest in the study of ancient language.

Jinsai and Sorai's work in ancient language influenced both the study of Japanese language and understandings of virtue, in that it focused on the human world based in historical texts, rather than the world of universal truths.⁵⁸ Given this, their thought allowed variety in defining good, and was not inclined to adhere to inflexible rules. Drawing on Mencius, who predated Song Confucian metaphysics, Jinsai saw a moral order that affirmed the potential for good in people.⁵⁹ In Sorai's reading of ancient texts, virtue was as multiple as there were human beings. By focusing on a world defined in historical texts, these thinkers identified virtue within the human community. These ideas linking virtue and the human experience allowed Kōkei to make *kijin* virtuous.

⁵⁷ Takahashi Hiromi, *Kyōto geien no nettowaaku* (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1988), 89-90.

⁵⁸ Tetsuo Najita, "History and Nature in Eighteenth-Century Tokugawa Thought," 599-610.

⁵⁹ Tetsuo Najita, *Visions of Virtue: The Kaitokudō Merchant Academy of Osaka* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), 27-29.

Kōkei opened *Kinsei kijinden* with the story of a warrior-class sage, Nakae Tōju (1608-1648). Kōkei's account stressed Tōju's idea of virtue based on individual nature, supporting the logic of virtue as a *kijin* quality. In Kōkei's eyes, Tōju qualified as a *kijin* because he thought and acted in accordance with his inner character. This idea resonated with the idea of sincerity mentioned earlier, and the idea of virtue and potential in all people found in the work of Jinsai and Sorai. In the account, Tōju declared that the truly virtuous freed themselves from rules, and trusted their own instincts, rejecting the distinctions made by Song Confucian scholarship:

[Tōju told his students,] "Even though it does not belong in the same class as the desire for fame, the desire to only investigate the customary rules (*J. kakutō*, Ch. *getao* 格套) is like losing the vital power behind your true nature. We must release the heart and mind (*kokoro*) concerned with details, and not be mired in them, instead believing one's own true heart and mind (*mizukara no honshin*)."
His students were immediately greatly impressed, and burst into energy.⁶⁰

Through the terms *kokoro* and *mizukara no honshin*, Kōkei articulated Tōju's idea of self that is at its best when free from prescriptive ideas of good. In this way, Kōkei advanced the core idea that goodness started from the self rather than from the outside, resonating with the idea of virtue as an individual property.

According to Kōkei, Tōju abandoned Song Confucianism because it taught falsely that inflexible rules could create good people. Tōju on the other hand taught that truly virtuous action started from within individual nature, expressed by the ideograph for "heart" often translated as "heart-mind," *shin*. In the story, Tōju asserted that Wang Yangming's Confucian teachings were correct because they recognized that "heart-mind

⁶⁰ *KKD*, 18-19. Translation referred to Nakano, notes to *Kinsei kijinden*, 24, and Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 655.

(*shin*) and deeds from the start are one. For this reason, when there are good deeds (*zen*), you cannot have a person whose heart-mind is not good, and also you cannot have a person whose heart-mind is good and deeds are not good."⁶¹ Tōju argued for moral action coming from the heart-mind, an expression of the self. For Tōju, then, virtuous action emerged naturally, as a result of the individual's own quality. In this way even though he used the word *zen* rather than *toku*, his thought approached the pre-Confucian use of virtue, where virtue is an individual property.

Like Tōju, Jinsai and Sorai sought alternatives to Song Confucianism and inflexible rules. While Jinsai and Sorai had different ideas on the role of the individual in virtuous behavior, their definitions for the word "virtue" supported the idea of multiple and diverse ways to be virtuous. Jinsai defined the term "virtue" (*toku*) in *Gomō jigi* (*On the Meaning of Terms in the Analects and the Mencius*, 1683) and Sorai in *Benmei* (*The Rectification of Names*, 1737). In their discussions of virtue and virtuous behavior, they eschewed the idea of a single path of behavior for all people, so that the individual, rather than rules, had a role to play in the definition of virtue. In Jinsai's discussions of both *toku* and *tokkō*, virtue was an individual's defining property rather than an ideal. Sorai wrote of individual virtues (*toku*), which differed for each person.

Jinsai's thought resembled Tōju as portrayed in *Kinsei kijinden*, in that virtue remained an essential potential for all people, rather than something acquired or earned. Jinsai's concept of virtue worked alongside his idea of "way" (*michi*), which he associated with activity. In *Gomō jigi*, Jinsai's explanation of virtue relied on pre-Confucian concepts emphasizing virtue as a property rather than an ideal: "Purging and expelling is the way of medicine; healing and promoting life is its virtue. Burning and scorching is the way of fire, while cooking food and heating beverages are its virtues."⁶² According to Jinsai,

⁶¹ *KKD*, 19.

⁶² John Allen Tucker, trans., *Itō Jinsai's Gomō Jigi and the Philosophical Definition of Early Modern Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 113. See also *Nihon shisō taikēi*, vol. 33, *Itō Jinsai*, *Itō*

everyday activity was directed by the concept of a way, something that occurred naturally, not by a prescriptive idea of virtue. He specified, "The way (*michi*) involves flowing activity while virtue (*toku*) refers to what preserves things as they should be. The way naturally directs (*ryūkō*) activities while virtue makes things what they are." Jinsai's words were tinged with moral implications when he asserted that virtue "preserves things as they should be," but he clarified that "virtue makes things what they are," showing that virtue was a defining property, not an earned state of moral rectitude.⁶³

In *Kinsei kijinden* Kōkei demonstrated thought similar to that of Jinsai in his tales of ordinary people who did good deeds in the course of their daily lives. By describing people who acted in accordance with their natures, Kōkei affirmed the idea that virtue lay inside individual nature. Under an entry headed, "A Yamashina farmer and five noteworthy people," an old beggar woman known only as Kame of Rōya refused a reward for finding and returning a lost item. In Kōkei's account, the old woman explained her behavior in terms of her own personality rather than shared ideas of virtue: "If I were inclined to take this, I would have sold the item and kept the money."⁶⁴ Thus, Kōkei's ideal virtuous deed was performed as a function of one's character. In that same section, Kōkei also described two other people, both poor, returning money and refusing any reward.

In keeping with the idea of individual nature as virtue, Kōkei included a wide range of *kijin*, demonstrating the diversity behind individual virtue. This resembled the thought of Ogyū Sorai, who understood virtue to correspond to the individual, not the reverse.⁶⁵ Sorai believed that one

Tōgai, ed. Yoshikawa Kōjirō and Shimizu Shigeru (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971), 37, 127.

⁶³ Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomō Jigi*, 112-113. Original translation includes glosses in both Romanization and Japanese script. See also "Gomō jigi," in *Nihon shisō taikēi*, 33:36-37 and 127.

⁶⁴ *KKD*, 127.

⁶⁵ Tetsuo Najita, trans., *Tokugawa Political Writings* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xxi-xxiii.

could not apply one standard of behavior to all people since all individuals were unique. In *Benmei*, he wrote, "Every human being has an inner nature and is different. Thus virtue, too, is different from one person to the next Even the teachings of the Sages, however wise, cannot be forced upon the people. Therefore, each and every one stays close to his inner nature and nourishes it to realize its virtue."⁶⁶ In this way, Sorai's idea of virtue also approached the pre-Confucian interpretation, where virtue was not a moral standard but a property that defined an individual thing.

In Sorai's view, since virtue was intimately connected with the self, virtuous living meant practicing that quality that makes one unique. In *Benmei*, he linked the virtue of the individual to life practice, the Way. In the following passage, Sorai identified a particular virtue (*sono toku*) with an individual (*sono hito*): "[It is said in the *Book of Changes*] 'If the effort is not from within that specific person, the Way as a whole will be in vain.' In other words, if *one's virtue* has not been developed the Way cannot be practiced."⁶⁷ For Sorai, virtue was not simply an individual property, but realized through practice that differed according to one's individual nature. For this reason he quibbled over the passage by Jinsai quoted earlier: "Jinsai did not . . . realize that virtue and inner character were not the same things. It is as though he is casually saying that medicine has a healing virtue and fire the virtue

to heat water. The issue is whether one realizes virtue through nourishment or whether one has the virtue from the beginning."⁶⁸

Sorai's thinking recognized people for their individual strengths. In the same spirit, Kōkei focused on an idea of selfhood guiding virtuous practice in his portrayals of *kijin*. Kōkei included a story where Jinsai's son Kaitei valued a certain servant solely for his individuality. The servant took orders too literally, and as a result had no practical use. When told to "let the knife rest" when cutting some abalone, he made a bed for the knife with brushwood sticks and a dishcloth.⁶⁹ Still, Kaitei recognized this extreme straightforwardness as a strength, and fostered it in his household. This thinking echoed Sorai's words, "if one's virtue has not been developed the Way cannot be practiced." Sorai might have agreed with Kaitei's judgment on the grounds that the servant as acting on his own virtue.

Above, in order to ground Kōkei's thought and *Kinsei kijinden* in an intellectual historical context, I have discussed Jinsai and Sorai's views of the relationship between virtue and the individual. Sorai emphasized the realization of individual virtue, while Jinsai stressed the individual housing the potential for good. By grounding their thought in the human world, Jinsai and Sorai made it possible to consider virtue in terms of the individual self.

Conclusion

The idea of virtue (*toku*) lies at the heart of *Kinsei kijinden*. *Kinsei kijinden* arose from a continuing tension between virtue as societal and virtue as individual found in both early Chinese texts and in Tokugawa Japanese thought. Dating back to pre-Confucian Chinese language, the idea of virtue as personal potency reemerged in Chinese and Japanese intellectual history when there was a renewed interest in creativity and individual expression, such as in Wei-Jin China and in Tokugawa Japan. Building upon these ideas,

⁶⁶ Najita, *Tokugawa Political Writings*, 44. See also John A. Tucker, *Ogyū Sorai's Philosophical Masterworks* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 180-181 and *Nihon shisō taikei*, vol. 36, *Ogyū Sorai*, ed. Yoshikawa Kōjirō et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 48 and 49.

⁶⁷ Najita, *Tokugawa Political Writings*, 45. My emphasis. See also Tucker, *Ogyū Sorai's Philosophical Masterworks*, 182, and *Nihon shisō taikei*, 36:50, 212. The passage Sorai quoted appears in Takata Shinji and Gotō Mitomi ed., *Ekikyō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1969), 2:276-277. Tucker's note on p. 371 also refers to Richard Wilhelm and Cary F. Baynes, *The I Ching or Book of Changes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 349.

⁶⁸ Najita, *Tokugawa Political Writings*, 45-46. See also *Nihon shisō taikei*, 36:50, and Tucker, *Ogyū Sorai's Philosophical Masterworks*, 183.

⁶⁹ *KKD*, 38.

Kōkei emphasized virtuous action as a function of personal potency within the *kijin*, rather than as a result of indoctrination. In this way, Kōkei showed his belief that virtue was not a single path, but many. With the ideas of sincerity and individuality, Kōkei demonstrated that the individual was both the source of virtue, and adequate justification for performing virtuous deeds. By understanding virtue in terms of novelty, Tokugawa readers of *Kinsei kijinden* could be inspired by the wonder of virtue in troubled times.

Throughout the Tokugawa Period, writers continued to explore and expand upon the relationship between virtue and the individual. While Kōkei linked *kijin* to virtue as an individual property, later writers developed this idea into a connection between *kijin* and identity. After the appearance of *Kinsei kijinden*, different communities compiled their own biographies of eccentrics, or *kijinden*, particularly geographical areas and artistic groups. Such *kijinden* helped create an identity for these groups. Two Tokugawa examples illustrate this point. Between 1831 and 1844 lower level warrior official Okamoto Shinko (1780-1856) and his collaborators compiled *Tosa no kuni kijinden*, a scholarly biographical collection of Tosa (present-day Kochi Prefecture) eccentrics. Blind *haikai* scholar Takeuchi Gengen'ichi (1742-1804) wrote the manuscript for *Haika kijindan*, a scholarly work published in 1816 that placed *kijin* in the context of the playful urban poetry form of *haikai*. Several other Tokugawa works on *kijin* and poetry followed.⁷⁰ After the Tokugawa Period, from Meiji to modern times, writers continued to compile *kijinden*, and to link *kijin* and identity. This trend underscores the power behind the idea of individual virtue, and the importance of the text *Kinsei kijinden* in early modern Japanese intellectual history.

⁷⁰ Further discussion of these works appear in Kameya, "Paupers, Poets, and Paragons," 204-207.

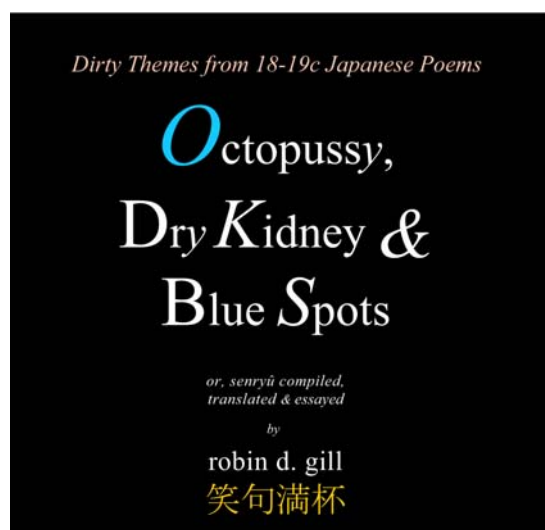
REVIEW ARTICLE

Robin D. Gill. *Octopussy, Dry Kidney & Blue Spots: Dirty Themes from 18-19c Japanese Poems*, Key Biscayne, FL: Paraverse Press, 2007.

Robin D. Gill. *Mad in Translation: A Thousand Years of Kyōka, Comic Japanese Poetry in the Classic Waka Mode*, Key Biscayne, FL: paraverse press, 2009.

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Emblazoned onto the front cover of his translation volume of mostly randy comic verse, the first of two works by robin d. gill under review here, is the iconographic masthead *THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW*, intimating recognition by that venerable institution. Upon closer inspection, however, the masthead turns out to be sandwiched by the fine print: “Yet Another Good Book...Will Probably Ignore” (Figure 1).

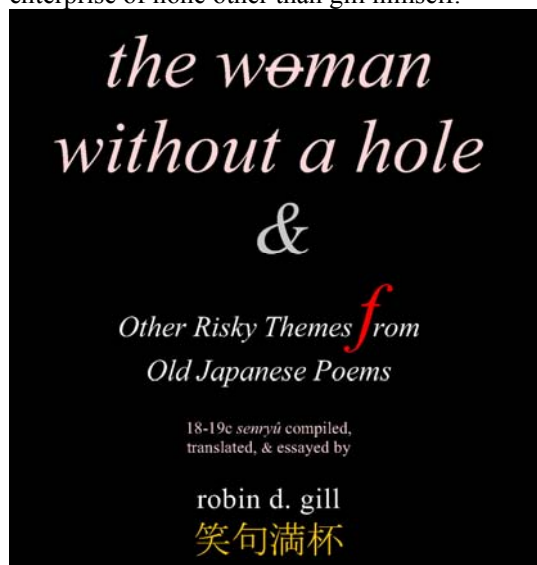


Yet Another Good Book

The New York Times
Book Review Will Probably Ignore.

This tongue-in-cheek hoax offers a whiff of the wonderful eccentricity running throughout maverick author gill’s ever-expanding corpus of writings on Edo-period poetry, particularly

comic poetry. The eccentricity resides less in the momentary leg-pulling than in the ironically wishful “probably”; for as gill must know, only works in large print-runs draw such notice, not those in small runs issued by “vanity presses”—which is surely how the Gray Lady would pigeonhole paraverse press, the self-publishing enterprise of none other than gill himself.



Yet Another Good Book

The New York Times
Book Review Will Probably Ignore.

Another whiff of whimsical unconventional-ity wafts up from the main title, *Octopussy*. gill claims to have discovered only recently that this was never really *his* neologism, but that of Ian Fleming.¹ Yet it is Henry Fielding, with his alternative titles to chapters and sections, who perhaps rather comes to mind, as well as the woodblock-printed publications of the Edo period, with their array of external and internal designa-

¹ Personal correspondence with the author. Full disclosure: gill and I have corresponded about his work and he has sent me copies of his books for this review. Page numbers to *Mad in Translation* are to the reading copy he sent and may vary slightly from the “final” version of that book. Full publishing information for gill’s other books appears at the end of this review.

tions (*gedai* and *naidai*); for *Octopussy* bears just such a second title, *The Woman Without a Hole & Other Risky Themes From Old Japanese Poems* (Figure 2).² The typography here amounts to another jest, referencing the legend (informing several of the comic poems) that the great poet and beauty Ono no Komachi was able to resist amorous advances because she lacked a vagina—the crossed-out “o” supposedly barring the one hole in the eponymous “woman” (in fact, there is another anatomical opening, tempting to some, in the letter “a”...).

More drastically, the title page to the closely related *Mad in Translation* presents a veritable laundry list of alternative titles: *The Unbearable Lightness of Kyōka*; *In Search of Wild Waka*; *Fun Poems from the Land of the Surprising Sun*; *Welcome to the Crazy Verse*; *Wacky Waka*; *Madcap Poems for the Man Who Wore a Carapace on his Head*; *Kyōka & other Kooky Japanese Poems*; *The Paraverse of Japanese Mad Poetry*; and (gill’s favorite) *Please, No Songs to Move Heaven and Earth! Matters are further complicated by the fact that gill has recently issued an abridged version of this book (running a mere 300 pages, as opposed to the 740 of the complete version), titled Kyōka, Japan’s Comic Verse: A Mad in Translation Reader*. Even the titles to gill’s works on haiku, though less multitudinous, often turn out to be jokey: *Rise Ye, Sea Slugs! 1000 Holothurian Haiku* (“holothurian” being the English adjectival form, it turns out, of the Japanese *namako*, or sea cucumber); *Cherry Blossom Epiphany: The Poetry and Philosophy of a Flowering Tree* (“Forget the fruit! This book is about the flower”); *Fly-ku!* (devoted to haiku on—well, you guessed it); and so on and so forth.

Regrettably for gill, the usual cast of scholarly journals in East Asian Studies and Japanology have (like the *New York Times*) passed over his work, no doubt because his books telegraph their unconventionality so flamboyantly. gill projects himself less as translator or poet or amateur-scholar, or some combination thereof, than as entertainer or *agent provocateur* or playful self-promoter: “If anyone with a major publisher is reading,” gill slips in at one point, referencing

Octopussy and yet another work, “I would be happy to do an illustrated half-length *pure wabi* version of this book and my earlier *Topsy-turvy 1585*, so long as you give me a decent five-figure advance and promise a large run for each.”³

Alas, one imagines that should some beleaguered editor at just such a publishing house actually be reading, she or he might sniff an elaborate Nabokovian practical joke: the constant intrusion of parenthetical remarks into otherwise learned discourse may smack of Charles Kinbote, the neurotic, almost certainly paranoid schizophrenic narrator of *Pale Fire*, who punctuates his quasi-scholarly annotations of poetry with asides about such things as the loud amusement park in front of his present lodgings where he resides in exile from the distant northern kingdom of Zembla. Or perhaps our only slightly less imaginary editor might fear that gill—who leads a reclusive, mysterious rural existence outside of Gainesville, Florida, usania (this neologism seemingly his)—could turn out to be another William Chester Minor, whose singular contributions to the compilation of *The Oxford English Dictionary* (as per Simon Winchester’s *Professor and the Madman*) were proffered far from Oxford, in the relative comfort of an insane asylum. After all, paraverse press—named for gill’s portmanteau word describing his method of translating poems into parallel verses—may also inadvertently suggest that its mastermind has slipped into some sort of parallel universe.

Succumbing to such ruminations would be as lamentable as ignoring gill’s corpus. This is because gill has given us two lively, extraordinarily knowledgeable, if decidedly non-academic, works on Edo-period comic poetry: *Octopussy*, on comic haiku (*senryū* 川柳), including what he calls “dirty” ones (*bareku* ばれ句); and *Mad in Translation*, on “mad” verse (*kyōka* 狂歌). Bombilating with verve, these works stand out from the huggermugger of scholarly discourse on similar topics, which more often than not disappoints as eminent but dull. To the extent that Edo-period poetry is too often misleadingly reduced to haiku by Bashō and friends, gill’s

² This image is from the front cover of an alternative version of the book.

³ gill, *Octopussy*, p. 465.

works on less established modes of *haikai* poetry and subjects—like the one devoted wholly to sea cucumbers—represent a refreshingly unencumbered contribution to the field. Even if these works cannot be described as punctiliously scholarly, gill’s status as poet-translator and amateur-scholar allows him the freedom to innovate. Some of his innovations set him apart from much scholarly publishing in Japanese studies and may even put him ahead of the curve. Indeed, gill’s unorthodox views on, and practice of, translation inform his treatment of print media itself, as we will see, in new and exciting ways.

Fish Out of Water

But first: who is robin d. gill? No newcomer to Japanese literature, gill, during his many years residing in Japan before his self-imposed exile to usania, published prodigiously in Japanese on poetry and related subjects under the penname Keigu 敬愚, “Yours Foolishly,” a pun on *keigu* 敬具, “Yours truly.”⁴ This penchant for witty self-effacement makes one speculate if his English name isn’t itself some kind of prank, a pseudonym suggesting comic incongruity (underscored by the cummingsesque lack of capitalization), like horns on a hare. The presumption that silliness can be a form of seriousness jibes with the spirit of Edo-period comic literature, particularly so-called “frivolous prose” (*gesaku*), but also *senryū* and *kyōka* themselves, which are not unrelated to *gesaku* (though gill never explores this probable connection). All first-rate poets, gill observes, “are wise enough to eventually indulge their foolish side, not simply to entertain others but to keep themselves in stitches.”⁵

Many of gill’s contentions are equally provocative, if not insightful, as with his argument, which runs throughout his writings, that the individual 17-syllable poem now known as haiku begins not with Bashō (1644-1694), as conventional thinking has long maintained, but two centuries earlier, with Sōgi (1421-1502). It is not so much that the first collection of opening stanzas (*hokku*) published in isolation from the rest of their linked-verse sequences, as though they

were what would later become haiku, dates to Sōgi’s posthumous *Jinensai hokku* (1506), but that Sōgi, in gill’s opinion, “wrote hundreds if not thousands [of poems] that clearly qualify as haiku” by virtue of their conception and subject matter.⁶ While not all specialists would concur, ignoring the conventional wisdom allows gill to open up the field of *haikai* studies to a closer examination of haiku before and apart from the Bashō School.

gill also breaks ranks by rejecting the old-school dictum that Japanese haiku and *senryū* should be translated into English in a 5-7-5 syllable line pattern. This is a shrewd move. Like dollars and yen, English syllables and Japanese *onji*—more a *mora* than a “syllable”—are different animals. Syllables are by no means of uniform weight themselves (compare “no” and “rough”), of course, but *onji*—what gill, throughout his writings, incisively terms *syllabets*—fall on the lighter end of the scale. gill thus settles on a line pattern of 2-3-2 accented beats for *senryū* and *bareku*. Accordingly, for his translations of the 5-7-5-7-7 syllabet *kyōka*, gill aims for 2-3-2-3-3 accented beats, mostly arranging these into 5 lines, every now and then 4 lines, but also often only 2 lines, which he maintains feels even closer to the originals.⁷

More daringly, gill runs against the grain of so much academic translation by frequently employing end rhyme in his renditions of comic verse. He does as much with a minority of the *senryū* in *Octopussy* and a majority of the *kyōka* in *Mad in Translation*. This is not to imply that the original poems relied on end rhyme; rather, gill believes that rhyme can compensate for the loss of Japanese puns and wordplay when transposing into English. Rhyme, gill insists, provides the sense of comic closure that is otherwise unavailable in translation. His strategy rests on the keen observation that rhyme is actually an unsung form of wordplay.⁸ Thus, gill mobilizes rhyme in place of the untranslatable pun, to pound home the punch line, ratify it, and make it seem intended if not natural. “So why the

⁴ Or, more literally, “Your respectful fool” and “Your respectful tool,” respectively.

⁵ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 53.

⁶ gill, *The Fifth Season*, p. 19, n. 3.

⁷ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 27.

⁸ See *Mad in Translation*, pp. 24, 28, and *passim*.

rhyme? I think the answer is that, without it, English short poems just do not have the snap to be funny.”⁹ gill has a point.

In recent decades, end-rhyme partisans among translators of haiku (like Harold Henderson) and of *waka* have all but ceased and desisted. But gill is dealing with overtly comic poetry, so he may be justified in revisiting the issue. One should therefore grant some leeway here, even if the effect is not always droll, since more often than not gill captures something of the whimsicality.

For instance, consider gill’s rendering of Yadoya Meshimori’s (1753-1830) well-known *kyōka* alluding to a line from Ki no Tsurayuki’s “*Kana Preface*”:

uta-yomi wa / heta koso yokere / ametsuchi
no / ugoki-idashite / tamaru mono ka
wa

To my mind, bad poets are the ones to be preferred:

Who wants to see Heaven and the Earth disturbed?¹⁰

The rhyme undoubtedly helps convey the humor, especially in comparison to a more orthodox rendering by Burton Watson that relies on allusion:

when it comes to poets,
the clumsier the better—
what a mess
if heaven and earth
really started to move¹¹

In most instances, gill exploits rhyme this way to marvelous effect. In a few cases, he is so successful that it almost seems as though the poem was originally composed in English:

To smoke however high the cost is simply
wacko:
which only goes to prove, no relief beats
tobacco!¹²

And in a rare few cases, gill manages to work a pun into the end rhyme:

ima made wa
heta ga shinu zo to
omoishi ni
jōzu mo shineba
kuso jōzu kana

’Til now I thought
for sure, dying was something
for nincompoops
When talents die, though fewer,
I’ll bet we make better manure!¹³

Sometimes, when he can swing the pun, gill dispenses with end rhyme completely:

shibaraku mo
yotoko ni shiri o
suezaru wa
waga tsuma naranu
inazuma zokashi

Ne’er in my bed
long enuf to sleep, the girl
called Lightning;
Here I am for a screw,
And all she does is bolt!¹⁴

At other times, however, gill’s translations are more whimsical than warranted by the original. Compare two versions of a verse (composed in 1716) by Raizan. First, Yoel Hoffman’s:

raizan wa
umareta toga de
shinurunari
sore de urami mo
nanimō ka mo nashi

Raizan has died
to pay for the mistake

¹² gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 305. The original runs: jūson no / ari to wa shirite / nomu kara wa / tabako ni masaru / nagusami wa nashi.

¹³ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 383.

¹⁴ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 262.

⁹ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 57.

¹⁰ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 32.

¹¹ Quoted in gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 33.

of being born:
for this he blames no one,
and bears no grudge.

And gill's version:

I Raizan die;
call it my punishment
for being born.
The fault is mine, I leave
in peace. Don't mourn!¹⁵

Needless to say, treating this ostensibly somber poem as a mad verse runs the risk of trivialization. But when the original is a light *waka* to begin with, the mad-verse idiom feels more apropos. Consider, for instance, two renditions of Ariwara Motokata's infamous poem opening the first imperial anthology of *waka*, *Japanese Verse Old and New* (*Kokin wakashū*, ca. 920). The following rendition, by scholar-translator Helen Craig McCullough, while slavishly close to the original in meaning if not in syllable count, feels rather plodding:

toshi no uchi ni
haru wa kinikeri
hitotose o
koso to ya iwamu
kotoshi to ya iwamu

Springtime has arrived
while the old year lingers on.
What then of the year?
Are we to talk of "last year"?
Or are we to say "this year"?¹⁶

Gill, by contrast, throws convention to the wind, offering this rather breezy interpretation:

Spring is in the air today,
So tell me if we may,

Call this year last year
Before New Year's day!

¹⁵ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 387.

¹⁶ McCullough, trans. and annot. *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 14.

By treating this light *waka* as a madcap poem, gill may be truer to the original than McCullough, though he is also provocatively rewriting the history of both poetic forms. As he himself puts it: "The original, which I consider mad, is neither the oldest *kyōka* nor, for that matter, ever called a *kyōka*. Nor was it an AABA verse; but I submit that my reading of Ariwara no Motokata's *waka* is, nonetheless, closer to the *spirit* of the original than the usual boring translation."¹⁷ gill has a point here, too. When it comes to rendering poetry, particularly comic poetry, literal is not necessarily better. For the translator, eliciting an eye roll trumps blank stares.

But eyebrows will be raised when it comes to gill's chronology, which pushes the advent of the *kyōka* back a half millennium earlier than the generally accepted opinion that the first extant *kyōka* collection, that by Kyōgetsu (1265-1328), marks the beginning of the form. Indeed, one of gill's most radical and interesting contentions in *Mad in Translation* is that by dwelling on the so-called *kyōka* boom of Tenmei-era (1781-1789) Edo, scholars have wrongfully obfuscated the genre's venerable history and origins, which he asserts stretch back past Kyōgetsu and even the *Kokinshū* to the earliest extant writings in Japan, *Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki*, 712), *Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon shoki*, 720), and *Myriad Leaves Collection* (*Man'yōshū*, compiled ca. 759). It is not that the *kyōka* grew out of the comic *waka* in these works, but rather that there was no distinction between the two in the first place.¹⁸

Gill admits, however, that what he considers to be *kyōka* was not recognized as such until none other than the great Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241) coined the term. And during a period of increased seriousness in *waka* epitomized by the *Shinkokin wakashū* (ca. 1439), the *kyōka* was forced underground, as it were, seeking refuge in the lighthearted form of linked poetry (*haikai no renga*). According to gill's revised history, the *kyōka* emerged as its own true genre and became popular a century or two earlier than

¹⁷ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 34.

¹⁸ For more on this, see *Mad in Translation*, pp. 595-634 and *passim*.

the Tenmei *kyōka* boom, with works by Yūchōrō (1547-1602), Kōfū (fl. ca. 1660s-70s), and the first bona-fide *kyōka* master, Teiryū (d. 1735). As gill puts it: “Despite the fact that the 100-odd books reproduced in *Kyōka Taikan*, or *Broadview* clearly revealed the literary importance of 16-17c *kyōka*, in the absence of a corresponding analytical rethinking of the history—or none energetic enough to blast through the shuttered windows of the Ivory Tower—almost everything written about *kyōka* continues to parrot the scholarship of the 1950’s and 60’s which, failing to appreciate older *kyōka*, treated 18-19c Edo *kyōka* as what amounts to the only real thing...I can understand both the appeal of Tenmei *kyōka* and of Edo but still, *why, after a quarter of a century are 16-17c kyōka still largely unknown?*”¹⁹

This is a good question on top of a provocative thesis. gill is absolutely right to interrogate the Edo-centric narrative of the *kyōka*. One of gill’s major contributions is his challenge to the conventional wisdom that *kyōka* became popular *only* in Edo during the Tenmei era, with its leading practitioner, Ōta Nanpo (1749-1823).²⁰ Sorry to say, however, gill’s revised timeline did not entirely convince this reviewer. For one thing, his thesis unfolds in a chapter called “A Short & Inadequate yet Extraordinarily Broad History of the Japanese ‘Mad Poems’ called *Kyōka* or *not* called *Kyōka* but *like* them,” a title that is considerably less convoluted than its content. For another, it is not clear how *kyōka* migrated from *waka* to *haikai no renga* to *kyōka* and yet remained a single, clearly definable entity. Simply put, this is implausible. If gill has demonstrated anything, it is that what has persisted from the age of antiquity is not the *kyōka* form so much as the comic imagination in Japanese poetry. As he himself admits: “If, like me, you see the comic at the heart of literature rather than a derivative or mere parody of the serious, you might also agree that *kyōka* by whatever name could have survived without formal *waka*, but not the vice-versa.”²¹

There are a few other noteworthy quirks in

gill’s works, such as his practice, in *Mad in Translation*, of making his translation chapters occupy two facing pages at all costs. When the main poem(s) and discussion conclude before the end of the second page, which is not infrequently the case, the remaining space is filled with fluff—personal comments and digressions that bear upon the original only tangentially, if that. gill justifies this practice on aesthetic grounds, and some of his comments are genuinely fascinating, even illuminating. At worst, though, this practice feels distracting if not so rigid that one suspects some kind of superstition is at play, like not stepping on the crevice between slabs of cement sidewalk.

Also, gill unwittingly adds oil to the bonfire of any would-be critics by his unremitting reliance on emphasis. One is reminded of Mark Twain’s alleged remark (according to John Grogan’s *Marley & Me*) that using an exclamation point in one’s writing is like laughing at one’s own joke. All of the italics, underlining, exclamation points, and non-standard characters in the quoted material in this review, in fact, reflect emphasis in the original. This emphasis is so rampant that one feels it would have been easier for gill to emphasize the points he wished not to emphasize.

Finally, carried away by his own exuberance perhaps, gill sometimes plays it fast and loose, passing off speculation as fact. One example is his statement that the mad verse was the most widespread form of comic poetry *ever*: “Hence, I think it truly extraordinary that the ‘mad poem,’ the *kyōka*, was able to achieve in its heyday greater popularity than that achieved by any similar genre of poem, if there is a similar genre, anywhere in the world.”²²

Dirty *Senryū*

These quirks are negligible compared to gill’s great accomplishment, which resides in his unflinching treatment and cheerily filthy translations, in *Octopussy*, of a completely overlooked class of *senryū*. This is the *bareku* 破礼句, literally “etiquette-violating verse,” which gill renders “dirty *senryū*” (though, for a general audience, it might better be rendered as “dirty sexy

¹⁹ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 596.

²⁰ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 698.

²¹ gill, *Mad in translation*, pp. 608-9.

²² gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 20.

haiku”). It has long been standard operating procedure among scholars of Edo literary studies either to ignore the *bareku* or, perhaps more egregiously, to acknowledge its existence begrudgingly without actually dirtying one’s hands by translating it, particularly in suitably crude language. The main exception to this rule is John Solt, who not long after issuing a seminal article on the subject left academia.²³ Here it might be queried why it is that the two major translators of *bareku* now work outside the academy. More to the point, one may wonder how it is that Edo studies outside Japan tends to be so priggish when Edo literature itself is so rich in scatological and sexual material.

The prudishness goes back at least to Reginald Horace Blyth, whose work on *senryū* largely set the tone for others to follow. Writing on the prevalence of *bareku*—though he never dignified them with that word—within one collection of *senryū*, Blyth blushed:

On the whole the verses [in *Suetsumuhana*] are so poor, poetically, that the ingeniousness of many of them hardly makes up for their dealing with low people at their lowest. I do not mean that sex is low; far from it. But lowness is low whether it is in music or art or religion, and when these or sex are deficient in humour they are poor and equally poor. Only a few verses are given here, not the best, but the best printable ones.²⁴

But how is one to understand another culture by looking at it through the standards of one’s own culture?

Likewise, it was with “regrettable decorum” (as William Sibley so eloquently put it) that Donald Keene, in *World Within Walls*, dismissed

such randy *senryū* out of hand.²⁵ Similarly, Faubion Bowers seems to have had *bareku* in mind when stating, scornfully: “*Haikai* spoke in everyday language and sometimes, in its exuberance, became little more than a display of wit and scatology.”²⁶ Even Makoto Ueda, in his otherwise first-rate *Light Verse from the Floating World*, which surpasses all other English-language works on *senryū* in the quality of its translations as well as its scholarship, looks down on *bareku*: “[T]here is a multitude of *senryū* [sic] peppered with slang words for male and female genitals as well as for various bedroom practices used by courtesans. There were so many such *senryū* that someone collected them in an anthology; entitled *Suetsumuhana* (The Saffron Flower), it appeared in four volumes between 1776 and 1801. Many of these *senryū* violate our sense of decency.”²⁷

Among the readers for whom Ueda presumes to speak, it would be out of the question to include robin d. gill. “I confess there was a time in my life when I read many books of obscene *senryū*,” gill writes, “but I cannot imagine a respectable scholar of Japanese with the time or inclination to do that. Indeed, Ueda’s explanation for ‘*the beautiful wife / boiling his herb medicine / that doesn’t work*,’ namely, that it is ‘very likely the medicine is an aphrodisiac,’ shows that he did not recognize one of the top dozen or two stereotypes of dirty *senryū*, *empty-kidney*, where the husband is bed-ridden yet literally *semper paratus* so to speak...so, [Ueda] probably did lack something but it was less a matter of skill (the ability to translate well), than of comprehension or a lack thereof.”²⁸

Still, the larger issue with Ueda’s starchy re-

²³ Solt, “Willow Leaftips,” in Sumie Jones, ed., *Reading / Imaging Eros* (Bloomington: The East Asian Studies Center, Indiana University, 1996), pp. 129-34.

²⁴ R. H. Blyth, *Edo Satirical Verse Anthologies* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1961), p. 277.

²⁵ Sibley, p. 487 of “A World Surveyed,” in *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 32, no. 4 (Winter 1977), pp. 485-94.

²⁶ Faubion Bowers, ed., *The Classic Tradition of Haiku: An Anthology* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1996), p. vii.

²⁷ Makoto Ueda, *Light Verse from the Floating World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 26. Ueda (like gill after him) drops the macron, ostensibly to usher the word into the English lexicon.

²⁸ gill, *Octopussy*, p. 450.

fusal to give *bareku* its due is that by making the standard perfunctory nod to *bareku* only to ignore it, Ueda slips a few into his book unwittingly. For instance, there is the perfectly indecent *bareku* employing a *double entendre* that is presented as a chaste little *senryū*: the word *ogamu*, meaning to place one's hands together fervently in prayer, is rendered merely as "worships" without capturing its vernacular use referring to the act of male auto-eroticism.²⁹

In contrast to Ueda's improperly proper renderings of *bareku*, gill's renderings are properly improper. In fact, as suggested by his *Apologia*, titled frankly "to be blunt—a word about cunt," gill shrinks not from matching the Japanese originals for earthy language.³⁰ This openness informs the organization of *Octopussy* as a whole, for his chapters (and not just individual verses from those chapters) are arranged by topics like: masturbation (*lying face up / self-pleasure turns a navel / into a puddle*, p. 77); syphilis (*cured and clean / as a pipe, then, cough! and / 'is nose blows off*, p. 95); anal sex (*butt-fucked / 'it's just like a turd / coming in'*, p. 199); farts (*wintering in / delighted with the farts / of her husband*, p. 370); vaginas (*all pussies / stink says the maid / unashamed*, p. 293); and sexual politics (*mr married-in / a fool with quim in his face / praises its taste*, p. 238), to cite but a few.

Thus, although Ueda's translations of the cleaner *senryū* are indeed top drawer, gill throws open the lower drawers to discover hidden therein all sorts of smutty books, sex toys, birth control devices, abortifacients, and so on, not mention scatological matter. Wonderful stuff, in other words. Certainly for anyone interested in the popular sexual imagination of Edo-period Japan. Yet it is in breaking the wrongheaded if entrenched pattern of dismissive lip service to randy verse—that is, of barely acknowledging *bareku* in order to try to repress it—that gill's *Octopussy* is to be singled out for especial praise. And while Timon Screech and others have drawn on *bareku* in their writings, they cast it in a minor, supporting role. gill brings the *bareku* up front and center as a bad-boy player worthy of his own

spotlight.³¹ This represents a significant contribution to Edo studies.

A *Bareku* By Any Other Name

Having said that, one difficulty with gill's treatment of *bareku* in *Octopussy*, though not amounting to an Achilles heel, concerns language. This has nothing to do with the saltiness, which is entirely justifiable and, indeed, indispensable. Rather, it is the fact that gill adamantly refuses to deploy the term *bareku*. gill argues that no such term existed during the Edo period and, further, that by using it as though it had existed, one inevitably draws a line between clean and dirty *senryū* in a way that inadvertently gives rise to the misapplication of modern conceptions of sex and obscenity.

Fair enough. Nobody should force his or her own postmodern conceptions onto the early modern Japanese. However, abstaining from the term *bareku* does not necessarily preclude cultural colonialism. And anyway, abstention gives rise to a different set of problems. Clumping *senryū* and *bareku* together this way will no doubt mislead some readers into believing that all *senryū* are *bareku*—or all *bareku*, *senryū*. Neither is the case, really, for strictly speaking, *bareku* can refer to any kind of lewd verse, not just *senryū*.³² gill attempts to make this distinction in a way: "it needs to be said that just as not all *senryū* are *bareku*, not all *bareku* are *senryū*, so it might be wiser for scholars to call them in English what I do, simply...*dirty senryū*."³³ Nevertheless, in differentiating between *senryū* and dirty *senryū*—which is to say verses not to be called *bareku* on historical grounds but still dirty nonetheless—gill ends up deferring and thereby reifying, in less direct, more convoluted terms, the selfsame distinction between *senryū* and *bareku* that he is trying to avoid in the first place.

The term *senryū* itself is a retrospective term, referring to a type of verse that in its own day

²⁹ Ueda, *Light Verse from the Floating World*, p. 81.

³⁰ gill, *Octopussy*, p. 463.

³¹ See Timon Screech, *Sex and the Floating World: Exotic Images in Japan 1700-1820* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999).

³² As gill puts it, *bareku* were "Lewd haiku, *kyōku*, *senryū* or *zappai*." In gill, *Octopussy*, p. 472.

³³ gill, *Octopussy*, p. 451.

was typically termed *tsukeai* 付合 (the riposte in the verse-capping game *maekuzuke* 前句付け), *kyōku* 狂句 (madcap haiku), and so forth. Thus, since gill insists on eschewing the term *bareku* on the grounds of historical accuracy, he should eschew *senryū* as well. (One suspects gill may actually be willing to do so, for he has hinted that he finds the dichotomy between *senryū* as humorous and haiku as *serious* to be false: “As readers of my books already know, there is far more humor in *haikai* than generally realized...”³⁴)

What needs to be emphasized, though, is that the *concept* of dirty sexy *senryū* clearly existed during the Edo period. Like pornography itself, people recognized *bareku* when they saw it, even if they did not have a single unambiguous word for it. Indeed, even though it was not until the mid-twentieth century that the scholar Okada Hajime would coin the word *bareku* and apply it retroactively, Edo-period authors, publishers, and readers clearly recognized that there were certain verses that occupied a special category.³⁵ There was no consensus on what to call these verses—contemporary terms included *aiku* 愛句 (love verse), *renku* 恋句 (“coupled verse,” burlesquing *renku* 連句 or “linked verse”), and particularly *iroku* 色句 (erotic verse)—and yet many anthologies included them nevertheless.

One such work was *The Ten-Thousand-Verses Match Evaluated by Senryū* (*Senryū hyō manku awase* 川柳評万句合, a.k.a. *Manku awase*), a series of printed announcements of the winning ripostes in verse-capping contests (*maekuzuke*) that Karai Senryū 柄井川柳 (1718-1790) held from 1757 to 1789. Inasmuch as many of these ripostes would today be labeled *bareku*, *Manku awase* is widely considered to be one of the early major repositories of these dirty sexy verses.

What is more, there were also *bareku*-only collections. This is proof that the category existed even in the absence of an agreed-upon label for it. The first such collection was most likely *The Haikai-Style Safflower Princess* (*Haifū*

suetsumuhana 誹風末摘花, a.k.a. *Suetsumuhana*), issued in four installments from 1776 to 1801. Japanese scholars have long regarded *Safflower Princess* as the most “literary” of these *bareku*-only collections, and since its illustrations are hardly x-rated, it remains the least unprintable. Widely read and highly evaluated in its day, *Safflower Princess* was banned as obscene throughout the early part of the twentieth century, and was brought to light in modern print only after the U.S. occupation.³⁶

More notably, *Safflower Princess* casts some light on another contemporary term for *bareku* and its relationship to *senryū*. The title can be thought of as advertising humor just as much as licentiousness, implying that the dirty sexy verses within, by whatever name, were indeed a kind of *senryū*; for the word *suetsumuhana* denotes a type of safflower, the tip of which was pinched off (just as Senryū himself cherry-picked the most colorful verses, an act that later would give rise to the term *senryū*) for his *Manku awase*—to create rouge (*beni*), a color (like pink) with sexual connotations. In fact, *suetsumuhana* is also echoic of the term *sueban* 末番, another contemporary term for *bareku*, meaning those verses at the “bottom of the barrel.” This is where these verses presumably ended up due to their subject matter, which dealt with the “extremities” of the lower part of the body, that is to say sex and excretion (as per Bakhtin’s carnivalesque). Of course, *suetsumuhana* also refers to the derisive nickname in *The Tale of Genji* for the lady with the comically long red-tipped nose. Thus, the word further connotes an exaggerated humor as well as this vague sexuality.

There were also *bareku*-only collections whose verses were composed expressly for that collection. The *most* unprintable one, perhaps, was *Willow Leaf-tips* (*Yanagi no hazue* 柳の葉末, 1835), whose verses were composed at various parties hosted by the likes of Ryūsha and Akako under the guidance of Senryū IV (a.k.a. Hitomi Shūsuke). Its title plays both on the *yanagi* (willow) of Karai Senryū’s *Willow Barrel* (*Yanagidaru* 柳多留, 1765-1838), thereby suggesting

³⁴ gill, *Octopussy*, p. 453.

³⁵ Okada Hajime, *Yanagi no hazue zenshaku* (Yūkō shobō, 1956).

³⁶ Solt, “Willow Leaf-tips,” p. 129.

Senryū IV's role in editing *Yanagi no hazue*, and on the *sue* of *Suetsumuhana*, confirming the popularity of the term *sueban* for *bareku*. Whereas the *sue* or "tip" usually refers to the top of a tree, however, in the case of a willow the uppermost leaves trail in the muck—which, as Senryū IV is quick to observe in his Preface, is precisely where most of these verses amusingly settle.

This quibble about nomenclature and the resultant conflation of *bareku* with *senryū* notwithstanding, gill should be applauded for rolling up his sleeves and diving into the muck so enthusiastically.

The Paraverse Method

The chief innovation running throughout gill's works, not just those under review, is his paraverse method. It is also the most conspicuous aspect of his works, since it departs visually from the layout of standard translation volumes. None of his books sport the usual pared-down haiku-in-translation look. gill arranges his multiple translations spatially on the page less as parallel verses per se than in clusters (perhaps "clusterversing" would be more apropos?). About this unusual layout, gill remarks:

...I came to feel that multiple translations, conceptually justified or not, *looked* bad. Presented in serial, strung-out down a page, or even spanning pages, a multiple-translation fails to convince; *many* poems are not *a* poem. Moreover, as haiku lines are very short, the waste of space/paper/trees represented by the broad margins was troubling. So, I started to experiment with mixes of single, double and even triple columns. It was not easy, for Microsoft Word columns have many quirks which are exaggerated when one mixes Japanese and English. But the torture was worth it, for the effect was stunning. Presented in side-by-side pairs or more complex clusters such as 1-2-1, 2-1-2, 2-3-2, 1-2-3-2-1, the multiple readings are experienced as a singular translation, a composite, *i.e.*, one multi-faceted *crystalline*(?) object of word art, a poem! Unless someone else has done this before, I would seem to have come up with a *major literary invention*,

albeit one with limited use, for clusters only work with tiny poems, such as Japanese *haiku*, *senryū* or short Chinese rhymes that can be written in squares as small as 4 x 4 characters.³⁷

It is impossible to replicate these clusters as they appear in his books in the format of the present journal, but a glance at a page will suffice (**Figure 3**).

Now, regardless of whether one agrees with gill's sense of aesthetics, two principle concerns with the paraverse method stand out. For one thing, offering multiple translations of the same poem does not always augment our understanding of the original, and sometimes may actually detract from it, if not undercut gill's authority as a translator. For another thing, gill paraverses more than verses. That is, he gives us multiple versions of his interpretations—and even his books themselves (not to mention his titles). At best, this may provide a model for a brave new form of scholarly publishing in a digital age. At worst, however, this ends up devolving into a real muddle.

³⁷ gill, *A Dolphin in the Woods*, p. 18.

170 *Holeless*

ことわりや穴さえ有らばさせもせめ
kotowari ya ana sae araba sase mo senu 横4
 (protest/qualification)!: hole even have-if let-do-not)

i beg your pardon
 even if she had a hole
 she wouldn't have

見た事も無くて小町の穴を云い 新編
mita koto mo nakute komachi no ana o ii 三
 (seen-thing even not komachi's hole[acc.] saying)

without seeing it
making pronouncements
 re. *komachi's hole*

all this talk of
something never seen
komachi's hole

Sometime in the 80's or the 90's, I recall seeing a photograph of a mummy on a hanging advertisement for a weekly magazine which stuck in my mind because of the headline about this Silkroad find. Not only was she a *blond* in the Far East but a *virgen!* The next day, Sato Sanpei, lead cartoonist for the prestigious *Asahi Shinbun* (who was kind enough to treat me to sushi when I got some of his work into the *Japan Times*), had her with blushing cheeks – how he did it in b&w I cannot recall – a quote of the “virgen” claim and some words to the effect that she was horribly embarrassed that they were so rude as to look.

おしい事聞かずに散る花の色
oshii koto hirakazu ni chiru hana no iro
 (regrettable thing open-not falling blossom's color/beauty)

what beauty lost
when a flower blows without
having bloomed!

what a waste!
the beauty of the blossom
that never blooms

a thing to regret
the bloom that drops
un-opened

a crying shame
this bud never knew
the birds & bees

The phrase “flower’s color/eros/beauty” (*hana no iro*) is commonly found in *Komachi ku* not actually naming her. Another: “*The beauty of / a flower that remains / virgin for life*” (生誕で一生くらす花の色 乃? *hi-masume de isshō karasu hana no iro*). They play upon her own *waka* (“*hana no iro* . . .”) regretting beauty lost as she wasted her life on idle concerns. Until I read her poems in Carter’s *Traditional Japanese Poetry*, I might have agreed with her self-evaluation. But, when you read “*In my idleness / I turn to look at the sky – / though it’s not as if / the man I am waiting for / will descend from the heavens,*” or another *waka* expressing her desire to share with someone the bush clover bloom and chime of the clear-toned cicada* in the evening glow, you *know* her life was well spent.

Before exploring these issues, a word on the paraverse method itself. gill provides on average two or three translations of each poem (not counting his helpful word-for-word literal translations), sometimes more, fewer times less. It would seem that, as with the alternative titles, gill resists allowing himself to be pinned down to a single version of anything. Since no single English translation could ever quite capture the true essence of the Japanese original (gill somewhere observes that Korean comes much closer), offering several versions of the same verse can, he maintains, help readers to better triangulate the play of meanings in the original.

Gill makes this claim throughout his writings whenever he discusses his paraverse method. He does so most succinctly, perhaps, in the introduction to his most recent work, *A Dolphin in the Woods*, where he explains that he took his inspiration from the likes of Alan Watts, “who noted the skeletal nature of Chinese not only permits but *asks for* multiple readings” as well as from Sato Hiroaki’s book *One Hundred Frogs* (1983), in which Sato provides a slew of translations of Bashō’s famous frog poem:

Then, in 2003, as I worked on my first book of translated haiku for publication (900+ *ku* about sea cucumber), I realized [that paraversing] was not *just* a game. For many *ku*, more than one translation was *needed* to cover ambiguity, express manifold meaning, or supply enough cultural background for it to be fully understood without the wit destroyed by explanation and extra beats.³⁸

Now, whether providing multiple verses (*ku*) fully explains the meaning of the original without the extra information that gill provides, however, is a matter of debate. Sometimes he is more successful than others. Let us take a test case, selected at random:

nanuka baka nan-no kotta to nyobo ii
 (‘seven-days only what things[!#?],’ wife says)

get a life!
 seven days are nothing
 says his wife

what’s seven days
 out of your life! stop bitching
 says his wife

just seven days
 what’s the big fuckin’ deal!
 says the wife

seven whole days
 a big ado about nothing
 laughs his wife

Here we see some rhyme, though it is not as prodigious as his *kyōka* renderings. One wonders, though, if the semantic differences among these paraverses really justify their inclusion?

Or consider the following (not selected at random):

(senzuri o kaki-ofuseta no [sic] ga shihainin)

³⁸ gill, *A Dolphin in the Woods*, pp. 17-18.

delayed gratification

the clerk who beat / his rivals by beating off /
alone?—the boss

the masturbator / is the one who became / the
master later

he who made do / with jacking off now / the
company boss³⁹

Sometimes not all of the translations are by gill. Take his discussion of *ateire*, which he defines as the “targeted insertion” of a dildo, as opposed to *ategaki*, either the “aimed stroking” of men or clitoral masturbation:

nigaoe de ateire o suru nagatsubone
(resemble-face-with aim-insert-do chamber-
maid)

staring at an actor print / the harem cham-
bermaid / inserts her dildo [trans. solt]

an actor’s likeness / for the chamber-maid’s /
targeted insertion [gill]

gill goes on to compare notes, adding yet a third version:

Solt’s translation captures the action perfectly, and Screech’s “Using a ‘likeness picture’ / She sticks it in / The serving woman” serves to bring out the fact that pictures were used—a well-made point in his book *Sex and the Floating World*, is that hard or soft (clothed) pictures could be used for masturbation—but neither of these previous translations caught the wit, which in senryu, is to say the poet’s intent. It is, of course, the invention of that *new term*. As there is no TM to indicate it is new, one must waste a lot of time on senryu to catch it (Syunroan explains, but because of my familiarity with *ategaki*, I had cracked it on my own!) Screech also opines that a dildo or fingers could be stuck in. *The words by themselves could allow it*, but I have yet to find a single *nagatsubone*

who used her fingers. For *that* you need an ordinary maidservant, a *gejo*, not one who wears fine clothing in a palace!⁴⁰

It might be countered that Screech’s “She sticks it in” somehow captures more of the wit than gill’s own “targeted insertion.” To be fair, though, gill does not always treat his versions as superior. Sometimes he doffs his hat to others. Either way, though, and even when the paraverses are all his, gill may run the risk of undermining his own authority.

This is the reason that translators have traditionally considered multiple translations of a single poem anathema. Any translator worth his or her salt should be able to render a single poem into a single translation, the logic runs. Furthermore, gill admits that many of his paraverses deliberately pursue readings of the original that may not be warranted: “Readers who fancy themselves to be traditionalists and are unfamiliar with my work, may be wary of a translator who confesses from the start that he will be literally unfaithful to the originals in order to be spiritually true. If you know my work, however, you know there is nothing to fear, for I always provide the original Japanese, a romanization, a word-by-word gloss and ample explanation (of which the numerous composite translations play a role) of what cannot be translated. This permits me to play without compunction and you, the reader, to see what is what and make your own judgment.”⁴¹

This approach may actually be canny. After all, limiting oneself to a single translation of each poem implies that there is—or at least *should be*—a one-to-one correspondence between a translation and its original, an implication that might well be questioned even without the benefit of so much recent translation theory. Anyway, since gill publishes on his own dime, he need not limit himself this way if he chooses not to. Moreover, the open-endedness of the paraverse method matches the open-endedness of the poems themselves, which often have more than one possible interpretation. Or rather, could it be that the original poem has one multifaceted

³⁹ gill, *Octopussy*, p. 67.

⁴⁰ gill, *Octopussy*, p. 85.

⁴¹ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 25.

range of meanings and the paraverse method is really just rendering the same interpretation into English in multiple ways? Either way, for every reader turned off by the seemingly radical indeterminacy of paraversing, gill may well earn another reader who doesn't mind—or even enjoys—the semantic juggling act.

Gills Gone Wild! Perverse Paraversing

The more intractable problem, though, is that gill applies his paraverse method promiscuously to more than his rendering of verses. I am not referring here to his penchant for multiple titles to his books, or even for the recipes on his website < www.paraverse.org > for cooking up different versions of his printed books. Once there, readers can not only find “*Errata & Lacuna*” to his various works, but also write in with their own comments and corrigenda, so that the stability of any of gill's printed texts is constantly in flux. In this sense, it might be said that gill's true medium is a mixed-media palimpsest. His printed books aspire to the interactivity and hypertextuality of the web. This means that gill's work is ahead of the curve, and thus, his wonderful eccentricities aside, it can provide a model, of sorts, for scholarly presentation in the age of digital reproduction. gill's books represents the closest, perhaps, that printed text can come to mimicking the open-endedness of the internet, though print must perforce always remain the net's pale shadow.

The problem is rather that gill's writing itself more often than not feels inchoate. Even “just” in the printed versions of his texts, strikeouts—included to be read as rejected—are not uncommon. This is presumably to share every last movement of his mind with the reader, even his banana-peel missteps, as though to imply that those who would do less are somehow less than candid: “Because, [sic] I provide glosses, readers can see what I do, but academics generally do not share that information => I am not the only one adding and subtracting words; I am just open about it.”⁴² And elsewhere: “your author believes in sharing failure as well as triumph.”⁴³

⁴² gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 59.

⁴³ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 25.

No doubt such statements will strike some readers as scrupulously honest. Others, though, may find these statements honest to a fault. I can see how they would antagonize many “academics” (and others) as presumptuous (for assuming that readers are interested in over-explaining) as well as sanctimonious. But it is the persistent destabilization of his prose that can be exasperating. Why should space—and the reader's time—be freighted by material otherwise meant for the editorial scrapheap? Is this really meaningful? Addressing the not unrelated issue of the organization of his work, gill confesses “the arrangement *is* pretty haphazard, even sloppy. A friend and critic who is *always* dismayed by my lack of editing, may find it absolutely appalling, yet another example, and *the worst*, of a book published before it was, properly speaking, a *book*.”⁴⁴

Regrettably, I would have to agree with the friend. Why not edit out the strikeouts? Do they really add anything vital, for instance, to our knowledge of the poems in gill's section “*Devil's Tongue for a Merkin?*”:

konnyaku o memekko ni suru hana no yoi
32-8

~~making a cunt~~
~~from the devil's tongue~~
~~blossom drunk~~

choosing konjak
that looks like nookie
on blossom eve

~~a blossom drunk~~
~~turns his konjak into~~
~~a piece of tail~~

Konnyaku, or *konjak* as it is sometimes written in English[,] is also *devil's tongue* according to my Japanese-English dictionary, though the definition found in my English-English dictionary “a foul-smelling fleshy herb, *Hydrosme rivieri*, of the Old World tropics” suggests otherwise (for it is found in temperate Japan). The starch is cooked and formed into springy—close to whale blub-

⁴⁴ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 13.

ber—rectangular or round blocks which have a somewhat off-color, sexy smell (whether foul or not depends on your taste). I suppose it would be possible to take a round block and fashion it to look like a vulva just for the hell of it, but, this is, after all a *senryū*, and it is more likely a lonely drunk is preparing to jack off with a piece of konjak while sitting in the bloomshade under the falling petals. □
So, I thought, but Okada notes there is a bona-fide way konjak is prepared where it looks that way (probably to hold the sauce=flavor)!⁴⁵

While all of this may be fascinating, it would have been more to the point simply to state that *konnyaku* 蒟蒻 was a key ingredient, along with such things as rawhide, velvet (*birōdo* 天鷲絨), and fur, in the *azumagata* 東形, the infamous Edo-style artificial vagina.⁴⁶ It might be countered that since the poem is all about getting plastered in the “bloomshade” (gill’s poetic creation for “beneath the cherry blossoms” that one wishes he had not cancelled out), the false starts and double takes communicate the poet’s inebriated state, in a way. Unfortunately, though, this kind of performative act is the exception that proves the rule.

Too Much Information

At its worst, gill’s paraverse-style writing can be deliberately and distractingly digressive. For instance, gill’s *Foreword* on x-rated *senryū*—which begins on page XXX (another gag, of course; the surrounding pages are 10 and 12), runs 3 pages, picks up again on p. 435, and zig-zags on and on through various notes, notes to notes, *apologia*, sidebars that gill terms “eddies,” and so on and so forth—is a coralline labyrinth. All of this makes *Octopussy* a tangle of texts that a university professor may want to think long and hard about before assigning to undergraduate beginners, though some fun-loving souls among them might not be irreconcilably put off.

⁴⁵ gill, *Octopussy*, pp. 77-78.

⁴⁶ For more on this, see Tanobe Tomizō, *Ishamitate Edo no kōshoku* (Kawade shobō, 1989), pp. 177-79.

For gill, the advantage of paraversing is that it provides the latitude to explore his subjects in the manner of Blyth’s freewheeling ruminations on *haiku* and *senryū*, only more so. For the reader, the benefit comes from allowing oneself to be taken on an idiosyncratic and at times extremely personal journey of discovery by a guide who knows the terrain better than most. If you like gill’s personality, this can be immense fun. gill also justifies his paraversing as educational, providing students of Japanese poetry with a sense of the translation process as well as the polysemic density of these verses. Paraversing helps with the paranomasia.

It must be said that while paraversing may convey something of the process of translating these verses from the Japanese, it is doubtful that most students of Japanese poetry would really have the time or the desire to retrace all of gill’s mental acrobatics. With all of the dizzying contortions, gill sometimes loses track of his pedagogical aims and veers into the incessantly personal—or even the private. There is a difference, after all, between being open about the process of translation and opening up about one’s innermost psyche. Speculating on one of Nanpo’s pseudonyms, Yomo no Akara, gill reveals parenthetically: “I read an explanation once, but it must not have been very interesting. I forgot it.”⁴⁷ How is this admission beneficial to the student of Japanese poetry? How is it not self-indulgent?

More vexingly, gill’s woeful circumstances are a not infrequent subject of asides: “by removing trace elements, tears *do* have calming properties, according to research in a blue paperback in a cardboard box in a warehouse in Japan, waiting a decade for its owner, a pauper, to sell enough books of his own to be able to afford to settle down and be reunited with his library.”⁴⁸ Departing from the mistranslation of *kabocha*: “Well, maybe that is less frightening than the all too real specter of poverty that keeps millions of men—such as your author—single.”⁴⁹ His fulmination against those who poke fun at thinness (as per a poem from the *Man’yōshū*) runs in this

⁴⁷ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 592.

⁴⁸ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 58.

⁴⁹ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 593.

vein, too: “An involuntarily thin man myself, I resent kidding about something that cannot be helped. Fat people have a choice. No one has to eat.”⁵⁰ Why does one attempt to translate comic poetry in the first place? “Because translating wit helped him forget his tinnitus and country exile.”⁵¹

Only a heartless person would not feel sorry for gill, whose plight sounds miserable indeed. But what does his personal plight have to do with comic poetry—unless he is trying to say that the ethos of *senryū* and *kyōka* compels him to disclose his own secrets, or that in order to translate Japanese poetry well one must suffer badly? One’s sympathy is sometimes undercut when his statements smack of self pity: “Circumstances do not allow me to move to a city or drive to a university library. I am stuck on a country property burdened with animals—tax-cows, old dogs and other merciless time-eaters—...without money to move or hire help for I am the help, or even for auto-insurance, without which I dare not borrow her old clunker.”

gill veers off road even further here, which is the right of any self-published author, perhaps. He continues: “Moreover, *we should not have to drive for access*. Library policies requiring *physical presence* for data-base use are anti-social and anti-ecological. Why waste fossil fuel for what can be moved on-line at infinitely less cost?”⁵² It turns out that true to his convictions gill has made his books available on-line at Google: “With books 100% viewable, they should also be reviewable without the loss of paper=trees. But if anyone who reads this does such a review, please see the continually updated Errata, as mentioned in my last message!”⁵³

Still, just because gill provides multiple versions of more than his translations need not condemn the paraverse method itself. In fact, it

might be said that paraversing informs gill’s understanding of parody, a crucial element of *senryū* and *kyōka*, and qualifies him uniquely to handle this poetry. Perhaps gill is able to handle comic verse so well because of paraversing. In one of his forewords to *Mad in Translation*, gill observes:

To appreciate parody, you must know the parodied, which must also be translated. That would only be inconvenient—more explanation—were not *the linguistic gap between our languages so large the parody and the parodied may lose much if not most of their similarity in translation*...while I say ‘parody’ for lack of a broader term, in most cases, the play upon the original, which may change as little as one letter, might better be called a *mutation*, and if that sounds too random, too natural, the only suitable word I can think of would be a term I invented to describe poems that changed so much in translation that I was forced to admit I was creating something new, alternative to or taking off on the original *paraverses*.⁵⁴

The insight here is that there is a synergy between paraverse translation and parody, by which I assume gill means the narrow sense of imitation to ridicule, instead of a more expansive parody (of the sort Linda Hutcheon and others have proposed).⁵⁵ This may well be the reason that gill excels in the translation of parodic verse in the broad sense he seems *not* to mean. In the final analysis, this is probably why *Octopussy* and *Mad in Translation* are preferable to gill’s more serious works—and, for that matter, why they may also be preferable, even with all their quirks, to the preponderance of academic translations of Edo-period comic poetry.

⁵⁰ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 56. gill renders the headnote to the poem in question, *MYS* #3853, as *Kidding a Thin Man*.

⁵¹ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 13.

⁵² gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 595.

⁵³ <http://www.japannavigator.com/2009/05/05/the-paraverse-of-robin-d-gill-countless-haiku-and-some-intercultural-musings/> Accessed January 5, 2010.

⁵⁴ gill, *Mad in Translation*, p. 24.

⁵⁵ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985). However, Hutcheon herself has since acknowledged major problems with her own approach. See her *Irony’s Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Other Works by Gill Mentioned Herein

Cherry Blossom Epiphany: The Poetry and Philosophy of a Flowering Tree. Key Biscayne, FL: paraverse press, 2007.

A Dolphin in the Woods: Composite Translation, Paraversing & Distilling Prose. Key Biscayne, FL: paraverse press, 2009.

The Fifth Season: In Praise of Old Haiku, a Saijiki of Delightful Density. Key Biscayne, FL: paraverse press, 2007.

Fly-ku! A Theme from In Praise of Old Haiku. Key Biscayne, FL: paraverse, 2005.

Kyôka, Japan's Comic Verse: A Mad in Translation Reader. Key Biscayne, FL: paraverse press, 2009.

Rise Ye, Sea Slugs: A Theme from in Praise of Olde Haiku, With Many More Poems and Fine Elaboration. Key Biscayne, FL: paraverse press, 2003.

Topsy-turvy 1585—a translation and explication of Luis Fróis S.J.'s TRATADO listing 611 ways Europeans & Japanese are contrary. Key Biscayne, FL: paraverse press, 2004.

Hiroko Johnson *Western Influence on Japanese Art: The Akita Ranga Art School and Foreign Books*

Amsterdam: Hotei Books, 2005

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Many things can happen when an admirable dissertation is reworked into a book. Sometimes the result is a *tour de force* of details that may overwhelm the average reader; sometimes it is a *piece de résistance* of theoretical references and rhetorical devices blinding us to weaknesses in the factual-level scholarship. This volume, by contrast, strives to reach past the limited scope of the original thesis and move into the realm of a broad survey of the topic; unfortunately the title outpaces the contents.

The structure of the volume is fairly straightforward. After an introduction that sets down the underlying premises (and includes the book's only illustration from before the eighteenth century), Hiroko Johnson gives us five essays on the history of Westernized art in Japan up to around the year 1800. The first chapter outlines the contact of Japanese artists with European painting from the arrival of the first Portuguese visitors in 1543 through the closure of most ports in 1634 to the loosening of restrictions in the 1730s. This chapter closes with a brief account of Hiraga Gennai (1728-1779), a scholar of "Dutch learning" (*rangaku*) who came to Akita in 1773. Chapter Two recounts the first autopsies in Japan, along with the earliest translation of anatomical texts by Sugita Genpaku (1733-1817) and their illustration by Odano Naotake (1749-1780). Chapter Three, "Three Elements, Signatures, and Seals" analyzes horizon lines, reflections on water, and emphases on the foreground in the work of Naotake and his feudal master, Satake Shozan (1748-1785). The fourth chapter describes Shozan's sketchbooks and their relationship to Dutch works in the libraries of Gennai and Genpaku. Johnson's final chapter expounds a theory of the "cultural middle class" consisting of lower-level samurai, wealthy farmers, merchants, and artisans whose interactions resulted in the cultural developments of the middle Edo period, particularly Akita *Ranga*. A brief "Conclusion" completes the volume, along with translations of three texts by Shozan, notes, bibliography, and an index.

Hiroko Johnson's basic work and research on Naotake, Shozan, Genpaku, and the beginnings of Europeanization in Japanese painting of the late eighteenth century is quite sound. She is at her best in this volume when analyzing specific works in detail, such as her coverage, in Chapter Two, of the process by which Genpaku translated and Naotake illustrated *Kaitai shinsho*, Japan's first anatomy text. Her description in Chapter Three of the stylistic elements that make up Akita *Ranga*, the "Dutch Painting" developed in Shozan's fief in northern Japan, is exquisitely dense, leaving readers with no doubt that they will recognize any example of this type of painting we might come across. And her comparative analysis of Shozan's sketchbooks with paintings by Naotake, Shozan, and such related painters as Shiba Kōkan is clear and complete (if a bit lacking in dramatic tension and hence rather dry).

The volume works less effectively when Johnson tries to raise broader questions. Her opening chapter surveys the influence of the West on Japanese painting up to the time of the book's main subjects in the mid-eighteenth century. While there are few factual errors in this survey, there is also very little that is new—this ground was covered as early as 1964, in an article by Miki Tanmon in *Monumenta Nipponica*, and of course by Cal French in the groundbreaking exhibition and catalog *Through Closed Doors: Western Influence on Japanese Art (1639-1853)*. Moreover Johnson trips up on the occasional detail—identifying the province that includes Hirado and Nagasaki as Bugo rather than Bungo (p. 21), or naming an early painter Emosaku rather than Emonsaku (p. 20). She fails to draw much of a distinction, in this early chapter, between Western subjects and Western styles, which is all the more remarkable in light of the distinction accurately drawn in Chapter Three. The later part of Chapter One suffers from overuse of the term "school," which may be confusing to readers who unaccustomed to this somewhat antiquated term for any group of painters with similar characteristics, whether or not they are linked to a teaching institution that transmits the style from one generation to the next. There are other confusions in her art historical terminology, such as a general conflation of "shadow" and "shading," the former usually reserved for areas on a depicted object not struck by light from a unified source, the latter referring to any darkening of areas of color in an attempt to cre-

ate three-dimensional rendering even if not accurately depicting projected light (or lack thereof).

Between this introductory chapter and the concluding section come the three chapters mentioned above, which cover their subjects quite nicely. The two scholars of Dutch learning, Hiraga Gennai and Sugita Genpaku, are deeply important for these chapters; unfortunately the standard cataloging information for the volume does not refer to them. Like the first chapter (and the overall title for the volume), the closing argument seems to take on more than it delivers, trying to convince us that the movement toward Western style is a product of the “cultural middle class” even though the prime movers were two elite scholars, a daimyo, and his retainer.

The volume also suffers from a gap in scholarship. Though clearly based on much research, the bibliography does not reference many works published after the completion of Johnson’s dissertation in 1994. Of special significance here is the lack of engagement with the arguments of Timon Screech, particularly his *Lens Within the Heart: The Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan*, published in 1996 with an updated edition in 2002 from the University of Hawai’i Press. Screech brought a new level of theoretical sophistication to Western thinking about Western influence in Japanese painting, prints, and books—precisely the topics Johnson covers here. Her old-school stylistic analysis remains important for the specialist and the aficionado, but for readers less familiar with art historical methods, or less interested in the narrow developmental process of eighteenth century Japanese painting, this volume will probably seem flat in conception and dull in execution.

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- Timothy H. Barrett, "Tominaga Our Contemporary," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series 3, no. 2 (1993): 245-52.

Bitō Masahide. "Thought and Religion: 1550-1700," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Volume Four: *Early Modern Japan*, edited by John W. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 373-424.

Thesis citations:

- Willem Jan Boot, "The Adoption and Adaptation of Neo-Confucianism in Japan: The Role of Fujiwara Seika and Hayashi Razan" (D. Lit., University of Leiden, 1983).
- Adriana Delprat, "Forms of Dissent in the Genroku Literature of Hiraga Gennai (1728-1780)" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1985)

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