

At Wit's End: Satirical Verse Contra Formative Ideologies in *Bakumatsu* and Meiji Japan

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Rap on a half-cut head
there is the sound of makeshift conserva-
tism.

Rap on a full-cut head
you hear the restoration of imperial rule.

Rap the close-cropped head
there is the sound of civilization and
enlightenment.

半髪頭をたたいて見れば、因循姑息の音
がする。

総髪頭をたたいて見れば、王政復古の音
がする。

ジャンギリ頭をたたいてみれば、文明開
化の音がする。

The Place of Satirical and Protest Verse Forms in *Bakumatsu* and Meiji Japan¹

This paper examines the historical parameters for writing satirical verse during the late *bakumatsu* and early Meiji period.² Focusing spe-

¹ I would like to thank William Sibley at the University of Chicago for his suggestions in numerous translations and regarding keys points made in this paper, Kano Masanao and Haru Shiro at Waseda University for introducing me to *rakusho* and sources, and to the anonymous reviewers who raised clarifying issues.

² *Bakumatsu* is the historiographical term for the period of the downfall of the Tokugawa Bakufu, the government and system that had unified the country since the early 17th century. Its decline extends from the 1830s to 1868, the year the Meiji period begins and imperial rule is restored. I will treat verse as late as the 1890s.

cifically on *senryu* (“comic haiku”), *rakusho* (graffiti in verse), and *hayariuta* (popular songs), it explores correspondences of class and genre during this period of ideological transformation from last years of the Tokugawa Bakufu to the modern nation of Japan. Reading representative examples of these anonymous verses, it attempts to analyze these verse genres and subgenera in their historical contexts to identify their ideological positioning relative to current social issues. In increasing our understanding of the ideological uses associated with specific verse genres, forms and conventions, these verses, ostensibly rooted in protest and satire, provide detailed sketches of changes in the ideological contexts within which they were written. One can see most dramatically in *senryu* of the mid Meiji period a transformation from being protest verse to being mildly satirical verse in confluence with broader national policies and ideological tendencies.

One can see in these verses various struggles to make sense of the change from an officially isolated Tokugawa context and ideology to a multinational array of ideologies within which “Japan” resituates itself. One of the recurrent themes in satirical verses of this period is how to solve widespread problems and build a great nation in comparison with European nations. These verses demonstrate the range of debate in the process of this transformation, and are ideologically productive, not merely “reflective” of any tenuously established ideologies. These verses detail evidence of class-specific accommodations made as writers surmised broadly acceptable ideological bases for mutually tolerated beliefs and behaviors among the various existing and nascent classes.

From the mid 1850s through the crushing defeat of the last serious samurai rebellion in 1877, the country remained precariously balanced between reactionary samurai seeking a return to power, peasant protestors, and the new bureaucracy in Tokyo. The government stood on shaky ground not only in terms of the threat of a counter-revolution by the old guard of the warrior class; it was thought that a revolution from below could grow out of the People's Rights Movement, which had successfully built its movement in part by the “word of mouth” effect of disseminated

hayariuta (popular songs), some of which resemble *shintaiishi* more than songs. For instance, Ueki Emori's (1857-1892) "*Minken Inaka Uta*" (Rural Song of People's Rights, 1879), which, though published before the seminal *Shintaishisho* (1882), has elements of both *shintaiishi* and *hayariuta*:

Freedom, endowing the body of man
from head to foot, surpasses
the many fleeting things of the heart,
merges mind and body – call it
a realm of heaven and earth
with oneself a person standing on one's own
with nothing else lacking,
declaring the liberation of man.
freedom, freedom, man is free....

自由なるぞや人間のからだ
頭も足も備はりて
心の靈妙万物に越える
心と身とが俱はるわ
一の天地を伝ふもよし
自分一人は一人で立つよ
なにも不足はなひぞいの
そこらで人間を自由と申す
自由じや自由じや人間は自由³

Kubota Masafumi even recognizes it as the first original poem in a new style, beside translations by Nakajima Hiroteri (1792-1864) and Katsu Kaishu (1823-1899), translations of hymns (*sanbika*), very popular "crazy poems" (*kyoshi*) by Narushima Ryuhoku (1837-1884), and Fukuzawa Yukichi's *Sekai Kuni Tsukushi* and *Ansho Jushi*, all of which lack the rhetoric of rhapsodic integration found in both the "*Minken Inaka Uta*" and the translations and original poems of the *Shintaishisho*. Composed at the peak of the *jiyu-minken* movement, Kubota correctly sees Toyama Masakazu's (1848-1900) "*Battoutai*" as having been written in "strict opposition" to Ueki's "*Minken Inaka Uta*." "*Battoutai*" (抜刀隊, Sword-Drawing Brigade) opens:

We soldiers of the empire have our enemies,
imperial enemies impermissible in the
realm.
Though the enemy general be great,
a hero unsurpassed in any age,
Though the warriors marching in his wake
go together to their certain death,
Courage to stand undaunted before fierce
gods
cannot justify rebellion against heaven.

吾は官軍我が敵は 天地容れざる朝敵ぞ
敵の大將たる者は 古今無双の英雄で
これに従うつわものは 共に慄悍決死の
士
鬼神に恥じぬ勇あるも 天の許さぬ反
逆を
起こせし者は昔より 栄えしためし有ら
ざるぞ
敵の亡ぶるそれ迄は 進めや進め諸共に
玉散る劍抜きつれて 死する覚悟で進む
べし⁴

In terms of style and ideology, "*Minken Inaka Uta*" used colloquial language (*zokugo*) and was in the "enlightenment style (*keimochō*), which intended to empower the subjects of an envisioned democratic Japan, while "*Battoutai*" used a *kanshi* (Chinese poetry) style aligned with the samurai of the former Tokugawa ruling class, and was written in a "commanding style" (*meireicho*), which intended to inculcate in the reader a sense of patriotic mission. "*Battoutai*" sought to unify the country by rousing in unison the forces that had been opposed in the Seinan War, and depicted both government and rebels as patriotic, though Saigo's side as having been tragically misguided.⁵

This demonstrated power of song and poetry convinced the Meiji government and its allies of the ideological potential of verse, and it sponsored deployments of poetry that championed unity of purpose in its policies of nation-building

⁴ Yamamiya 43-44.

⁵ See 's Kubota Masafumi. *Nihon Gendaishi Jiten*, Hokujindo, 1955, 262-263.

³ Ueki Emori. *Ueki Emori Zenshu*, v. 1. Iwanami, 1990, 30-34.

under the program of the Kaika (or Enlightenment, as in the slogan *Bunmei Kaika*, “Civilization and Enlightenment”).⁶ The government’s influence on *shintaiishi* is discussed by Honma Hisao, who while calling Ueki’s poetry “no more than infantile, propagandistic literature,”⁷ argues that the use of poetry and song by Ueki Emori and other participants in the *jiyuminken* movement to disseminate their ideals directly lead to the use of such forms for other propagandistic purposes, though with less ostensibly politico-ideological ends.⁸ We must add, precedents for such uses of verse are found most notably in Fukuzawa Yukichi’s *Sekai Kunizukushi* (Meiji 4), and others who found in the model of the versified textbooks of the *terakoya* (Tokugawa era schools especially for merchant children) an apt form for educating and influencing people ideologically. What was different in *shintaiishi*, as it drew on the *jiyuminken* movement’s use of poetry, was the emotional and patriotic investment in the voice, something virtually absent in the dry use of verse by earlier writers such as Fukuzawa, who had been trained in the writing of scholarly *kan-shi*, which tend to demonstrate restraint and a rhetoric of sound Confucian equanimity. Thus we

see in the *Shintaishisho* the use of verse to co-opt the rhapsodic, patriotic vision found in Ueki’s *jiyuminken hayariuta-shintaiishi*, so as to supplant the threat of unrest and focus on “freedom” the exaltation of discrete subjects with a more duty-bound patriotic fervor for an emperor-oriented nation.

It was in no small part this governmental effort to maintain power that engendered *shintaiishi*, the high-profile, “literary” verse form emerging after the Meiji Restoration and modeled mostly after English verse in the *Shintaisho*. In this way, the grass roots satirical verses and *hayariuta* stimulated ideological counter measures by the Meiji regime, which attempted to discredit them by offering literary *shintaiishi* as a superior alternative. The successful propagation of the *jiyuminken* movement by disseminating *hayariuta* (some of which have been called *shin-hayariuta* [new popular songs]⁹ as well as *shintaiishi* [new-style poems]) lead the government itself to sponsor anthologies of *shoka* (school songs, songs for singing), which figure prominently in the history of *shintaiishi*.¹⁰ Similarly, pro-government writers translated and wrote *shintaiishi*, aligning themselves with the government and viewing *hayariuta* as a destabilizing threat to it. As the government censored *hayariuta* of the people’s rights movement, in their

⁶ “*Bunmei Kaika*” was a slogan to modernize on the model of advanced European countries and the United States. Thus the “Kaika” is the period from the 1870s through the 1880s when the government exacted policies, such as the support for translating Western publications, and changes in the legal codes so as to encourage the adoption of Western socio-political culture and expunge what was considered vulgar and not meeting Western standards of being “civilized” as they were understood at the time (military might, wealth, technology and industry figured prominently).

⁷ Though the intertextual politics surrounding the uses of various *shintaiishi* styles (such as in “*Minken Inaka Uta*” and “*Battoutai*”) by different political and literary interests will be developed in a later work, a brief overview of pertinent issues is presented here. Honma Hisao. *Meiji Bungakushi [shimo]*. Tokyodo, 1949, 68.

⁸ Honma 69.

⁹ See Soeda’s discussion of the *jiyuminken* movement songs as “*shin-hayariuta*” in Soeda Toshimichi [Azenbo]. *Hayariuta Meiji Taisho Shi*. Tosui Shobo, 1983 [1933], 37. For poems or songs included in both *hayariuta* and *shintaiishi* collections and anthologies from the Meiji period to the present, see, for instance, Soeda, 26, 41ff; Fujizawa Morihiko. *Ryukoka Hyakunenshi*. Daiichi Shuppansha, 1951. 1951, 267, 233; and Yamamiya Makoto, ed. *Nihon Gendaishi Taikei*, v.I. Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1974, 88-89.

¹⁰ On the government’s role and motives in the publication of *shoka* see Tadayoshi Keizo. *Kindai Nihon Ongaku Kyoikushi* (2 volumes), Gakubunsha, 1980; and Yamazumi Masumi. *Shoka Kyoiku Seiritsu Katei no Kenkyu*. Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1967.

place it encouraged verse reflecting the aim of unifying the populace and dissuading people from calling for human rights and democracy. Backers of the government sought to "enlighten" their audience with patriotic sentiments that appealed to a sense of national duty and beckoned all to emulate an aristocratic tone of valorous self-sacrifice and to extol the greatness of the national polity (implying subordination, not "liberation," of the subject).¹¹

The examples presented below demonstrate how ironies and conflicts surrounding the socio-political and cultural upheavals that define the period were not lost on any of the classes, and how verse became a tool for shrewdly shaping and amending positions with regard to the nation's state of affairs as well as the symbolic characterizations of the "nation." From the crises of the 1860s through the changes of the Kaika, the social order was extremely unstable in terms of political leadership, economics, legal codes, accepted cultural practices, and foreign relations. Communities across Japan were shaken by inflation and shortages, prolonged terrorist attacks and fighting by samurai, humiliation at the hands of foreign powers wielding gunboat diplomacy and the threat of increased coercion (as they had seen happen in China). People witnessed the abolishment of the Shogun-centered *bakuhau* governing system, and a policy of Westernization under the emperor as restored monarch unifying and transforming the old Tokugawa coalition into a modern nation.

While there were internal economic and agricultural problems, a Darwinian sense of world history (within and without Japan) threatened and challenged Japan to compete in the "struggle of the fittest," so that a sense of national danger would become integral to an intoxicating patriotism that developed. Even while Japan was still vulnerable, pompous declarations of greatness and military might were common in Japan as in other modernizing nations during this age of imperialism. The gap between the precariousness of

the nation vis-à-vis foreign powers as well as internal issues and the language of grandeur became the wellspring of jokes and extended comparisons in satirical verse.

In this state of affairs, as in any society experiencing major disruptions and changes, current events and discursive aims dictated "style" as well as subject matter. For example, because of this matching of uses and style, waka, which were steeped in a tradition based on a strictly limited poetic lexicon and standardized range of topics, were incapable of treating current events involving so many changes on such a broad and material scale. Therefore, simply the attempt to engage new topics in waka (even in unorthodox or *haikai*) would necessitate lapsing into the "vulgar" or comic verse style such as is found in *kyōka* ("crazy poems") and *senryū*.¹² Yet waka composition and appreciation continued to be one of the most ideologically potent symbols of accomplished status and sovereignty for former samurai, scholars, the titular aristocracy of the court, and others. *Senryū*, *rakusho* and *hayariuta* on the other hand, formed the frontlines in the use of verse to garner political support or public sympathy at a grass-roots level. Comic, satirical and protest verses tentatively drew together diverse discourses (producing their comic effects) and tended to contribute to the potential establishment of political subjects contrary to the elitist and didactic polities of Meiji government offices.

Much satirical verse is "serious" at the same time as it elicits a raucous round of laughter in protest and leaves the problem of governing ultimately to others. The satirical and protest verses often do not imply assertions of sovereignty or even a will to rule. Indeed, even in the *yonaoshi*¹³

¹² "Crazy poems" is the designation used by the late Andrew Marcus in research on *kyōka*. See Markus, Andrew Lawrence. *The Willow Tree in Autumn: Ryūtei Tanehiko, 1783-1842*. Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1992.

¹³ Peasant *yonaoshi* "world renewal" protests were directed against rich merchants who had upset the precedence of peasants before mer-

¹¹ On the politics of "*Battotai*" and other poems in the *Shintaishisho*, as well as *shōka*, see Akatsuka Yukio. *Shintaishisho Zengo — Meiji no Shiika*. Gakugei Shorin, 1991, esp. 59-76.

and *Eejanaika*¹⁴ songs, there is little that, strictly speaking, can be called utopian or revolutionary; it is restricted protest not preoccupied with an overarching vision. There is “renewal” in a cyclical, agricultural sense or as in a carnivalesque religious purification, but not a visionary “movement” toward wide-sweeping changes. While not underscoring grandiose treatises aiming to change the world (as one finds, for instance, in P. B. Shelley and Yoshida Shoin), protest and satirical verse at this time often evidences a shrewd critical apparatus. Remonstrative practices are highly compatible with Confucian ideas of socio-political order and expectations of benevolence on the part of the rulers, who the people appeal to with respect from below.¹⁵

chants in the class hierarchy. “With a desire to level the accumulated wealth and landholdings that no longer coincided with the former status hierarchy, peasants felt it necessary to destroy the prevailing power structure that had brought village life to an impasse and to reinstitute the moral community in which their fathers used to live the life of ‘peasants.’ They petitioned for ‘the continuity of the peasantry.’ In world renewal movements (*yonaoshi*) they demanded lives suitable to their social status. Acting upon their expectations of world renewal, they destroyed houses, furniture, and goods, the concrete manifestations of insufficient benevolence and the private interest of the rich and powerful. Destruction was an expression of peasant’s indignation toward the actual world.” Hashimoto, Mitsuru. “The Social Background of Peasant Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan,” in Najita, Tetsuo and Koschmann, J. Victor. *Conflict in Modern Japanese History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, 157.

¹⁴ *Eejanaika* refers to specific instances of *yonaoshi*-like “spontaneous” religious and political protests that occurred on the eve of the restoration. See Norman in Dower, John W. *Origins of the Modern Japanese State: Selected Writings of E.H. Norman*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1975, 343-349.

¹⁵ In *kanshi* by Yoshida Shoin and imprisoned Mito Restorationists, the conventional Confucian

With the complexity of the relation of poetry and nation being compounded by issues of class and subject-position in Japan, poetry provides an opportunity for review of how we understand the origins of the modern Japanese nation and its early “working” ideologies. It is not an exaggeration to say that ideological testing of modes of integrative and centralizing enunciation took place in verse. Though *senryu* in the late 1890s displays a dramatic change in the correlation of this verse form with disputes leveled against prevalent government positions. With a growing capitulation to an ascendant nationalism, one finds that the uses of verse as a form of protest (limited primarily to *senryu* at this time) were attenuated on the left of the political spectrum.

Hayariuta, *senryu*, *kyōka* and *kyōshi* (crazy *kanshi* [Chinese poems]), as well as *rakusho* and variants of all these forms, were modes of expression that were readily adapted to and even thrived in the changing lexical and social terrains of the *bakumatsu* and early Meiji period. *Senryu* have the distinction of gracing the front pages of most major newspapers in Japan still today. However, most of the forms have disappeared, with the exception of *hayariuta*, which have evolved into *enka* and pop music (*poppusu*, *ka-yōkyoku*, or *ryūkyōka*), and *rakusho*, which have become simple, usually non-versified *rakugaki* (graffiti).

***Senryu* in the Age of an "All-encompassing Truth": Discursive Images from the *Bunmei Kaika* to the Sino-Japanese War**

As documentation of the forces that impacted the fall of the Bakufu, *senryu* provide historical references by which we may glimpse the popular hubbub over issues of the day. *Senryu* probe the imagery of public discourse with witty associations that usually refer to unstated assumptions, so as to flesh out certain ideological values.

use of the medium of poetry to critique rulers is especially notable in samurai class writing. See Moriya Hidekatsu. *Nihonshiseki kyōkai soshō*. Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan Kai, 1974; and Saiko Hikoichi. *Yoshida Shoin Zenshu*, 7. Iwanami Shoten, 1939.

George Lakoff and Mark Turner provide a compelling analysis of how words are applied in the context of supporting arrays of metaphors and associations within linguistic communities. Their work has the virtue of not being bogged down in contentious meta-theories that construct abstract models for how metaphors mean. Rather, they show how words are used with intertextual dependency on hitherto formed contexts for their usage, which are open to deliberation. In this approach, it is a small step from discussing the metaphorical backdrop for idiomatically sound enunciations to discussing the formation of ideological expectations. Manipulating words in all their metaphorical potential (*vis-à-vis* other words) already assumes the potential for imbuing certain words with evaluative connotations and establishing discursive contexts by which classes jockeyed for influence.¹⁶

Senryu are ideological, in their condensed form, both in the sense of making a statement from a restricted historical point of view, and in the "spin" they put on the news, reflecting the relative importance not only of a point of view, but of one discourse over another (in terms of contending values, paradigms, and ways of speaking about the topic at hand). *Senryu* are a great genre for demythologizing the assumed priority of one discursive context or set of issues over another. The proliferation of puns derives from foregrounding such divisions of attention in *senryu*. Puns function as fulcrums for resituating ideological givens in terms of subtexts, "misunderstandings," and displaced reasons for the occurrence of observed events. The satire of current events in *senryu* involves staging and distorting words in ways that expose ideological tensions, often by recasting decisions and actions by the ruling class in terms of common, local points of reference.

Unlike the usually drier and always illegally circulated *kudoki* (underground printings of de-

nunciatory attacks on public policies or exposés of scandals) and other openly bitter graffiti, many *rakusho* (which can include *senryu*) and most *senryu* authors found value in a process of writing and distribution that characterized hardship, unfair treatment, and official scandal in *their* terms as commoners or disgruntled lower samurai. These songs of protest and verse tracts "from below" developed ironically from a position of subservience and dependency (on the good will of the sword-bearing warrior class) to speak out in spite of their lack of political position or representation. Such verse engendered a transgressive energy and means of enunciation that could be propagated, enjoyed, and potentially create bonds of solidarity. Though one would be hard pressed to claim that late Tokugawa verse cultures of the lower classes could have developed into a revolutionary discourse, they certainly created in their example the potential for all ideologically oppositional parties (in relation to the de facto Tokugawa ruling government) to draw on the idiom of these "voices" of protest, whether of sarcasm, dire urgency or righteousness. This point helps explain how *hayariuta* became such a potent tool in the Freedom and People's Rights Movement (peaking in the early 1880s), which the government would censor while publishing its own verse to stage its own positions as it faced an increasing threat of revolution "from below."

In the process of unifying Japan as a modern nation, factions of former classes competed for legitimate voices and authority in printed texts of all types. Even during the *bakumatsu* period, fixed relationships between classes were no longer a given, as the official orthodoxy had been challenged with considerable cumulative success. Questions regarding Japan's relation to the world and history on a global scale now had been on everyone's mind since Perry's arrival in the 1850s, if not from the 1840s when news of the Opium War spread.¹⁷ As a sense of shared stakes and

¹⁶ See George Lakoff and Mark Turner's two books: *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, especially 1-26, 60-71; and *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, especially 3-105.

¹⁷ Though uncertain of the degree to which the general populace was aware of the Opium War and the general threat of colonial powers wandering the globe in search of lucrative profits, recent research by Miura Tadashi suggests that there was a considerable exchange of information

responsibilities (a national consciousness) grew during the early decades of the Meiji period, there were diminished possibilities for relying on an authoritative and serious (deadpan) “other” against which parody and punning could be effortlessly sustained. Yet, *senryu* remain to this day a means of lampooning specific events in their historical contexts (indeed, they are often indecipherable without such knowledge); however, in periods of imperial expansion and increased censorship (enforced and voluntary) the parody of serious “national” plans made “above” would lose some of its force. For instance, *gunka* (military songs) and *shoka* (school songs) were published often as part of national and local government plans to propagate stability based on an emperor-centered and fundamentally Confucian mode for representing moral action in the new context of the modern Japanese state.

The gap between the Bakufu ideology and the tentative *Bunmei Kaika* ideology (of “civilizing” socio-economic Westernization) became the driving irony for many *senryu* and humorous writings of the *Bunmei Kaika* period. There was a tendency to juxtapose extreme differences between life in the former Edo period and in the new Kaika period. In this way, *senryu* can be seen as complicating how the literature of satire had been written in the *Bakumatsu* period, in a self-effacing, critically askew manner “from below.” *Senryu*, then a disenfranchised medium, came to participate reactively in the formation of the new order. The following *senryu* displays a commoner’s view of reapportioning work and leisure time allocations after the dismantling of classes. Former peasants and merchants now supposedly would have had time to write poetry

between merchants even in the far north of Honshu and various ports around Japan. He shows how merchants in Hachinohe communicated information on the socio-political events of the day through channels in Edo, Osaka and Kyoto, suggesting that the exchange of news had the effect of strengthening merchants’ general awareness of events beyond their locale, and even contributing to an increasing sense of political independence. See Miura Tadashi. “*Kitaoku ni Okeru Shonin no Joho Katsudo.*” *Nihon Rekishi*, 1997(2), 64-82.

on a samurai tilling the fields, rather than only the reverse situation.

Rustic samurai: not so much poetasting
as mucking in the paddies.

田舎武士、今は詩よりも田を作り¹⁸

Much of the satire and irony derives from the fact that a poem is being written by a newly empowered commoner. Moreover, the character for “poetry” (詩, *shi*) referred primarily to *kanshi*, which were composed almost solely by samurai and former samurai (or educated rich land-owning peasants and merchants who emulated them). The commoner now writes this *senryu* so that part of the irony (of depicted incongruity) derives from the reversal of their places as peasant and warrior and in this instance the ranking of their preferred forms of poetry: a vulgar form has supplanted the exalted *kanshi* of the old guard. This typical *senryu* of the Kaika (Enlightenment) period dryly illustrates an ironic reversal that delivers its satirical punch with a degree of historical complication that undermines its comic gesturing; there is less of a performance to chuckle at than a situation to examine ironically from a diachronic historical perspective.

Satire *depends* on a relationship of inferiority to those that the verse is satirizing (the samurai), even if it is only a rhetorical inferiority. Yet, the very act of writing in this instance suggests seri-

¹⁸ Yamamoto Seinosuke. *Senryu Meiji Seso-shi* (the history of the way things appeared in the Meiji period through *senryu*). Makino Shuppan, 1983, 17. (Japanese language materials are all published in Tokyo unless specified.) It should be noted that this book is more of a selection and arrangement of *senryu* by topic or current issue than a study of *senryu*. Yet, the limited amount of notes and commentary has proven essential to understanding these *senryu*, which are almost always context-specific. The interpretive work is mine unless otherwise noted. Dates of the appearance of given *senryu*, when available, are provided in these footnotes and are according to Yamamoto. All translations are mine unless noted.

ousness over levity, regardless of the form. There is an implied continued capitulation to the will of the samurai in beginning the poem with an address to the samurai, but it is a parody of the old system of names and ranks: "rustic warrior." While the former status quo has been discounted, it remains a point of reference in negotiating the current social order and conventional behaviors.

The irony in this case evokes a point of view that is *not* in a subordinate position in relationship to the prevailing thought of the day, but merely in terms of the past common sense, before the current age of the Enlightenment. The commoner stands level with, if not gazing with contempt at, the toiling samurai. Writing a poem about samurai no longer writing poems is a transitory event that merely underscores this aspect of ironic change, not hilarity amid alienation. The larger irony here is that the satirical bite is diminished to the degree the relationship is no longer "from below" but rather "from above" or at least on roughly level terms (rather than written in vain protestation). This combination of a satirical shadow and reflective, perhaps modern irony makes this *senryu* especially rich as a historical and literary record of ideological change.

Satire of this period played upon ironic juxtapositions within the confines of the increasingly influential place of historical consciousness in Japanese society. The fall of the Bakufu and the opening of the closed country created a context in which historical consciousness came to the fore in people's daily lives, and the juxtaposition of former and present class divisions in a way undercuts the superior position of the *senryu* poet by reminding the reader that the situation used to be different and that humorous instability is part of the present social situation. However, the primary tone here is one of quiet exuberance. Such diachronic references to change form the division by which the ironic gap is opened up.

Senryu are usually used to express grievances in a way that does not suggest aspirations to exact control within the socio-political context. As Linda Hutcheon has most recently pointed out in her study of parody, satire is characterized by a "moral and social" focus, which is "ameliorative

in its intention."¹⁹ *Senryu* engage in such satire from the point of view of the cooperative commoner and is associated with non-revolutionary protest and commentary from below.

At the same time, the ironic reminders of the former Bakufu can be seen as transforming nostalgia into a weapon working to find pleasure in the rapid deterioration of faith in the "good old days" (which posed a threat of a counter-restoration, a return to the shogunal system). However, we should not overemphasize this delight in dismantling the old regime, since many people were irritated by all the changes, the way that small details of daily life were cursed as "evil customs" to be purged from the new society. *Senryu* written during the *Bunmei Kaika* period typically reflect mistrust of the status of the historical present as the government was framing it: as a great "enlightenment" and opening up to the world. People of all walks of life were called upon to make sacrifices in terms of the way they lived their lives then. Largely because of the complex minutiae of laws and customs that governed former hierarchical relations, the new Victorian codes of law and fashions superceding them created a comical situation. Thus *senryu*, *hayariuta*, *kyōka* and *kyōga* (humorous pictures) can be seen to boom during the *Bunmei Kaika*. Nowhere could lampooning find a better home than in the juxtaposition of the old and new.

The above example suggests the samurai of old were "nothing but" makers of poetry, and thus "good for nothing," a prevalent opinion in an age of internal peace and external threat that required bombs not swords. Other *senryu* comically represent them as formerly great lovers, suggesting that the practical concerns of the Meiji *shizoku* (former samurai) had deprived them of the luxuriating time they once had for satiating their sexual appetites. The once at least nominally sovereign class had had guaranteed income (*koku* stipends) as well as status, and would have attracted the attention of lovers and mistresses, but now the times had changed.

¹⁹ Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody*. London and New York: Routledge, 1985, 16.

With their sweet memories of when
they stood tall, old samurai.

槍立てた昔恋しき老士族²⁰

“Standing tall” (*yaritateta*) combines the more literal “doing great things” with a secondary meaning, “having sex.” *Yari* can mean “to do,” “to have sex,” and be another name for the male organ. *Tateta* is the past tense from of *tateru*, “to erect.” The translation “old samurai” collapses “old” (*ro*) and “former samurai” (*shizoku*).

A minor theme that appears in the period between the new and the old regime is that of Buddhist karma and previous lives. One *senryu* simply states:

The old Bakufu, the past
life of former samurai.
旧幕の時が士族の前世界²¹

Implied is “what goes around comes around,” as it would have been understood that the times were now difficult for former samurai, as if they were paying dues for their past laziness. A pleasurable sense of avenged inequity and reversed privilege is implied.

Not all such *senryu* focused directly on the samurai’s reversal of fortunes. There are many examples of more obtuse (and historically specific) *senryu* that pun on names and words associated with current events. Because the famous and widely (but not universally, at this time) revered Saigo Takamori had died taking the lead in the failed Seinan War (1877), the final uprising by former samurai to threaten the integrity of the Meiji state, he was satirically immortalized in such verses as the following.

While the average potato passes as gas
Saigo becomes a star.
芋は、屁となり西郷は星となり²²

This *senryu* assumes readers had a familiarity with the immediate association in popular usage of Satsuma and potatoes (inhabitants of the province were referred to as “potatoes”). The vanity of the grandiose ideology of the samurai in an age of practicality also seems to be an inspiration for this *senryu*.

In the wake of the Meiji Ishin, new Western and established Confucian abstractions and ideals appeared in *senryu*, reflecting their use by the government. They are often rearranged in creative combinations, providing much material for *senryu* in the parody of the rhetoric and pompous language of empire. Parody and satire in pre-Meiji literature included various figures, such as *modoki* (satirical mockery, especially of major figures or lead actors), *chakashi* (satirizing something serious), *ugachi* (a cutting comment or “dig”), *mitate* (in satirical works, enigmatically depicting the object of satire in terms of something else), and *mojiri* (changing lyrics in parts of a song, so as to make it humorous or allegorical). These satirical figures tend to remain indirect, mocking and parodying putative authorities.²³

Another figure of interest is *keiku* (警句), a concise condemnation of the principles of some novel and exceptional idea. It emphasizes on the separation of the parodic composition from the world of what is being parodied.²⁴ We see this figure in much of the satire of the Bunmei Kaika, in all three senses of *keiku* mentioned by Yanagisawa: treating something as strange in condensed, penetrating expression; overturning social appearances through novel, unexpected phrasing; and paradoxical expression. Takahashi defines parody (*parodi*) in Japan in particular in terms of *modoki*, which he lists as having the following senses and functions, varying according to historical examples at hand: a “translation” imitating

²³ See “*Parodi*” by Takahashi Toru in Kokubungaku Henshubu (Japanese literature editorial department), *Koten Bungaku Retorikku Jiten* (Dictionary of Classical Literary Rhetoric), Gakuto-sha, 1993, 56-57.

²⁴ See “*keiku*” by Yanagisawa Ryoichi in *Koten Bungaku Retorikku Jiten*, 25.

²⁰ Yamamoto, 17.

²¹ Yamamoto, 17.

²² Yamamoto, 21.

an original, canonical text; a vulgarization of something sacred; criticism; and comic laughter.²⁵ In the Kaika world, which was already predicated on a severance from the immediate past of Tokugawa society, the allure of entering liminal world and compounding its duality with parody would have been hard to resist for a generation raised on the playful, popular Edo fiction (*gesaku shosetsu*) and *kyōka* and *senryū* verses.

The juxtaposition of the old and new not only extends to the Bakufu and the Meiji government, but to cross-references between ancient *Kojiki* myths and historical representations of the emperor, and European monarchies, histories and ancient civilizations (Judaic, Greek, and Roman). Some examples of how abstractions from the old regime were applied satirically to pending situations suggest the fine line between elevating grand absolutes from various literary and historical contexts in the name of making Japan into a great, modernized nation, and the collapse of such abstractions as seemingly hopeless dreams. Parody in *senryū* thus drew attention to the fragility of such feats of the imagination that underlie society at this time:

Dispense the medicine of benevolence
and root out the country's ills.
仁の施薬に国病のねを絶やし²⁶

Here the lampooner questions how the Meiji government has played the “*tenno* card” in tandem with Confucian ideals. While not mentioning the emperor per se, the use of *jin* or “benevolence” (on the part of the emperor to his *loyal subjects*) in this sardonic manner clearly implies the imperial institution. Though the emperor was now an actual rather than titular ruler, the language of Confucian rule, applied to the new context, would still have been broadly seen as a strategic attempt to justify the right to govern with smooth words. Such political subtexts are what make *senryū* capable of being, in Arai Akira's

²⁵ See Takahashi Toru in *Koten Bungaku Reitorikku Jiten*, 56-57.

²⁶ Yamamoto, 23.

reading of *senryū*, cutting, sharp-witted, and “intuitive” (*chokkanteki*).²⁷ For Arai, *senryū* aim at “*ugachi*” or “opening a hole,” “digging up something not visible on the surface. In other words, it is that which renders an interior visible.” *Ugachi* (a “dig”) involves the exposing of weaknesses in a person, or contradictions in society. Without becoming completely “serious,” it is both ironic and satirical.²⁸ In short, by entertaining irony in evident multiple perspectives, *senryū* provide a means for closely examining ideologically contentious language in the process of defining the new nation.

Senryū from around the time of the *Bunmei Kaika* emphasize distinctions between the new and old, often with a critical eye on the coercion implicit in many of the new laws. Many *senryū* imply that the whole redefinition of a society as based on “civilization and enlightenment” is itself a sham, and that distinctions between the old and new are only superficial matters of parroting the jargon of the Kaika and aping the mannerisms perceived to be common to the people of the “Great Powers.”

The bad old ways lead the Way
to enlightenment.
旧弊は開化の道の教師なり²⁹

The masters who wield the rod seem to take the form of constant prohibition and negation, so that all the new ways are a purging of the past ways, and to become “enlightened” one need only know the evil ways as those things one should eschew. Similar, self-explanatory examples include:

In perfume catch a whiff
of enlightenment.
香水で一寸開化を匂はせる³⁰

²⁷ Arai Akira. *Nihon Inbunshi*, Ofusha, 1979, 145.

²⁸ Arai, 149.

²⁹ Yamamoto, 86; Meiji 11 (1878).

³⁰ Yamamoto, 85; Meiji 10 (1877).

Newspaper vendors' mouths
 get used to enlightenment and progress.
 新聞屋、開化進歩が口に馴れ³¹
 Even the parrots laugh!
 mimicking the makeshift Enlightenment.
 オウムも笑ふ口真似の生開化³²

In the fledgling Enlightenment
 even the tadpoles seem like fish.
 生開化お玉約子も魚ぶり³³

This last *senryu* interestingly associates the grandiose "Enlightenment" with being a fish, while emphasizing that it is a project "in the works" (*nama*) so that at present one must deceive oneself in order to see great beginnings as consummated dreams (tadpoles as fish). Similarly, the middle two *senryu* lampoon the rote mouthing of the buzzwords of the day, and the first one pokes fun at the minor contribution of wearing perfume (in Victorian fashion) in elevating the nation.

The following is based on an ironic discrepancy between the stated objectives of the *Bunmei Kaika* and how these aims appear to the broad spectrum of society.

In the world of Enlightenment
 everything is worth looking up to.
 開化の世、上見て及ぶ事ばかり³⁴

How enjoyable this world of civilization
 where we note all our own faults.
 己が非を見る文明の世は楽し³⁵

The punster in the latter *senryu* frames "civilization" (*bunmei*) as a humbling arena within which one learns to assimilate new critical concerns. One becomes hypercritical of one's own inadequacies, especially, it is implied, since adults would have been "above" such products of an age now held in disdain.

The dry irony is in part derived from pleasure taken in this process of developing a critical sensibility that conforms to the new order all the while expressing a degree of resistance. There is an awareness of an intrinsic masochism in participating in this "progress," and pleasure to be found in its lampooning. There is a paradoxical empowerment of a new, broadly disseminated critical consciousness and coercive framing of critical propositions in *senryu* discourse. What is being sounded out in such *senryu* includes both questions regarding the impossibility of following the proposed ideology and the difficulty in resisting it. The irresistible joy of empowerment, in the very act of composing these witty *senryu*, certainly overshadows their criticism of the proliferation of prohibitions.

More contextually specific *senryu* record various reactions to new laws issued in Tokyo and in rural areas in 1872 and 1873 (Meiji 5 and 6).³⁶ There were *senryu* on the prohibition against urination in public:

Wanting to pee on the roadside,
 the feelings of the fallen samurai.
 路傍へ小便、落武者の心持ち³⁷
 When you hear the squeak of leather shoes³⁸
 stop the water pump.
 靴音を聞いてポンプの水を止め³⁹

³¹ Yamamoto, 86; Meiji 11 (1878).

³² Yamamoto, 86; Meiji 12 (1879). Yamamoto includes obsolete characters for *omu* and furigana in katakana.

³³ Yamamoto, 86; Meiji 13 (1880).

³⁴ Yamamoto, 85; Meiji 8 (1875).

³⁵ Yamamoto, 85; Meiji 4 (1871).

³⁶ See examples of these laws in Ogi Shinzo et al, *Fuzoku Sei* [customs and sexuality], in *Nihon Kindai Shiso Taikei* 23. Iwanami Shoten, 1990, 3-26.

³⁷ Yamamoto, 49; Meiji 7 (1874).

³⁸ "The squeak of leather shoes" was the sound of a "modern" gentleman, who would have been known to regard public urination with disdain.

Five *sen* to relieve myself –
a ticket for peeing.
小便の料を五銭でべんしょうし⁴⁰

With a furtive look, peeing
I see the nightstick and shrink.
見廻して小便、棒をみて縮じみ⁴¹

If we emphasize the discursive practices that were sustained beyond the *bakumatsu* context and into the Kaika, we recognize continuity in these lampooning practices. Yet, if we underscore the changes in the discursive context due to the new government and society, we find the relations between the punster poet, the government, and a broader general audience have been altered. The new controls over the actions and bodies of Meiji subjects stimulated a vigilant, continued use of *senryu*, which both contested the new laws and were a means of realizing some benefit from the dismal prohibitions, if only by generating fodder for an economy of laughter and pleasure as compensation. In this way *senryu* can be seen as part of the naturalization of new ideological expectations; they are a continued source of entertainment derived from converting increased social restraints into opportunities for disrupting the language of the new order.⁴²

³⁹ Yamamoto, 49; Meiji 12 (1879). Cf. a verse from an *iroha-uta*: “Before the unblinking eyes of cops on the beat there will be incursions by urinators thieving a pee” (抜目なき巡査の眼折々は、盗み小便する人もあり). See *Yubin Hochi Shinbun*, Meiji 8.1.29. In *Meiji Jidai Bunka Kiroku Shusei*, 168.

⁴⁰ Yamamoto, 49; Meiji 13 (1880).

⁴¹ Yamamoto, 49; Meiji 16 (1883).

⁴² Among the *senryu* on similar themes, there are the following two on the new prohibition against public nudity: “Undress a shoulder and no sooner / will the police burn moxa on it” (*Katamugu to sugu ni junsu ga kyokau o sue*), Yamamoto, 49, Meiji 11 (1878); and “Though naked, there are no fines / for Mt. Fuji in the summer” (*Hadaka demo*

Inspired by the ideas of democracy and human rights, People’s Rights Movement *senryu* combine the sense of indignation found in peasant protest songs and *rakusho* of the *bakumatsu* period with the wit of the above *Bunmei Kaika senryu*. Furthermore, they are.

The bricks [of the Ginza] glisten with
the oily sweat of the people.
人民のあぶらで煉瓦よく光り⁴³

Reaction to oppression —
steam boiling the lid off.
圧制の反動、蓋を似上がる湯⁴⁴

Such *senryu* were written in reaction to government demands to make sacrifices of labor for grand projects, to increase production, to redefine established customs, and to establish a “blood tax” as military conscription was called by farmers. Many *senryu* employ the imagery of being “ready to explode,” and *senryu* beginning specifically with “oppression” (*assei*) are abundant and varied. Such *senryu* on government oppression often include representations of the public reaction to it as pushing the populace toward a great uprising. But by far the most common image is built around the pun of *ken* (rights or authority) and *ken* (sword). In songs calling for people’s rights, especially from Meiji 10 (1877), we find *senryu* such as:

Undo the sword from your *obi* and trade it in
for the freewheeling force of rights.
圧制の反動力は噴水器⁴⁵

With the abolition of swords
commoners hold the rights (*ken*).
廃剣にしたで平民けん（剣・権）を持ち⁴⁶

bakkin ha nashi natsu no Fuji, Yamamoto, 49, Meiji 13 (1880).

⁴³ Yamamoto, 35.

⁴⁴ Yamamoto, 36; Meiji 21(1888).

⁴⁵ Yamamoto, 39; Meiji 13 (1880).

In a world where hips have lost their swords
(*ken*)

people sprout rights (*ken*).

腰に剣ない世で民に権が出来⁴⁷

After the abolition of swords

they polish people's rights in Tosa.

廃剣の後、民権を士族で磨き⁴⁸

A world under a despotic government
puts rust on the sword of people's rights.

専制な世は民権にさびが付き⁴⁹

These numerous *senryu* are playfully predicated on the fact that it was after the order abolishing the wearing of swords (*ken*) that the call for people's rights (*minken*) came to flourish.⁵⁰ Tosa, in the fourth verse, was a hotbed of People's Rights movement activities. Former samurai here, notably Ueki Emori and Itagaki Taisuke, became local and national leaders of the movement.⁵¹ The most common motif in these *senryu* is the continued, somewhat parodic repetition of ritualistic actions associated with wearing and caring for swords (cleaning and polishing) here transferred onto a concern with human rights. In the *bakumatsu* period, the sword was not only a symbol of samurai sovereignty, but also of their laziness and uselessness (first as "warriors" during a time of peace, then in the face of the more advanced Western armories). Thus there was an underlying sense of justice in commoners gaining rights while doing the work by which society

⁴⁶ Yamamoto, 36; Meiji 10 (1877).

⁴⁷ Yamamoto, 36; Meiji 10 (1877).

⁴⁸ Yamamoto, 36; Meiji 11 (1878).

⁴⁹ Yamamoto, 37; Meiji 12 (1879).

⁵⁰ Yamamoto, 37.

⁵¹ On the importance of former Tosa Domain samurai in the movement, see Bowen, Roger W. *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980, 108ff.

functions; this is the meaning of "With the abolition of swords / commoners hold rights." Furthermore, "In a world where hips have lost their swords (*ken*) / people sprout rights (*ken*)," suggests the power vacuum all people, samurai included, would fill as the privilege to bear swords was exchanged (in the ideology of the People's Rights movement) for inherent (natural) rights for all.

As if the fetishistic magic of the word "sword" in the former governing order were dispelled by the abstract word "rights," not by the actual abolishment of swords per se, these *senryu* lampoon the class tensions underlying the de facto samurai revolution and governing leadership in contrast to the oppositional People's Rights groups, which while being lead primarily by samurai were empowered by commoners (especially farmers). It is from the perspective of someone who became an impassioned activist that the author of the final *senryu* above writes: Not to take advantage of the new, still intangible sword/rights would expose Japan to the danger of being "A world under a despotic government / [that] puts rust on the sword of people's rights."

There were also *senryu* critical of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, often labeling it "wagamama" (selfish):

Freedom to follow your every whim
will never amount to people's rights.

我俣の自由、民権にはならず⁵²

Stretch out your limbs and go to work!

It's a free workaday world [now].

手も足も伸ばして稼ぐは自由⁵³

Though the first example sides with the opposition to the Freedom and People's Rights movement, the second is less clear-cut. Its "dig" (*ugachi*) could be against laziness, celebrating the advent of a self-determined working world, but more ironically it cuts against the ideal of freedom, underscoring that it too is a call to work.

⁵² Yamamoto, 39, Meiji 20 (1887).

⁵³ Yamamoto, 39; Meiji 21 (1888).

A decade after this movement had been crushed one finds a growing abundance of nationalist *senryu*. *Senryu* employing the phrase “*Yamato-damashii*” or “Japanese spirit (of old)” flourished in the periods of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars.⁵⁴ “*Yamato-damashii*” is an abstract word used to arouse patriotic emotions by associating it with its believed manifestation, often images of military prowess or national supremacy.⁵⁵ The *senryu* form is well equipped to lampoon the overuse of this jingoistic buzzword. Yet, as *senryu* are usually based on current events or discourse of the day, and depend upon resituating these in droll juxtapositions, it is not always easy to distinguish mere observations from witty associations without referring to historical details. In examples of *senryu* built around the patriotic jargon of “*Yamato-damashii*,” virtually anything in Japan can be included and identified as its manifestation. The humor in such convocations of images is obvious; part of their entertaining value in the Meiji period stemmed from expectations that yet another everyday, insignificant item would be ironically placed under the glorifying rubric of the *Yamato-damashii*. Some of these *senryu* seem to be mere citations or snapshots of uses of the word *Yamato-damashii*, and it is often unclear whether their humor or “amusement” is derived more from a critical mode or a celebratory nationalism. For example:

As pupils to eyeballs,
the Japanese spirit to the globe.
眼中の瞳、地球に大和魂⁵⁶

⁵⁴ See Yamamoto, 33.

⁵⁵ To understand how “*Yamato-damashii*” was used, consider the phrase “the American way.” It is virtually meaningless, yet in any given context conjures up vague associations, perhaps of “rugged individualism,” in the context of sports, invention, finance, and space exploration. “*Yamato-damashii*” is just such a metaphorical expression and very broad abstraction that is bound up with the rhetoric by which the nation is popularly defined.

⁵⁶ Yamamoto, 31; Meiji 19 (1886).

The imagery is outlandish, suggesting the Japanese spirit is the overseer and inspirational axis on which the earth finds its moral bearing. It presumably mimics the nationalism of contemporary chauvinists. It must be interpreted as both parodying the absurdity of such national megalomania, and of tacitly enjoying such chauvinist discourse as a source of entertainment.

The Japanese spirit bound up in two words:
a rainbow of loyalty and righteousness.
忠と義の二字に縛り合う大和魂⁵⁷

Here “*Yamato-damashii*” is represented as the synthesizing entity by which Confucian values of the old regime are reified. One anachronism is shown being used to justify another. The following is more openly wary of such relations:

The righteousness of those united under the throne [like the sworn brothers of Ryubi, Kanu and Chohi, of the Three Warring States],
and not to mention the dreary Japanese spirit of those united under [our] throne.
桃下の義、愚か桐下の大和魂⁵⁸

As this is a *senryu* and all puns are within the realm of possibility, we are compelled to read the *oroka* in both senses of “not to mention” and of “insipid.” Along with the allusion to the vows made by the brothers of the Three Warring States, it is a good example of an author drawing a fine line between eloquent praise and mockery.

From the time of the Sino-Japanese War, *Yamato-damashii* became a buzzword to express elation at having overcome the threat of colonization and embarking on an aggressive pursuit of Japan’s own empire. From being controlled by unequal treaties and necessarily reactive, living in the shadow of resentment and condescension, Japan was at a point at which it could now stage

⁵⁷ Yamamoto, 32; Meiji 27 (1894).

⁵⁸ Yamamoto, 32; Meiji 27 (1894). This translation incorporates Yamamoto’s note.

its own plans for seizing control of surrounding territories and markets. Even after the insult of the Triple Intervention, the language of patriotism and nationalism would increasingly compensate for the residual threat of the West. Examples of *senryu* in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War suggest how pliable “*Yamato-damashii*” was, applicable to anything with chauvinist or violent overtones vis-à-vis the foreign:

Cannons forward on the double –
such is the Japanese spirit
大砲の真 [っ] 先掛 (駈) けは大和魂⁵⁹

What no one cannot replicate overseas –
the Japanese spirit.
外国で模造は出来ぬ大和魂⁶⁰

Preserving national purity:
the Japanese spirit of the troops.
国粋の保存、兵士の大和魂⁶¹

These works may be read as braggadocio compensating for insults in foreign affairs and reflecting actual military battles; however they can also be read as parodying the figurative move that uses “*Yamato-damashii*” as a form of bound potentiality (in the sense that Nietzsche describes resentment and “priestly vengeance” in the first section of *The Genealogy of Morals*).⁶² In this way, there is a continuation of the rhetorical pattern found in Freedom and People’s Rights period *senryu* on “oppression” (*assei*) above, whereby the language of threatening innuendo compensated for insufficient political power. Moreover, reproducing the political order of the *bakuhau*, *senryu* remained removed from the realm of

planning actions that could affect the direction of specific policies.

The following *senryu* illustrates the expanding range of the form. It employs irony of a sort made possible by the successful attainment of overseas territories after the first Sino-Japanese War. The black humor emerges from a mixture of the new national consciousness and traditional satirical humor, which was most often used to attack rulers and their policies or to lampoon scandals. Here the shrewd wit emboldens chauvinism in the subjects of the common Japanese state. The images of “strong country” and “real estate agency,” identifying strength and wealth, recall the earlier slogan “rich country, strong army,” employed at a time when Japan’s own sovereignty was being threatened by colonizing European nations. By presenting these as productive associations in “natural” juxtaposition, a Japanese upon reading it would have discovered the achievement of that slogan’s goal in the unified image of a strong nation that demonstrates its military and financial strength by its maintenance of control over Taiwan.

The real estate broker of a great power:
the Japanese spirit.
強国の不動産なり大和魂⁶³

The following are of interest in that they recognize *gunka* as part of a plan to instill militarism in children. They are part of the preparation of weapons of revenge against their nemises Russia, Germany and France who, in the Triple Intervention, were seen as having robbed Japan of its victory in the field of empire-making and colonization by forcing it to return the Liaotung Peninsula to China.

Military songs even for the toddlers –
the wrath of the Japanese spirit.
小児も軍歌、敵がいの日本魂⁶⁴

In lullabies as in martial songs,

⁵⁹ Yamamoto, 32; Meiji 29 (1896).

⁶⁰ Yamamoto, 32; Meiji 30 (1897).

⁶¹ Yamamoto, 33; Meiji 31 (1898).

⁶² Nietzsche’s discussion of *resentiment* and cultural expression describes the structure of “priestly vengeance.” See Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Genealogy of Morals*. Tr. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1969, 33.

⁶³ Yamamoto, 33; Meiji 31 (1898).

⁶⁴ Yamamoto, 32; Meiji 30 (1897).

the rousing beat of marching feet.
 子守まで勇む軍歌の足拍子（アシビョウ
 シ）⁶⁵

There is a mocking of the shrewd if not thoroughly mean-spirited appropriation of young children as pawns in plans of colonial expansion. Such indoctrination is at the core of the ideological: entrusting to youth, who look up to their teachers for guidance, ideas that they themselves as adults may believe in or rebel against. But, the issues are firmly planted in their minds, becoming part of their ideological common sense by which they situate themselves ethically so that militarism rings true to them.

The *senryu* in this section illustrate how *senryu* evolved from the late Bakumatsu to the mid Meiji period, from forms of satire largely removed from voicing public policy to more discursively participatory forms. *Senryu* began to contribute to national ideological centralization and unity rather than remain a marginal “shaking fist.” A qualitative shift in the role of satirical verse is related to the identifications of the individual with the interests of the nation. Each citizen was to contribute to a central, focal agenda (symbolized by the emperor, but also by slogans such as “rich country, strong army” [*fukoku kyohei*] and “produce and industrialize” [*shokusan kogyo*]). That is to say, the ideological function of the nation had taken root in the subjects, who became increasingly assured of the stability of the new order after the quashing of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement. Individual subjects would find their audience for oppositional rhetoric increasingly hard to find, being unable to rely on a rhetoric that parodies others without taking note of their own place in the picture, so that the humorous became easily engaged in “serious” and historically motivated issues, which dispels and attenuates what otherwise would have been humorous.

Also contributing to the blunting of the oppositional aspect of *senryu* was the influence of Western ideas of literature, nation, and history that became immensely popular and influential, even, to some extent, before the Meiji Ishin itself.

⁶⁵ Yamamoto, 72; Meiji 31 (1898).

The rhetoric of “civilization and enlightenment” meant the degradation of existing popular culture. In the realm of song and poetry, this policy meant supplanting comic poetry and song with a more “civilized” poetry of the new nation: *shintaiishi* (new-style poetry). While not subsuming satirical verse genres, *shintaiishi* contributed to the elimination of many comic genres. In contrast to “vulgar” comic forms, *shintaiishi* was touted as part of the acculturation of the nation to a vision of a “Western” Japan.⁶⁶ The pressure to do away with the “bad customs” of the past and the impact it had on cultural production in general is in these very *senryu* shown to be extensive, as is found in the countless satires of the Kaika. To expunge vulgar forms and to implement *shintaiishi* went beyond distinctions of former class-based verse forms. Major genres with historical class associations include courtiers writing primarily *waka* (and *kanshi*); higher-ranking samurai primarily *kanshi* (and *waka* and *kyoka*); and commoners singing and writing folk songs, *hayariuta* (inclusive of countless forms), *senryu* as well as *waka*, *kyoka* (crazy poems), and haikai.

Yanagida Izumi used the phrase “all-encompassing truth” (*issai no shinjitsu*) as a metaphor to describe the new quality of the dissemination of knowledge in the Bunmei Kaika.⁶⁷ In the con-

⁶⁶ See, for instance, the prefaces to the *Shintaiishisho* and Yamada Bimyo’s introduction to the *Shintaiishisen* in Yamamiya Makoto, ed. *Nihon Gendaishi Taikei*, v.I. Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1950, 23-26 and 90-91.

⁶⁷ Yanagida goes into details about the common-sense underlying the “grasping of principles,” which he takes as the contemporary standard aim of all study. The Bakufu also had a policy of encouraging learning and study, but the “consciously established aims of studying” (*gakumon*) were different. He explains, “the dissemination of a knowledge that extended an all-encompassing truth (*issai no shinjitsu*) to the people involved the enlightenment of the people (*jinmin no kaika*), a redefinition of the lives of the people in the culture, and [the inculcation of] a grasping of principles. Though this was not the primary aim in the ‘encouragement of learning’ (*gakumon*)”

text of comic poetry and song, “all-encompassing truth” meant a seriousness that threatened to diminish the enjoyment of these subcultures, as well as many aspects of commoner culture in general. At the same time, the introduction of this seriousness itself was one of the most satirized aspects of early Meiji society.

In these one recognizes a pattern of using *senryu* to expose folly and to find means of making sense, in this ironic language, of the historical complexities that led to whatever events were at hand and scene being depicted. Though the range of subject matter is far broader than the slice of *senryu* discussed here in the context of nation and ideology, these adequately illustrate a form of expression that retained the language of pun-filled wordplay while reflecting changes in how commoners viewed and participated in public opinion-making during the struggle to construct a new Japan and an ideological consensus that settled well with enough people to stave off any further serious revolutionary coup.⁶⁸ Part of the significance of *senryu* lies in relation to other “serious” verse discourse, especially *shintaiishi*, which would virtually ban puns in favor of univocal stylistics resembling high European poetry.

Rakusho: Verse as Underground Exposé

Rakusho are anonymous, versified lampoons or satirical ditties in the most general sense, encompassing many varieties of illicitly printed and posted graffiti. The use of “*rakusho*” (落書, lit. “fallen writing”), thought to have existed since the Muromachi period, varies widely. Some literary histories suggest that we distinguish it

shorei) by government offices, it was a natural result....” See Yanagida Izumi. “*Meiji Shin-Seifu Bungei Seisaku no Ittan*.” *Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyu* 11. Undated offprint, Yanagida Collection, Waseda University Library, 2.

⁶⁸ For a more general sense of the range of subjects in the form, see the major collections of *senryu* in *Haifu Yanagidaru* (1796) and *Haifu Yanagidaru Shui* (1801), in Sukimoto Nagashige and Hamada Giichirou. *Senryu Kyouka Shu*. *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* 57. Iwanami Shoten, 1958.

ary histories suggest that we distinguish it from “*rakushu*” (落首, lit. “fallen verse”) and “*rakugaki*” (落書き, graffiti). Kamisaka disagrees with Motoori Norinaga’s explanation that *rakushu* is a phonetic transformation of *rakusho*, preferring the explanation that *rakushu* designates lower-grade work and *rakusho* higher-grade work. Regardless, it is clear that *rakushu*, which came to refer specifically to 31 or 17 syllable verses, were more narrowly defined than *rakusho*, though they both came to be used interchangeably in the Edo period. However, the more heterogeneous *rakusho* too came to be most closely associated with such short forms, especially 31 syllable verses, which often resemble *kyoka*.⁶⁹ Kamisaka sees *rakusho* as developing out of the emulation of a *senryu* mode of satire, but emphasized that *senryu* tend to confine themselves to events within the lower echelons of society (rumors, talk of illicit trysts, prostitution) and do not evidence the broader awareness of multiple class relations that distinguishes *rakusho*.⁷⁰ It is in this doubly defiant sense of outdoing and even mocking *senryu* and *kyoka* themselves that *rakusho* were “fallen writing.”

Though once prominently including prose as well, from the Edo period, *rakusho* most often take the appearance of “crazy and playful poetic language.”⁷¹ They substituted for legally sanctioned means of expressing dissent and flourished during the late Tokugawa period.⁷² Unlike legally published *yomiori* and *kawaraban* (clay tablet-printed news), which reported news and

⁶⁹ See Kamisaka, 4.

⁷⁰ Kamisaka, 38.

⁷¹ In the Edo period there also appeared *rakusho* expressions consisting solely of the pictorial, with no script. Though falling under the broad rubric of *rakusho*, they are more specifically referred to as *fushiga* (風刺画, satirical pictures). Kamisaka 4. For a general pictorial overview of the period treated in this paper, see the works of Yoshitoshi (1839-1892).

⁷² See Kida, 129-130; Kamisaka, 3ff.

contained editorials in a direct prose style, *rakusho* were figurative,⁷³ so as to disguise the message in the medium, and avoid the excessive wrath of the censors and the particular officials scrutinized in their lampoons. However, the use of figurative language also reflects the lack of more or less contractual obligation to provide current news and events, as was the case with the *yomiuri* (lit., “read-and-sells”), which were sold by vendors as they walked around reading them aloud. While *yomiuri* were printed in order to turn a profit, and depended on ordinary public channels, *rakusho* were not for profit and could be distributed under the censors’ radar. They were posted and distributed primarily by viewing and subsequent retelling by word of mouth. *Yomiuri* and *kawaraban* had to conform to censor regulations lest the authorities stop their distribution, which was of course essential if they were to turn a profit. Those producing *rakusho* were relatively unfettered by such entanglements.⁷⁴

Discussing the widespread use of *rakusho* as a means of eluding censorship laws, Sakuraki Akira writes in his *Sokumenkan Bakumatsushi*, a multi-volume collection of *rakusho*:

Preceding the Meiji Ishin, in the feudal world of the Tokugawa, freedom to criticize the government of the realm in newspapers and magazines as we do today, and to denounce social ills, was not permitted at all. Thus hierarchical distinctions as they stood in their proper order did not allow for interference, however minor, by the lower classes.⁷⁵

Commoners (including low-ranking samurai) had to submit to anything the Bakufu ordered, and

in this set of circumstances, no matter how unequal the people (*jinmin*) were, there was no room for addressing this inequality. Thus it was only natural that by way of ‘*rakusho*’, ‘*tobun*’ (written challenges) and the like did criticism of the realm inadvertently come to be circulated in abundance.⁷⁶

Though they had been written since the Genpei period, it is in the Tokugawa period that they came to flourish at a new level. When Bakufu failures to address the needs of the common people grew extreme, *rakusho* were written in profusion. When the Shogun’s Council suggested to the Shogun that the prohibition of *rakusho* genres be ordered, the Shogun on the contrary told them they were becoming ministers of admonishment.⁷⁷ From this exchange one can see the attention attracted by the proliferation of *rakusho*, and the seriousness with which some officials sought to quell this affront to their authority. Although *rakusho* is a broad rubric, including numerous verse forms, I shall focus especially on *kanshi* (Chinese poetry) acrostics, satirical dialogue, and enumerating verses such as *kazoe-uta* (counting songs) and *iroha-uta* (ABC songs). As a particular mode of social expression, *rakusho* use many of the same verse forms used by commoners (*senryu*, *kyoka*, and *hayariuta*). However, *rakusho* are not always written from the point of view of politically disenfranchised commoners. Most *rakusho* appear to have been written by disgruntled *ronin* (masterless samurai)⁷⁸ and some by merchants. A deluge of *rakusho* of the *sutebumi* (opinion/grievance handbills) and *harifuda* (pasted handbills) types accompanied the

⁷³ See Kamisaka, 8.

⁷⁴ Kamisaka, 7-8. On laws against *rakusho* and punishments, see Kamisaka 25ff.

⁷⁵ Sakuraki, 1. For an overview of developments in censorship from the *bakumatsu* into the Meiji period, also see Rubin, Jay. *Injurious to Public Morals - Writers and the Meiji State*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984, 19-23.

⁷⁶ Sakuraki, 2.

⁷⁷ Sakuraki, 2.

⁷⁸ *Ronin* or *roshi* are samurai who had renounced their lords, leaving their domains against the wishes of superiors, or who otherwise had become unaffiliated with their former domain or house because of, for instance, disobedience.

rise of independent bands of *ronin*, who formed terrorist groups making strikes against governmental powers and challenging their legitimacy. It is an ideologically interesting form that distinctly reveals dissent within certain strata of the nominally ruling samurai class, as well as the economically empowered merchant class. *Rakusho* exhibit a spectrum of positions, from humorously conciliatory, silly satires of current events (similar to what can be found in *senryu*) to calculated formulations of grievances and plans for rebellion, as well as to bitter references to failed terrorist attacks.⁷⁹ The form is so diverse that, in this brief introduction, I can best explore examples of representative subgenres rather than try to characterize *rakusho* by way of vague generalizations.

Research of *rakusho* has focused predominantly on the historical.⁸⁰ Kamisaka emphasizes the historical setting reflected in *rakusho*, which he calls “particularly biased” and containing a “corrective evaluation” that reflects critical observation of the underside of how situations appear. In a way complementing my ideological examination of verse, Kamisaka defends the use of *rakusho* as historical documentation that is necessarily of a fragmentary nature. For him, the compression of expression is an outstanding feature of *rakusho*, which he praises for its capacity to reveal core complexities of contemporary events.⁸¹ Kamisaka situates *rakusho* in terms of

its development from a form differentiating interests (*rigai*) with respect to various social phenomena, to a form employed to foment class opposition to the ruling top-tier samurai.⁸²

The following *rakusho*, arranged as a sequence of *kyōka* that can be read individually or in the context of a narrative series, treats the arrival of Perry.

In June everyone out in fishing
boats,
going back and forth, an uproar
in the harbor.
A cold sweat in the heat, gathering
as ordered
boats speed to the mouth of the
dragon.
The morning sun goes down in
the white sails and into the
high rigging,
The news goes out to all domains
[or countries] in rapid
order.
Japanese would rather eat dregs
than be a country eating
American rice.
Japan, muckraked clean by a
foreign country —
looking back, what an awful time at the [Ur-
aga] harbor.

水無月や四そうの船のみな
と人
上を下へとさwぐ浦かな
暑中にてひや汗流す奉行衆
辰の口へといそぐ早舟
高繩に白帆の続く旭影
諸国注蝕櫛の齒を引
あめりかの米より食ぬ国な
れど
日本人はあわをくふなり

⁷⁹ Kamisaka writes that *rakusho* were disseminated by pasting them where people could see them, such as on gates. Kamisaka, 3.

⁸⁰ Major titles of research and annotated collections of *rakusho* include: Kamisaka Kuratsugu. *Shakai Jihyo toshite no Rakusho*. Takahara Shoten, 1930; Kida Jun'ichiro. *Rakusho Nihonshi*. San'ichi Shoten, 1967; Suzuki Tozo and Okada Satoshi. *Rakusho Ruiju* (3 Vol.). Tokyodo Shuppan, 1984; Sakaraki Akira. *Sokumenkan Bakumatsushi* (2 Vol.). Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1982 [1905]. Three of these collections focus on the historical importance of *rakusho* in their titles.

⁸¹ Kamisaka, 1.

⁸² See Kamisaka, 2. This class division of not four principles classes but rather of samurai and non-samurai is affirmed by W. G. Beasley in *The Rise of Modern Japan*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990, 7.

日本のあかを異国で荒ひは
り
かえしてみればうらが大変⁸³

The first two verses are about the stir Perry caused, the fourth deals with ongoing trade issues, and the fifth verse suggests the possibility that part of the energetic satire of the events unfolding most likely produced a degree of pleasure, at least for the non-ruling classes, in watching the already failing Bakufu have to agonize even more under foreign pressure. The concern for the country as a whole rather than in local domains would appear in these verses to have been stimulated by the external threat that Perry brought to Japan, already on top of the internal problems alluded to with “muckraking.” These historical facts are well known, but these verses depict local reaction with details about the different angles from which people tried to sort events into a loose narrative.

Satire in the third *kyōka* is grounded in the play of twice-removed relations of symbols caught between conflicting forces. It reflects both historical contingencies and discursive possibilities in the situation. The indirect, symbolic play suggests various relational possibilities and anxieties concerning the symbolic and ideological stability of a society in crisis. Perry came at a time when it had become increasingly clear that structural change, including the possibility of the restoration of imperial rule, was not unlikely. In this verse, the rising sun, symbol of Japan, is replaced by the image of morning sunlight filling the white sails of the “black ships.” It is as if the sunlight being caught in the high rigging puts into images the capture of the very symbol incorporated into the name of the nation itself, the “rising sun.” Moreover, the “spreading of the news” is to “various domains/countries” (*shokoku*), which then could mean both foreign nations and internal domains, implying a cross-referencing of points of views and concerns in terms of symbolic and actual power, and the sovereignty and solidarity of Japan. Embarrassment was both internal to the archipelago and international. These verses are among the most entertaining and historically insightful, revealing a witty if not bitter awareness

⁸³ Sakuraki, 10-11.

of what current events entailed in terms of the symbolic capital and status within and without late Tokugawa Japan.

A particular *senryū* collected as a *rakusho* suggests the impact of imagery and depiction of current events on how people viewed events. Obvious interpretive orientations and values are couched in the following imagery that certainly carried the power to disseminate and popularize attitudes and ways of formulating views on the events of the day. For instance, we come across pieces like the following (which I hesitate to quote), a textbook example of the use of sexual imagery of feminization and violation in colonialist situations:

Visible to America between the rain,
the Japanese pussy.
あめりかにあまみ見らるる日本ぼぼ⁸⁴

Amerika ni amama miraruru Nihon bobo

In this short, very playfully prosodic *rakusho* one can see how this form had the potential to derive its impact from the exploitation of every nuance and from the conversion of landscape into a memorable (albeit in bawdy taste) caricature of the situation with regard to foreign affairs and national sovereignty. Such self-parodying depictions of Japan’s humiliation, in being, for example, forced into accepting unequal trading agreements and extraterritorial rights for foreigners, were inevitably linked to sexual images invoking gendered stereotypes of dominant and subordinate powers. Like the *senryū* examined earlier, which deal with the sexuality and sovereignty of samurai after the abolishment of swords, this *senryū* displays a nexus whereby such images and motifs reinforce each other’s misogynist and nationalist views.

Another form of *rakusho* takes the form of acrostic *kanshi* rebus. Though it appears in many forms, including maze-like chains of *kanbun* (Chinese prose written by Japanese), the most prevalent form is a series of grids of 9 characters

⁸⁴ Sakuraki, 7.

forming a square.⁸⁵ They are read as four lines, with each line utilizing the central character, however the English delineation removes the pleasure of deciphering the reading and posted message. Though more cerebral than poetic, the form as read in the original is invested with a rhythm based on the repetition of the central character in the acrostic, providing a locus for both linking diverse associations and creating humorous effects such as presenting alternative, ironic sides of a given situation, and incorporating amusing, sudden or clever turns. Some of these acrostic poems have some characteristics of sorites (logically progressing nonsensical syllogistic chains), which can be found in comic lines in Shakespeare.⁸⁶

Being linked by a central Chinese character, there is the added element of a rhythmic unity as well as a somewhat "logical" play with shifting contexts and aspects linked by the axis of the central, recurrent character. These acrostics, like sorites in English, make a mockery of coherent lines of relation or reasoning by underscoring the discrepancy between lived and ideal relations in the surviving socio-political order, the "logic" or "reason" involves falling between reference to the historical situation, and the use of the central character in the acrostic as a pivot for a "circling back" effect, which for the sake of situating such repetition in an English-language context may be compared with devices of repetition in a villanelle or sestina (though the tone in these acrostic blocks is usually serious and political rather than aesthetically detached). The following is a very concise, direct example:

The good retainers are in hiding,
the rebel retainers are amassing;
there are no loyal retainers
and many traitors

⁸⁵ For examples of the maze-like chains of *kanbun* acrostics used for *rakusho*, see Kida, 49-51; and Suzuki Tozo and Okada Satoshi. *Rakusho Ruiju* (3 Vol.). Tokyodo Shuppan, 1984, III:35.

⁸⁶ See Sister Miriam Joseph's treatment of sorites in her *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language*. New York, 1947.

賊 忠 良
 \ | /
多—臣—逆
 / | \
隱 無 集⁸⁷

These acrostics are read as four lines, beginning with the upper-right character and diagonally down, secondly from the upper-left character diagonally down, then from the central character of the top row vertically down, and finally from the central character of the rightmost column horizontally across to the left. They are read in the order indicated in the following example (from a work to be treated later), following the numbers and repeating the "no" in each line.

Above there is no trust,
below no propriety,
the retainers have no loyalty
and the masters have no heads.

下 臣 上
 \ | /
首—無—主
 / | \
信 忠 禮⁸⁸

⁴below [there's] ⁷ retainers [have] ¹above [there 's]

¹²heads no (in each line) ¹⁰[&] masters [have]

³trust ⁹loyalty ⁶propriety

When translating this acrostic into English, "no" adequately provides a substitute for the central, repeated "nai" character in this acrostic. The central character would have been read as the final character in the typical Japanese method of reading *kanbun*, reversing the order of the final two characters in each line and thus further complicating the reading as would be desirable in these outlawed satires. The first line would be

⁸⁷ Kida Jun'ichiro. *Rakusho Nihonshi*. San'ichi Shoten, 1967, 191.

⁸⁸ Kida, 165. Also in Sakuraki, I:337.

read, “*ue de shin [ga] nai*,” and “*ga nai*” would round off every line, creating a dry rhythm punctuating the message. As we will see below, this “stanza” concludes a series of four such blocks of *kanshi* acrostics. A rhythm based on the repetition of the central character in the acrostic provide a locus for both linking diverse associations and creating humorous effects in the juxtapositions that arise. This is precisely how the form is adeptly used in the above example.

In other uses of the form, unfair relations of power in hierarchical oppositions are exposed, as well as financial contradictions that burdened the non-sovereign classes:

A foreign country’s ship
comes to an eastern domain [country]⁸⁹
sending the country into turmoil
changing domainal rule.

Many domains are surprised
by another country’s strength.
Nippon is in an uproar,
the country under duress.

With the seashores fortified
rumors circulate among the public,
smoke rises around the fields
and neighborhoods are bustling.

```

東  乱  異
 \  |  /
  變—国—治
 /  |  \
船  城  来

```

⁸⁹ I.e., Perry arrived in Shimoda, in eastern Japan, and Japan was a country in the East. The distinction was ambiguous, and became an issue in 1867, when the Satsuma Domain, providing evidence in its possession of the Ryukyu Islands, applied as a sovereign nation for a place in the Paris Exposition. See Marius B. Jansen, “The Meiji Restoration,” in *The Emergence of Meiji Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 184.

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異—倭—諸
 \  |  /
愁—国—自
 /  |  \
驚  騷  強

```

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公  野  海
 \  |  /
賑—辺—近
 /  |  \
堅  煙  囀90

```

This last acrostic “stanza” makes full use of the form, creating a sense of reversals and confusion by situating the most unobtrusive puns in imbedded multiple-kanji words (*jukugo*) and by reinforcing the image of hysteria and rebellion. Here, all four “lines” (readings) vary the meaning of the central character, imbedding the following different *jukugo*: “seashore” (*kaihen*), “the public” (*kohen*), “around the fields” (*nohen*; fields), and “neighborhood” (*kinpen*). Moreover, in the first two versions, the first two lines describe the menacing danger from outside, while the latter two lines suggest internal turmoil. In English translation these word-plays may not be apparent when there are variations in the reading of the central character of the acrostic.

Changing his residence,
bitter under house arrest,
plotting a quiet retreat
a warrior in retirement.

A time in the future
before the troops set off,
they won’t have changed their base
ways before awakening.

In a world full of decay
today this is too much,
the barbarians prosper
sending people bustling.

Above there is no trust,
below no propriety,

⁹⁰ Kida, 129-130.

the retainers have no loyalty
and the masters have no heads.

```

蟄 閑 住
 \ | /
 土-居-隱
 / | \
代 企 恨

軍 眼 時
 \ | /
 止-末-幣
 / | \
来 覺 癸

今 夷 世
 \ | /
 騷-盛-人
 / | \
哀 也 過

下 臣 上
 \ | /
 首-無-主
 / | \
信 忠 禮91

```

Class schema, and their insolvency, are mapped out in this final acrostic “stanza,” easily rendered in English, by reading the central word, “no,” in its appearance in diagonal, vertical and horizontal lines. For a merchant, this crisscrossing of negations (discussed as the example used to illustrate how to read kanji acrostics) would have symbolized the decline of transactions by which he collected his profits.⁹²

The ruling class needed to be able to trust those below them, the lower samurai, who were in normal circumstances obliged to convey trustworthiness to their sworn masters. Thus the “trust” (*shin*) was *between* high and low and es-

⁹¹ Kida, 165. See also Sakuraki, I:337.

⁹² Kida notes that though *rakusho* were written mostly by lower samurai, the *shomin* still figure prominently in this genre. See 261.

pecially important within the samurai class — within each domain and, ultimately, with respects to domainal ambitions and their relative standings vis-à-vis the shogunate. As unrest grew among all classes and domains, the ruled (all lower-samurai and below) no longer bothered to exhibit a sense of respect and decorum, which conveyed trustworthiness in compliance with the firmly established ideological orthodoxy. The retainers, who were the mediators between the very top and the other classes, exhibited no loyalty, so that the relations between ruler and ruled no longer benefited from a unity of command, actions, and legitimacy to govern and be governed under a Confucian model of reciprocal relations between ruler and ruled (the ideas of which were hotly debated to diverse ends). Such relations became murky and loyalties diverse.

“The masters have no heads” refers especially to Ii Naosuke who was assassinated outside the Sakurada Gate of Edo Castle, in revenge for the purge of Mito retainers who advocated the overthrow of the Bakufu and the restoration of the emperor. Thus the “warrior in retirement” is probably Yoshinobu (Keiki), son of the shogun Iesada and potential successor who Ii Naobumi had forced into retirement.

A very similar, but extremely dry and direct acrostic appears as politically empowered independent bands of *roshi* began making terrorist strikes and employing a deluge of handbills in the early 1860s.

The lord’s words esteemed,
the retainer’s words taken lightly;
heaven’s will is flawless,
the barbarians good as dead.

The country’s authority is strong,
the barbarian’s authority in ruins;
the lord’s authority is awesome,
retainers’ authority gains backing.

The country’s authority is strong,
the barbarian’s authority in ruins;
the lord’s authority is awesome,
retainers’ authority gains backing.

The lord holds the Way,
the retainers hold loyalty;

the people are in order
the barbarians will be punished.⁹³

臣	天	君		
\		/		
亡	—	命	—	賊
/		\		
重	正	輕		
夷	君	国		
\		/		
備	—	威	—	臣
/		\		
強	嚴	哀		
臣	民	君		
\		/		
罰	—	有	—	賊
/		\		
道	治	忠		

This acrostic, as Kida writes, illustrates the thought of independent bands of *roshi* and their terrorist groups. It maps the political ideals and the unresolved, tense relations between factions advocating various solutions to the country's problems. The opening acrostic reflects *sonno joi* (revere the emperor, expel the barbarians) thought, and the last "stanza" reaffirms the main tenets of Confucian ideology in general. In this acrostic, as Kida writes, "lord" versus "rebel" indicates restoration thought, and "country" (or domain) versus "barbarian" (foreign countries) reflects "Expel the Barbarians" thought. Both are situated within the binary conceptual pattern attendant to Confucian thought. After the opening of the ports, the cost of living rose, and the first to be affected were the people at large (*minshu*) and the lower class samurai, who become the most vociferous proponents of "expelling the barbarians."⁹⁴

This form more than any other reflects the turbulent class relations from the point of view of

⁹³ Kida, 170.

⁹⁴ Takahashi Shin'ichi. *Takahashi Shin'ichi chosakushu*, v.10. *Hayariuta de tsuduru Nihon Gendaishi*, Ayumi Shuppan, 1985, 12.

those upper merchant (commoner) class and the lower samurai, where the ruling ideology was most at odds with the realities of the day: wealthy merchants were buying last names so as to attain samurai status and privilege, while samurai, became more indebted to merchants. The ruled (lower-ranking samurai and below) no longer stood in awe of the power of samurai ceremony and decorum, which represented the orthodox Confucian ideology's firmest consummation.

In a broader perspective, these *kanshi* acrostics are the most serious of the satirical verse forms that include most prominently *kyōka* as satirical with respect to waka, *senryū* as satirical vis-à-vis *hokku*, and *kyōshi* and this *kanshi* acrostic as satirical with respect to the more philosophical and abstract *kanshi*. These acrostics, because of the tendency of the repetition of the central character to exaggerate parallelism that is already prominent in *kanshi*, in practice are more analytical in their critical raids on established ideological and structural assumptions.⁹⁵ As *kyōka* parody the elevated literary court language specific to waka, *kanshi*-based satire parodied and twisted the rules of *kanshi* precepts, specifically those of Confucian values. These bitter acrostics did not always attack these values themselves and certainly not so as to dispense with them altogether. Neo-Confucianism of some kind was all they knew, and even when calling for the Restoration of Imperial rule, their arguments were usually based on these very values. Kida sees the partisan propagandistic uses of *ra-kusho*, from around 1863, as having robbed the genre of its "original esprit."⁹⁶

⁹⁵ It would be easy to label them "deconstructive," but I believe this term has been overused for the sake of unifying a critical ideology in the late 20th century at the expense of understanding the complexities of the way language was handled and wielded in these *bakumatsu* and Meiji contexts, where Western notions of an integrated subject associated with expression are but one dim possibility for situating linguistic and ideological practices.

⁹⁶ Kida, 171.

The governing order was at that time breaking down on all fronts: politics, economics, social order, and foreign relations. The somewhat bitter mode of protest in these acrostics, whereby the subjects (the ruled) exhibit a concern for the realm as a whole, is important to Confucian models of state. As is apropos in a Confucian manner of sympathetic remonstrance, both anger and paternal concern over the state of affairs is expressed.

Rakusho of yet another variety take the form of a satirical assemblage of snippets of purported dialogue. In some of these *rakusho* lines are attributed, with varying degrees of innuendo, to specific classes or stations. The device of enumeration that structures such *rakusho* resembles the numerous *hayariuta* in the subgenera of *mariuta* (ball songs), *iroha-uta* (ABC songs), and *kazoe-uta* (counting songs), all of which utilize the vehicle of catalogue to assemble a litany of complaints, usually about social ills and unjust situations. While *hayariuta* tended to make light of all in “good humor,” *rakusho* were in general more serious, intimating the challenge of an oppositional force with which to be reckoned. Being a broadly inclusive genre defined by its illicit means of distribution, they often utilized an enumerative, cataloging device to add rhythmic and mnemonic staying power along with a sense of conviction.⁹⁷

The following example is an extended, playful and satirical “graffiti verse” (with missing fragments indicated by ellipses). The left column of lines represents an array of distinct voices uttering various opinions on current events. The right may be read either as a direct attribution or a clarifying gloss on the utterances.

From the Back Streets: One’s Fortune on Slips of Paper in this World of Change
(世の中辻うら *Yo no Naka Tsujiura*)

⁹⁷ These lampooning dialogues were *rakusho* that sometimes were based on or became popularly circulated *hayariuta*, such as is the case of the well known “Close-Cropped” (*Jangiri*), which will be treated below.

Quick, over here don’t be so loud about it I am delighted.	Mito lords in retirement public affairs of state the abbot at Zojoji Temple
They’ll really change? my chest is pounding, aren’t they cute? How could it be? the dirty things ... Dreadful!	rumors of their return impoverished (shogunal) retainers Japan’s ‘great vessels’ these hard times anything over 100 <i>koku</i> enlisted into service ...

はやくおいでよ 静かにおしよ 嬉しいねへ ほんとうかえ 胸がどきどきするよ かはいいいねへ どうしてこんなだ らう きたないこと。。。 いやだよ ⁹⁸	水戸殿御隠居 公儀のはなし 増上寺のはなし 帰帆の噂 貧乏な御家人 日本の大船 世の中ふけいき 百石三両の御手伝
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The left column suggests the multiplicity of banter one might overhear in an imaginary public sphere that reaches into the back rooms of concerned players in pre-Restoration politics. The right column provides solid points of reference, which quite interestingly evoke ideologically diverse voices, which cohere in their consistently ironic tone and as a medley of fragments of conversational utterances.

The contrasting voices create a cacophony designed to amuse, and which can be read as columns and confusedly, with interruptions, as somewhat arbitrarily divided lines designed to convey a sense of disorder. This example epitomizes Kamisaka’s emphasis on *rakusho* as being “critical, mocking (*choroteki*), satirical (*fushiteki*),” and “incorporating overlapping (*jufukuteki*) and associative (*engoteki*) expression.” He

⁹⁸ Sakuraki, 23.

continues, *rakusho* “began with the aim of disseminating throughout the community information about the advantages and disadvantages of things of interest, by raising [questions related to] every sort of event or incident in the government and blunders in someone’s actions.”⁹⁹ Historical engagement and lack of fixed topics for composition distinguishes *rakusho* as an anti-literary form of verse, performing as an affront not only to specific policy issues, but also to the ascendancy of higher poetry as distinguished by proper diction, and inclusions and exclusions of topics.¹⁰⁰

Similarly interesting in its treatment of historical imagery is the *kazoe-uta* or “counting song” “*Daikoku-mai*,” which is written with the characters for “dance of the great nations” but which is homophonic with a folk dance developed in the Muromachi period as a prayer for the new year, called “Dance of the Great Black.” The dancers would don masks so as to take the form of Mahakala, a Buddhist protectorate deity, and sing prayers of thanks to the deity. This subtext is significant as a framing device, noticeable in the closing word, “*go-anshin*,” translated as “royal peace of mind.” But rather than a prayer for the new year, it reads like a lament for a chain of misfortunate events:

Dance of the Great Japan

First	The English pick a fight
Second	Japan is stirred into an uproar
Third	Blinded by the confusion
Fourth	The bows and javelins of our world
Fifth	To practice from now on
Sixth	With our military science of old
Seventh	Just seems like we won’t make it
Eighth	Estates are royal warehouses
Ninth	And ensuing royal pledges
Tenth	Will surely insure royal peace of mind.

⁹⁹ Kamisaka, 2.

¹⁰⁰ According to Kamisaka, topics for *rakusho* are various, without a broadly accepted generically defined range of topics and objectives for writing *rakusho*. Kamisaka, 5.

大国舞

一に	イギリスおしかけて
二に	日本をさはがして
三に	さんさぬろたへて
四ツ	世の中弓鐘ぼう
五ツ	今から稽古して
六ツ	むかしの軍学も
七ツ	中なかまにあはず
八ツ	やしきは御物入
九ツ	今度の御固めも
十ツ	とうとうご安心 ¹⁰¹

Here the punster begins with a general allusion to samurai who advocated “expelling the barbarians” and expressed their infuriation over the presence of foreigners by assaulting English subjects (who were shielded by extraterritorial rights).¹⁰² In 1861 and 1863 the English are said to have ‘picked a fight’, and in actuality one Englishman lost his life, leading the English government to seek compensation and punishment of the Japanese who killed the British subject. Because of inter-domainal conflict, it could not be resolved to their satisfaction, and this incident culminated in the British bombardment of Kagoshima in August 1863. The opening lines conflate the national subjects of England and the Shogun with the local subjects involved in this physical fight. The ‘turn’ in the *rakusho* comes midway, as comparisons of weaponry available to back “the great nation” are made, so as to satirize how Japan has not living up to its samurai bravado. With an antiquated “military science of old,” it seemed like Japanese would not “make it” in time to stop outright colonization. The use of enumeration underscores the parody of the understood order of the daimyo with their “royal” estates, pledges, and security, which were all rendered ineffectual by the dangerous combination of military inferiority, lack of political order, and brash actions by stalwart samurai. This *rakusho* displays some of

¹⁰¹ Sakuraki, 25-26.

¹⁰² See Samson, George, *A History of Japan, 1615-1867*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963, 239-240.

the dangers of the late 1850s and 1860s known as “troubles within [open the country to] disaster from without” (内憂外患).¹⁰³

Semantically playful *rakusho*, could express resistance to the glib application of new names and ideas. Such words were often presented as a panacea capable of transforming a troubled social milieu into a glorious one. Though government supporters may take them seriously, for satirists such words were seen as ruses employed to mislead lower classes into acting against their own interests, as the following *kyōka* suggests:

Read backwards by the underlings,
it means they shall not prevail.

上からは明治どなどといふけれど治明
(おさまるめい) と下からは読む¹⁰⁴

“Meiji,” read “backwards” (lit. “from below,” in usually vertically written Japanese) is “*osamarumei*,” or “they shall not prevail.” This punning portrays class tension invested in the ideological bent latent in the very designation “Meiji” itself. This *kyōka* lampoons the name for being merely a nominal attempt to decree a lasting remedy for the country’s problems.

Kida correctly cites this as an example of the people’s (*minshu*) opposition to “revolution from above” (*ue kara no kakumei*). However, we must also point out that the form for such opposition to the government by lampooning the name of the reign was not new. One finds in the *Somenkan Bakumatsu-shi* similar play with the “Ansei” period name (1854-1860). At that time many criticized the Bakufu for opening the country to broader foreign relations: “Ansei (peaceful government) read backwards is Isen (parallel of lati-

¹⁰³ On *naiyu gaikan* see Marius B. Jansen, “The Meiji Restoration,” in *The Emergence of Meiji Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 144-150.

¹⁰⁴ Kida, 218. Furigana appear in parentheses. Note that the name of Edo was changed to Tokyo in 1866.7.17.

tude), / and what’s left is the land of America.”¹⁰⁵ The purport here is that the Bakufu had capitulated to American demands and had orientated its actions and principles in line with America. It also suggests that America, given such appeasing policies, will rule at every latitude, throughout the world.

Similar songs include two appearing in the *Yubin Hochi Shinbun* in 1874, under the heading “a few *hayariuta*.” They reflect in song various attitudes toward imposed changes in social customs. One is very similar to the previously cited song, on the futility and sheer stupidity of trying to change deep-rooted customs, values, and institutions overnight by mere proclamation.

Though mouthing the words
‘Civilization and Enlightenment’,
dyed-in-the-wool bigots

文明開化と口では伝へど染みた固陋¹⁰⁶

Another song reads:

O august body politic of equal rights
between men
and women, where today’s women are
nobody’s fools.

今の女は馬鹿にはならぬ男女同権の御政
体¹⁰⁷

It is a song on the hypocrisy of suddenly treating women as equals when diminutive attitudes toward women were still the norm. This song parodies the solemn, exhortative voices that characterized proclamations of ‘rights’, whether general human rights or specific cases of marginalized groups such as women.

Here are a few comical examples of how *senryū* ditties expressed the feeling of absurdity

¹⁰⁵ Sakaraki, 1: 109.

¹⁰⁶ From the *Yubin Hochi Shinbun*, included in *Meiji Jidai Bunka Kiroku Shusei*, 129.

¹⁰⁷ *Meiji Jidai Bunka Kiroku Shusei*, 129.

upon seeing the pomp invested by the ruling class of intellectuals:

Across the page sideways
like the crab-letters, so go people's minds.
蟹文字の横へそれ行く人心

"Enlightenment" is summoned
and shapes are magically transformed.
開化とは開けて化ける姿なり

For as long as we have some life in us,
our eyes will only get bluer.
これからは目玉が青くなるばかり¹⁰⁸

All of these satires reflect differences between former ways of conducting daily affairs and the new ways, which were imposed from above and often enforced by law, giving rise to much dismay and scrutiny. The comic element here derives from what Bergson described as a situation that "belongs simultaneously to two altogether independent series of events and is capable of being interpreted in two entirely different meanings at the same time."¹⁰⁹ Here the "series" are Tokugawa rules and routines in contrast to the newly reformed "enlightened" rules for living. It is hard to imagine a situation more prone to such clashing of norms of established series than in this period, especially with the grandiose claims of "Kaika" publicists abutting the pettiness and superficiality of the actual impact.

This essay attempts to demonstrate how historically contextualized satirical verse, though reactive in most instances, visibly interacted in the formation of subjects and ideological commonsense of the former Bakuhan classes and formative Meiji classes. Changes in the uses of these forms also reflect variations in ideological stability. The most recurrent theme in this study of *senryu*, *rakusho*, and *hayari-*

uta has been how these verses negotiated class relations, and the relation of the forms of power represented in the examined verses to the developing field of variously competing ideologies. The class conflict manifest in these ideologies may be understood, as I have suggested, in terms of resentment towards "the revolution from above"¹¹⁰ and the impositions made by leaders who wielded and distorted language in ways to advance their positions and diminish the voices of those with dissenting opinions. From the point of view of the dissenters themselves, these verses show how the words and slogans of the new leaders became entertaining fodder for satire, became means of expressing bitter criticism publicly displayed as acrostics and versified dialogue, and became in 1890s *senryu* voices reinforcing the ruling bureaucracy's position on national issues. *Senryu* especially can be seen to migrate from being forms of annoying marginal dissent to being ironic voicing only mildly taunting the nation as it quietly applauded Japan's rise to regional dominance as an industrial, modernized nation with various issues of ideological backing that these verses document.

¹⁰⁸ Kida, 221-222.

¹⁰⁹ Cited in Susan Stewart, *Nonsense - Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1978, 157.

¹¹⁰ For instance, see Kida, 218.