

Crossing the Borders to Modernity: Fictional Characters as Representations of Alternative Concepts of Life in Meiji Literature (1868–1912)

Edited by
Stephan Köhn and Chantal Weber



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Preface

This book originated in the eponymous conference “Crossing the Borders to Modernity: Fictional Characters as Representation of Alternative Concepts of Life in Meiji Literature (1868–1912)”, which was held at the University of Cologne on January 10 and 11, 2020. This conference concluded our research project, “Literary characters in the early texts of the Japanese author NAGAI Kafū (1879–1959)”, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) for a total of three years. The conference was planned and organized by Martin THOMAS, who was the research assistant for the project at the time.

The conference aimed to create a dialogue between different historical perspectives on the process of Japanese modernization. 17 speakers from Germany, the United States, Italy, Norway, Switzerland and Japan came together to discuss how Japanese authors of the Meiji period (1868–1912) positioned their writing in terms of social and political changes. What specific problems did they identify in view of rapid development from an isolated, feudal and agricultural society to an imperialist, modern industrial nation? What solutions did they offer to their readers?

The scientific exchange at the conference was a great opportunity—who would have guessed that only two months later the whole world would go into pandemic mode, rendering such conferences temporarily impossible. We are grateful to the authors of this book for having completed their articles under these circumstances. Facing the personal difficulties caused by the pandemic as well as the logistical complexities of gaining access to research material, their research has contributed to showing—in greater detail than ever before—the positions taken by the selected authors and characters made with regard to the process of modernization during the Meiji period. This book shows that even in times of restricted mobility, the international research community can thrive and collaborate efficiently.

Last but not least, our thanks go to Michael DORRITY for his thorough proof-reading of the English manuscripts and to Marie-Christine DRESSEN for the final check of all articles. Any mistakes and inaccuracies remaining are the responsibilities of the editors.

Cologne, November 2021

The editors

Crossing the Borders to Modernity

—An Introduction—

Stephan Köhn and Chantal Weber

The sound of fallen leaves whirling through the garden. The noise of wind rattling the sliding paper doors.

It was a winter's afternoon. I sat near the window of my study, the dim light reminiscent of the autumn evening many years ago when I had broken up with my lover. I leaned, alone, lonesome, against the charcoal brazier reading Ivan Turgenev's [1818–83] biography. As a child, Turgenev often wandered around his father's garden where the trees had grown thick and unkempt. One summer evening, he saw a snake and a frog mercilessly biting one other near an old pond that was overgrown with weeds. Incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, his childish mind soon began to doubt that God could have a heart full of mercy ... While I was reading this passage—I know neither how nor why—my mind wandered to the old garden in my father's residence in Koishigawa Kanatomi-chō, in Tōkyō, and the scenery there, somehow terrifying. Almost thirty years have passed since the days when the water would come streaming from the Kobinata Suidō-chō waterworks, running through the dayflowers in our garden like a country brook.

Soon after the Meiji Restoration, the abandoned residences of former vassals and retainers from the Mito domain began popping up for sale here and there. My father, who had taken his advantage of the new times, bought property as large as three of those samurai residences and built a new, spacious mansion while leaving the old-fashioned garden and trees untouched. (NAGAI 1992: 79–80)

NAGAI Kafū's 永井荷風 (1879–1959) short novel, “The Fox” (*Kitsune* 狐), was first published in the educational magazine “The World of Junior High Schools” (*Chūgaku sekai* 中学世界) in January 1909, before being republished only eight month later in Kafū's short novel anthology “Pleasure” (*Kanraku* 歓楽). It can undoubtedly be considered paradigmatic for both the new Meiji period (1868–1912) and the new kind of literature that is now widely referred to as Meiji literature (*Meiji bungaku* 明治文学). In this short novel, the first-person narrator—who is referred to only as “I”—, is the offspring of a wealthy family that spends his time idly reading a biography of the Russian writer Ivan TURGENEV, while reminiscing over his early childhood days in his father's new residence. Early in the course of the novel, a fox suddenly emerges from the old rambling garden of the residence, throwing the entire household into turmoil. The fox is the actual “hero” of this eponymous short novel and poses a threat for “I”'s family in a double sense. The animal is wild and, at the same time, supernatural. He both steals a chicken from the family's henhouse, while reviving the superstitious beliefs of

the modern and enlightened family. In the end, the fox is killed, and peace is restored to “I”’s family life. However, the fact that “the same people who killed the fox, because he had killed a chicken, have now killed two chickens [for a celebration party] because they had successfully killed the fox” forces “I”, like TURGENEV in the beginning of this short story, to wonder what to make of so-called “justice” (NAGAI 1992: 93).

That the family background of the first-person narrator has striking “similarities” to that of the author, NAGAI Kafū, was not, in itself, arbitrary. Nor was it unknown to the majority of those who read “The Fox”. Literary self-representation (*jiko hyōshō* 自己表象) had become quite common among Japanese writers at the beginning of the 20th century, thanks to the information on contemporary authors and their works that was circulating in countless magazines and newspapers at the time. As HIBI Yoshitaka (2018: 199–218) pointed out, this kind of “meta information” served both to help many readers in getting to know authors—such as NAGAI Kafū—more “personally”, while also encouraging them to read a second, hidden layer into the texts, one that was enriched with secret details from the authors’ private lives. The new media environment that emerged in the second half of the Meiji period fostered the development of mutual trust between authors and readers, a bond that would play a crucial role in most genres of modern Japanese literature for decades to come.

However, it is not merely for this “overlapping” of author and protagonist—widely practiced in both literary production and reception—that “The Fox” should be considered a typical piece of Meiji literature. It is above all in its *dramatis personae*—“I”’s father in particular—that “The Fox” epitomizes the specific *zeitgeist* of this new era. Like NAGAI Kafū’s father in real life, he is a high official in the new Meiji government who has earned his living and his reputation as a man who “had taken advantage of the new times” (NAGAI 1992: 79). Leading the typical glamorous life of a nobleman of old, his imposing residence is built on grounds that formerly belonged to three wealthy samurai families from the Mito domain (today’s Ibaraki prefecture). “I”’s father symbolizes the new self-made man of the Meiji period who succeeds in life by advancing professionally and socially (*risshin shusse* 立身出世). Irrespective of family background, the prospect of advancement represented by “I”’s father, came to constitute a popular *topos* in numerous literary works of that time. The Meiji period was a time of radical social changes, and NAGAI Kafū’s “The Fox” depicts this new social order perfectly.

From feudal system to modern nation-state

Discussions of the Meiji period typically call key words such as modernization or Westernization to mind, given that it was a time of great changes in politics,

economy, culture, science. After the feudal Edo period (1603–1868), Japan engaged in rapid transformation with a view to becoming a modern nation-state. By the end of the Meiji period, it was able to keep up with Europe and the United States in terms of industrialization, militarization and the establishment of social and political institutions as well as protecting its independence against Western domination. Though the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate and the establishment of the Meiji government were a long time coming, it was the arrival of the Black Ships and the demands of Commodore Matthew C. PERRY (1794–1858) in 1853 for Japan to be opened to the outside world that are widely regarded as the turning point. They furnished parties opposing the shogunate with the opportunity to voice their opinions on the domestic front.¹ According to Andrew GORDON (2020: 62), however, the Meiji Restoration (*Meiji ishin* 明治維新) of 1868 was “little more than a coup d’état. A relatively small band of insurgents had toppled the Tokugawa bakufu.” It was predominantly samurai from the peripheral domains Satsuma (today Kagoshima prefecture) and Chōshū (today part of Yamaguchi prefecture) who marched to Kyōto in 1867 under the slogan “revere the Emperor, expel the barbarians” (*sonnō jōi* 尊王攘夷), taking control of the Imperial Palace and proclaiming the restoration of the imperial power over the country. Though some allies of the shogunate fought until 1869 against the imperial forces in the so called Boshin War (Boshin sensō 戊辰戦争), the feudal era came to a peaceful end in most parts of the country.²

In April 1868, the Charter Oath (also called Five-Article Oath, Gokajō no goseimon 五箇条の御誓文)—representing the strategy of the new government for the modernization of the state—was issued in the name of Emperor Meiji (1852–1912):

1. Deliberative assembly shall be widely established and all matters decided by public discussion.
2. All classes, high and low, shall unite in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of state.
3. The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall each be allowed to pursue their own calling so that there may be no discontent.
4. Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature.
5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule. (GORDON 2020: 78)

Though this document seems to be rather democratic and advanced, calling for public discussion and equality of all social classes, Marius B. JANSEN (2000: 338–39) pointed out that “[i]n the context of its formulation, however, it constituted a shrewd blending of points of view.” Many political leaders, previously involved in the discussion, arrogated privileges for themselves and created a document that was substantially open to interpretation. It is clear in Articles 2 and 3

that not all classes, “high or low”, are equal, and that “civil and military officials” are no mere commoners. Nevertheless, the document “expressed a spirit of reform that informed the revolutionary changes imposed by the new government over the next decade” (GORDON 2020: 79).

Government and policy, during the new Meiji period, were dominated by members of the samurai class such as ŌKUBO Toshimichi 大久保利通 (1830–78) and SAIGŌ Takamori 西郷隆盛 (1827–77). Both from Satsuma, they attempted to build a new nation centered around the young Meiji Emperor. The members of the so-called Meiji oligarchy or “domain clique” (*hanbatsu* 藩閥) had to face the problems of the Tokugawa shogunate such as military and economic weakness, as well as social inequality and political fragmentation. As such, the government quickly started issuing orders and regulations to overcome the feudal political and social system.³ In 1871, all domains were abolished and replaced with prefectures, whose governors were appointed by the central government; the political system of the Edo period—an interchange between shogunate and domain lords, the so-called *bakuhatsu* system (*bakuhatsu sei* 幕藩制)—was effectively overthrown and the samurai retainers of the domains were left without a leader. Shortly after, in 1872, the lower samurai were therefore classified as commoners (*heimin* 平民), as was already the case for the entire non-samurai population. Though the upper samurai and daimyō still remained a privileged elite of sorts, the new social order abolished the status society of the Edo period and established a nation with an ostensibly equal society.

Under the slogan of “rich country, strong army” (*fukoku kyōhei* 富国強兵), more reforms were initiated; the land tax reform (Chiso kaisei 地租改正) of 1873 being one of the most important.⁴ In the Edo period, tax was paid either by one household unit or by a village to the domain lord. Due to the reform, however, (male) individuals had to pay tax directly to the state, which used the budget partly for public works and modern national infrastructure such as telegraph lines or a postal system. The population did not easily adjust to the various changes and in the rural regions the new laws were not always followed. Nonetheless, the land tax reform gave the commoners new possibilities of voicing their concerns, and communicating more directly with the state. In 1874, the Patriotic Public Party (Aikoku kōtō 愛国公党) around the former member of the government ITAGAKI Taisuke 板垣退助 (1837–1919) emerged as the first political association to demand people’s rights. Though this particular political movement was short lived, it paved the way for a new association that was formed in the 1880s; the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement (*Jiyū minken undō* 自由民権運動). They demanded the possibility of participation through election and the establishment of a national assembly.⁵ The newly founded newspapers gave the political discussion a forum. James L. HUFFMAN (1997: 8) noted that “the Meiji press

was, at its core, a popular medium [...] the only public channel available to timely, ongoing intercourse between *minshū* [commoners] and the national establishment.” The first newspaper was established in 1871, the *Yokohama mainichi shinbun* 横浜毎日新聞, followed in 1872 by the *Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun* 東京日日新聞 (renamed *Mainichi shinbun* in 1943), the *Yomiuri shinbun* 読売新聞 in 1874, and the *Asahi shinbun* 朝日新聞 in 1879.⁶ As early as 1875, the government started to restrict the new public space by the Newspaper law (Shinbunshi jōrei 新聞紙条例), issuing the first of many censorship laws to come.⁷ According to Hiromi SASAMOTO-COLLINS (2013: 17) “[t]his pattern, in which publication is ‘encouraged’, while criticism of government policy is banned” is consistent throughout the Meiji period.

One main issue during the Meiji period was the handling of the Western dominance and the preservation of independence. Starting with the United States in 1854, several unequal treaties between Japan and Western countries were signed, by way of which harbors were opened to commerce. In addition, extraterritoriality was granted to foreigners, and taxing authority in the foreigner’s settlements was ceded. To regain its sovereignty, one main goal of the Meiji government was to thus revise the treaties and be recognized as equal by the Western countries. One of the first attempts was the Iwakura Embassy (Iwakura shisetsudan 岩倉使節団) lasting two years from 1871 to 73, led by the eponymous IWAKURA Tomomi 岩倉具視 (1825–83), a noble man born in Kyōto and an early supporter of the *sonnō jōi* movement. The embassy—which consisted of fifty high ranking statesmen and students, who would be left behind⁸—visited the USA and different countries in Europe principally to evaluate Japan’s global status and to discuss possibilities of changes in the unequal treaties. The embassy returned to Japan in 1873, convinced that there was no immediate danger for Japan, given that the Western countries had only recently gained their modern and advanced status. JANSEN (2000: 358–59) concluded: “Rather than prepare for military defense, Japan should inaugurate a program of ‘defensive’ modernization, setting its house in order so that it could work its way up the international hierarchy of respect and prestige.”

To achieve this goal, the Meiji government employed Western experts, so-called “hired foreigners” (*oyatoi gaikokujin* 御雇外国人), in various fields such as in medicine, the military, or architecture, to name but a few. Western technology, along with its construction industry, was thus imported to Japan, and modernization was propelled forward as a consequence. In the meantime, Japanese students were sent to Europe and the United States to study different academic fields and to become a replacement for the foreign experts in Japan. The phrase “Japanese spirit, Western learning” (*wakon yōsai* 和魂洋才) became a slogan for the incorporation of Western advanced technology and existing Japanese

intellectual history. OKAKURA Kakuzō 岡倉覚三 (also OKAKURA Tenshin 岡倉天心; 1863–1913)—known for his commitment to the Japanese art—stated in his 1889 essay “Flowers of the Nation” (*Kokka* 国華), published in the eponymous art magazine *Kokka* 国華: “Now is a rare and glorious time, the enlightened reign of Meiji. In this era, we search for models everywhere, drawing on ancient and modern times, and seek knowledge broadly, from East and West” (OKAKURA 2012: 176).⁹ Tessa MORRIS-SUZUKI (1994: 83–84), however, pointed out that: “Some Meiji intellectuals, it is true, proclaimed the need to maintain a ‘Japanese spirit’ (*wakon*) while borrowing ‘Western science’ (*yōsai*); but in practice, the new technological system demanded fundamental changes in attitudes and social institutions, as well as in methods of production.”

Whereas the decade of the 1870s had been rather liberal as proclaimed in the Charter Oath, in the 1880s the government established the legal base with which to entrench changes permanently by issuing fundamental laws such as the Criminal Code and the Penal Code of 1880.¹⁰ Most important, however, were the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889 followed by the establishment of the Imperial Diet, by which the new nation of Japan had truly crossed the border to modernity.

After the Meiji Restoration, the government adopted the Council of State system (*dajōkan* 太政官) as in the Heian period (794–1185), which saw the Emperor surrounded by three ministers. The system prevailed until the formation of the Cabinet system in 1885. ITŌ Hirobumi 伊藤博文 (1841–1909) served as the first prime minister of Japan, calling ministers predominantly from the former Satsuma and Chōshū domains, with whom he took steps toward formulating a constitution for the new Empire. Along with certain other government officials, ITŌ had visited Germany and other European countries for discussions with legal experts on such a constitution. The German legal scholar Hermann ROESLER (1834–94) wrote a draft in 1887, which was highly discussed among the Cabinet members and at times in front of the Emperor, culminating in a concept “between imperial absolutism and representative government” (SASAMOTO-COLLINS 2013: 27).¹¹ The Constitution, promulgated on February 11, 1889, consists of seven chapters starting with the “Emperor”, followed by the “Rights and Duties of Subjects” and the structure of the government. In contrast to the Charter Oath of 1868, the document obviates the Meiji state’s self-image as a restoration of antiquity, which can be clearly seen in the opening paragraph:

Having, by virtue of the glories of Our Ancestors, ascended the throne of a lineal succession unbroken for ages eternal; desiring to promote the welfare of, and to give development to the moral and intellectual faculties of Our beloved subjects, the very same that have been favoured with the benevolent care and affectionate vigilance of Our Ancestors; and hoping to maintain the prosperity of the State, in concert with Our people and with their support, We hereby promulgate, in pursuance of Our Imperial Rescript of the 12th day of the 10th month

of the 14th year of Meiji, a fundamental law of the State, to exhibit the principles, by which We are guided in Our conduct, and to point out to what Our descendants and Our subjects and their descendants are forever to conform.

The right of sovereignty of the State, We have inherited from Our Ancestors, and We shall bequeath them to Our descendants. Neither We nor they shall in future fail to wield them, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution hereby granted.¹²

Article 33 of the Constitution proclaims the foundation of an Imperial Diet consisting of two Houses, a House of Peers and a House of Representatives. In July 1890, the first election took place, with more than one thousand candidates competing for the three hundred seats of the diet. However not everyone was permitted to participate, as the “Election Law limited the franchise to men who paid a direct national tax of 15 yen. [...] The number of those qualified to vote numbered 450,365, a figure rather close to the total membership of the old samurai class” (JANSEN 2000: 415). The Prime Minister and the ministers of the Cabinet were not elected, but chosen by the Emperor, making YAMAGATA Aritomo 山縣有朋 (1838–1922) the first Prime Minister of the newly elected government.

Though Japan entered in the 1880s under a modern form of governance it was not democratic, as a significant part of the population was excluded from the political process and remained subjugated within the new political order. In the following decade, the Meiji state grew increasingly nationalistic, depending less on Western examples and ideas. Instead, Japan started taking a leading role in Asia, and the population was encouraged to show patriotic behavior. Growing competition with China over domination in Korea culminated in the Sino-Japanese War (Nisshin sensō 日清戦争) in 1894. Though outside observers assumed that as the bigger and more powerful country, China would prevail over the newcomer, Japan had invested a great deal in its navy and was thus able to secure victory against its significantly larger opponent. As a result, Korea not only remained independent for the foreseeable future, but also China was forced to pay reparations to Japan, while Taiwan became Japan’s first colony. For JANSEN (2000: 432), the victory “was central to Japan’s rise to membership in the ‘concert of powers’ thereafter.” The majority of the Japanese people viewed the war with a sense of national pride, considering it a necessity in the liberation of Korea from China.

This burgeoning developing nationalism was also clear with regard to public opinion on Christianity, which had been relatively high in the 1870s as it was associated with the civilized societies of Western countries. Before and during the Sino-Japanese War, however, Christian communities were seen as the foreign other, which stood in opposition to the imperial notion that had formerly prevailed in Japan. Christians, by contrast, seized on the war as an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to the state. A. Hamish ION stated:

The few pacifists were outnumbered by those who strove to demonstrate their support for Japan's cause by providing comfort for bereaved families, disseminating information that justified the war, and performing other useful activities in their neighborhoods. War became the medium through which Christians could most visibly show that they were as patriotic and nationalistic as their non-Christian fellow citizens. (ION 2003: 72)

Christians exerted significant influence on the intellectuals of the Meiji period, especially in the popular rights and socialist movements. This again became apparent in the next war of the Meiji period, when Japan fought against Russia over dominance in Korea and China during the Russo-Japanese War (*Nichiro sensō* 日露戦争) of 1904–05. Leading socialists like KŌTOKU Shūsui 幸徳秋水 (1871–1911), though not Christian himself, did not support the war against Russia, though “[o]nce again most public opinion favored standing up to the Russians” (JANSEN 2000: 439). Due to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (*Nichiei dōmei* 日英同盟), signed in 1902, there was no danger for Japan of an intervention by other European countries, and Japan was thus free to challenge the significantly larger country. The war was a war of technology and a forerunner of what would occur in World War I, when Japan would again surprise most outside observers by prevailing over Russia. Not only did Japan's victory meet with the approval of Western countries, her defeat of a major imperialistic power impressed nationalists throughout Asia. It should not be forgotten, however, that Japan itself had already become an imperialistic country and was about to expand its influence with the annexation of Korea in 1910.

One clear aim of the Meiji government was to form a modern, civilized society, comparable to the Western nations. The phrase “civilization and enlightenment” (*bunmei kaika* 文明開化) was not limited to the political system, its primary aim was the education of the people as individuals. In particular, the educator and reformer FUKUZAWA Yukichi 福沢諭吉 (1835–1901) emphasized the need for independent individuals in the interests of the state. In his text “An Encouragement of Learning” (*Gakumon no susume* 学問のすすめ), published in 17 installments between March 1872 and November 1876, he stressed the importance of education for everyone.

It is said that heaven does not create one man above or below another man. This means that when men are born from heaven they all are equal. There is no innate distinction between high and low. [...] In the *Jitsugokyō* [実語教, *Teaching from true words*, textbook of the Heian period, popular until the end of the Edo period] we read that if a man does not learn he will be ignorant, and that a man who is ignorant is stupid. Therefore the distinction between wise and stupid comes down to a matter of education. (FUKUZAWA 1969: 1)

There has been debate as to whether FUKUZAWA's opening line on equal humans was a reference to the Declaration of Independence. However, considering his historical and family background, one has to assume that he was a man shaped by the end of the Edo period. Earl H. KINMONTH (1978: 680–81) thus suggested

“that [Fukuzawa] actually criticized few Tokugawa ideas; that his writing shows that he himself had not thrown off many Tokugawa conceits, especially those of the samurai class; that his advocacy of ‘rights’ was a means to other goals and not the end purpose of Gakumon; that his ideas concerning rights came from the most conservative eighteenth and nineteenth-century sources; and that the primary function of the work was to give voice and direction to samurai aspirations for personal advancement (*risshin*).”

The Meiji education system had to rely heavily on the Edo period, as it was not possible to build new schools and publish new textbooks in such a short time. On August 8, 1872, only four years after the Meiji Restoration, the government issued an outline of the education system in the First National Plan for Education (Gakusei 学制). The main goal of the plan was to provide essential education for everyone, such that people could develop according to their talents. Benjamin DUKE (2014: 74) concluded that “the first national school system in Japan introduced two comprehensive principles of education, each of revolutionary proportions. Elementary education for all inaugurated the concepts of mass education and mass literacy, [...]. The second principal of major significance, the centralization of education, placed responsibility for determining educational policy for the nation in the hands of the relevant governmental organ, the Ministry of Education.”

The early education system of the 1870s was a time of possibilities for everyone in Japan, regardless of gender, social class, or family background. For the most part, elementary schools remained this way, although families initially hesitated to send girls to class. Already in 1879, however, the Gakusei was replaced by a new education law, the Second National Plan for Education (Kyōikurei 教育令), in order to adapt to current developments. Whereas the Gakusei was highly centralized, the new law took local needs into account. As Brian PLATT (2004: 219) noted: “the Educational Ordinance [Kyōikurei] [...] reduced the number of required subjects and allowed localities to adapt subject matters to practical needs, and abandoned the ‘school district’ system and restored the village as the basic unit of local educational life.”

The greatest shift from the somewhat liberal education system of the 1870s was undoubtedly the turn to more traditional values and nationalism in the 1880s, in which the state took a leading role. In 1880, the Revised National Plan for Education (Kaisei kyōikurei 改正教育令) took effect, strengthening moral education in elementary schools and increasing the power of the prefectural office over local schools in general. Where moral textbooks had mostly consisted of translated Western books in the 1870s, the following decade saw the Ministry of Education publish “Elementary school morals” (*Shōgaku shūshin sho* 小学修身書), based only on Confucian writings and Chinese classics, in 1883.¹³ The position of the

emperor as central state figure was further strengthened in the Imperial Rescript on Education (Kyōiku chokugo 教育勅語), which was issued in 1890. This established the emperor-system education (*tennōsei kyōiku* 天皇制教育) that remained in effect until the end of World War II. The Rescript had to be memorized by students and recited daily.¹⁴

Though the education system sought to form obedient subjects who would strive to serve the state, the expectations it laid out for men and women diverged significantly. Men were allowed to develop as individuals and aspire toward “individual personal advancement” (*risshin shusse*), to serve the state through personal success. Women, on the other hand, were to fulfill the role of the “good wife and wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母), serving the state by educating children to become obedient subjects to the Emperor. In spite of mandatory early education for both genders, women were gradually excluded from higher education and even prevented from voicing political opinions in public. As Sharon H. NOLTE and Sally Ann HASTINGS (1991: 152) explain: “State propaganda exhorted women to contribute to the nation through their hard work, their frugality, their efficient management, their care of the old, young, and ill, and their responsible upbringing of children. The significance of these functions did not entitle them to political rights, however.”

The role model for women of “good wife, wise mother” was officially established as a state ideology in the Girls’ High School Order (Kōtō jogakkō rei 高等女学校令) of 1899, becoming the key concept in the syllabus for women’s education.¹⁵ While the female ideal was raised to the level of state ideology, men were granted greater freedom to lead independent lives. Though they were ostensibly expected to engage in self-improvement and personal success, the more idealistic goal was “to escape society and think it all through for one’s self” (KINMONTH 1981: 149). The discourse of *risshin shusse* was rather philosophical and was largely reflected in contemporary fictional writing and its preoccupation with the concept of individualism.¹⁶

Modern literature at the crossroads of tradition and innovation

Needless to say, the fundamental changes that overshadowed the entire Meiji period also had an enormous impact on cultural and intellectual trends. In general, the preceding Edo period was re-conceptualized by many historians during the Meiji period as the antagonistic “other”, a feudalistic and anachronistic period that stretched over 250 years before modernity, civilization and enlightenment were finally brought to Japan shortly after the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The Edo period was now commonly referred to as the “pre-modern period” (*kinsei* 近世)—in contrast to the “modern period” (*kindai* 近代) of Meiji—and artistic production from that time would come to constitute a veritable bone of conten-

tion for many intellectuals of the Meiji period. Apart from the popular genre of theatre known as Kabuki, literature became one of the “relicts” of a pre-modernity that was now fiercely discussed. The entire Meiji period was replete with reforms of various types and “literature”, as Peter F. KORNICKI (1982: 2) aptly pointed out, “was thus one of many possible subjects for reform and therefore not regarded as a special case.”

In point of fact, the literature of the Edo period was the product of a highly commercialized and professionalized publishing business that had emerged as early as at the beginning of the 17th century in the former capital of Kyōto, followed by the cities of Edo and Ōsaka. Under the protection and surveillance of the so-called publisher’s guilds (*hon’ya nakama* 本屋仲間), pre-modern unions were formed in these three publishing centers, at the behest of the shogunate government in 1721–23. Book production flourished due to a highly efficient network of book publishers, booksellers and rental libraries that guaranteed distribution throughout the country. Book publishing became a very lucrative business for both publishers and authors. As early as the end of the 17th century, Japan’s first professional authors appeared. Given that these writers were considered key to a successful book publishing industry, many publishers tried to bind them to exclusive contracts (MAY 1983: 82–85).

By the Edo period, writing literature was no longer the unique privilege of the well-educated upper class intellectual. Nationwide, public schools (*terakoya* 寺子屋) began shooting up like mushrooms in the 17th and 18th century, and commoners in both urban and rural areas were able to receive a solid basic education. The literacy rate thus reached exceptionally high levels as compared with central Europe. Indeed, some of the most famous bestselling authors of the Edo period were born into commoner families. This includes authors such as SANTŌ Kyōden 山東京伝 (1761–1816), TAKIZAWA Bakin 滝沢馬琴 (1767–1848), or TAMENAGA Shunsui 為永春水 (1790–1843), to name but a few. Yet, readers from virtually all social classes were attracted to the work of such authors.

In the Edo period, popular literature was generally referred to having been “written for fun” (*gesaku* 戯作). Of course, the meaning of *gesaku* was intended as rather tongue in cheek, given that all *gesaku* authors were highly professional and commercial in their literary production.¹⁷ Under this generic umbrella term, many different genres of popular literature were subsumed such as “comic books” (*kokkeibon* 滑稽本), “fashionable books” (*sharebon* 洒落本), or “picture books” (*kusazōshi* 草双紙). According to NAKAMURA Yukihiro’s seminal work “A theory of popular literature” (*Gesaku ron* 戯作論), *gesaku* literature was characterized first and foremost by loosely linked scenes (instead of a stringent narrative structures), superficial depictions of events, and typified characters (NAKAMURA 1966: 134–36). However, many *gesaku* works were actually adapted

for the stage of the Kabuki or Bunraku puppet theatre, while many theater plays were, in turn, adapted for *gesaku* fiction. As such, it is unlikely that NAKAMURA Yukihiro's "*gesaku* characteristics" were the result of an alleged cultural backwardness of the Edo period, that is, an inability to depict reality as it was—a criticism that was frequently levelled during the Meiji period. Rather, it seems that these characteristics resulted in considerable interconnection of very different media in the Edo period. This phenomenon has been referred to by Henry JENKINS as media convergence, that is, "a flow of content across multiple media platforms". Admittedly, he proffered the term with reference to modern popular culture (JENKINS 2006: 2).¹⁸ As such, *gesaku* literature was rather modern in a sense; just not in any sense that Meiji period intellectuals typically employed.

Gesaku literature remained popular even in the Meiji period, as is probably best demonstrated by the author KANAGAKI Robun 仮名垣魯文 (1829–94). Robun made his debut in 1844, and soon became a renown *gesaku* writer during the Edo period. Yet he enjoyed his greatest success after the Meiji Restoration. The modernization and Westernization of Japan were central themes in KANAGAKI Robun's *gesaku* literature. Robun satirized the new achievements of the Meiji period, ridiculing Meiji reformers such as FUKUZAWA Yukichi, and such writings were met with critical acclaim by his readers. A number of KANAGAKI's works were bestsellers at a time when large parts of society were still highly skeptical about the sudden, and radical, changes occurring at the beginning of the Meiji period. Examples of such works include: "Smalltalk in a beef restaurant: cross-legged at a hot pot" (*Ushiya zōdan: aguranabe* 牛屋雑談安愚楽鍋), which was published in 1871–72, and parodied the lifestyles of the Meiji period's new Westophiles; or "Tradition of the water imps: the cucumber gift" (*Kappa sōden: Kyūrizukai* 河童相伝胡瓜遣), a persiflage on FUKUZAWA's "Natural sciences illustrated" (*Kyūri zukai* 窮理図解, 1868), published in 1872.

For *gesaku* authors such as KANAGAKI Robun, the promulgation of the "Three Principles" (*Sanjō no kyōken* 三条の教憲)—issued in 1872 by the "Ministry of Religious Education" (*Kyōbushō* 教部省)—posed a serious threat as writing on anything deemed "fictitious" (*kyō* 虚) was now prosecuted as an act of disloyalty and disrespect towards the Emperor.¹⁹ For this reason, some *gesaku* authors, such as KANAGAKI Robun, worked as educators for the new government's enlightenment campaigns while many stopped writing at all, until they could return to their former métier some years later (KÖHN 2002: 22–25). The so-called "small newspapers" (*koshinbun* 小新聞) that emerged in the middle of the 1870s became a new "playground" for many *gesaku* authors over the course of the next decade. In contrast to the normal, so-called "big newspapers" (*ōshinbun* 大新聞), these "small newspapers" focused on entertainment rather than on news. Comparable with today's yellow press, articles were easy to read—the corresponding reading

was added to all Chinese characters—, illustrated, and, most importantly; sensational (NOZAKI 1927: 2–16). Due to the level of popularity that “small newspapers” enjoyed among their readers, many *gesaku* authors began working again as professional writers by becoming contributors, or even editors, at the “small newspapers” of the time.

As the rigid climate toward popular literature began to thaw in the second half of the 1870s, *gesaku* literature experienced a fulminant revival in the Meiji period. KANAGAKI Robun’s “The story of the demonic Takahashi O-Den” (*Takahashi O-Den yasha monogatari* 高橋阿傳夜刃譚)—a sensational report on a “wicked woman” (*dokufu* 毒婦) who was sentenced to death in 1879—was published only one month after O-Den’s execution and was an overwhelming success both for the author himself and for *gesaku* literature more generally. *Gesaku* was widely read in Meiji, even after the “small newspapers” were ultimately absorbed by the “big newspapers” at the end of the 1880s. It is important to note, however, that the reception of *gesaku* was not limited to certain of the lower classes of Meiji society. On the contrary, as Peter F. KORNICKI (1982: 19) pointed out: “there can be no doubt that in the 1880s the fiction of the late Tokugawa period was widely read by intellectuals and lesser mortals alike.”

Though literature from the Edo period still enjoyed widespread appreciation among a variety of readers during the first half of the Meiji period, a new understanding of “literature” (*bungaku* 文学) was slowly but surely beginning to emerge, at least this was the case among Meiji intellectuals. Japanese translations of numerous Western literary works had been available as early as the end of the Edo period, and these had greatly impacted Meiji’s early literati and researchers.²⁰ As Sadami SUZUKI (2006: 69–93) has illustrated, the concept of “literature” (*bungaku* 文学)—as had originally been introduced from China—was not unfamiliar to the intellectual of the Edo period. However, it was not until the modernization and Westernization of the Meiji period that *bungaku* came to constitute a central concept for many contemporary intellectuals. Traditional Japanese ideas around subjects such as “religion” or “art” differed significantly from those in the West. The arrival of the latter to the country saw the creation of new vocabulary to accommodate such concepts; *shūkyō* 宗教 and *bijutsu* 美術 in this case. To a certain extent, this paved the way for a re-conceptualization of Japanese literature, which was now seen in the broader context of Western modernity. The question thus arose as to how and to what extent literary works created in Japan could, in actual fact, be classified as modern and artistic as compared with their Western counterparts.

TSUBOUCHI Shōyō 坪内逍遙 (1859–1935) was undoubtedly one of the most emblematic figures of the time. A writer, dramatist and literary critique, Shōyō had translated William SHAKESPEARE’s (1564–1616) complete dramatic works

into Japanese. His programmatic treatise, “The Essence of the Novel” (*Shōsetsu shinzui* 小説神髓), published between 1885–86, provides an excellent illustration of how the Meiji period intellectual struggled to conceive of the new requirements for a “modern” literature.²¹ For Tsubouchi, the “main purpose” (*shugan* 主眼) of a novel was to reveal the innermost feelings and thoughts of its dramatis personae. “A novelist”, Tsubouchi wrote (1885: 20 back), “is like a psychologist. His characters must be so created that they are psychologically convincing.” On the one hand, he complained that the literary characters of the Edo period were “not true representations of contemporary man” (*gense no ningen araneba* 現世の人間あらねば) (1885: 21 front). He thus urged novelists to “commit themselves to the principles of psychology” (*sono kokoro o shinri ni sosogi* 其意を心理に注ぎ) (1885: 21 back) in their writings by “imitating human nature as it really is” (*ari no mama ni mosha suru* ありのままに模写する) (1885: 21 back). On the other hand, Tsubouchi discerned crucial elements of the modern novel such as human feelings or realism in the *gesaku* literature of the Edo period and even held the literary work of popular *gesaku* authors such as Tamenaga Shunsui or Takizawa Bakin in expressly high esteem. Sadami Suzuki dryly resumes this conceptual ambivalence as follows:

[...] from the modern West, *Shōsetsu shinzui* borrows the idea that the novel is a form of art; he applies this idea to Motoori Norinaga’s [1730–1801] thesis that the proper aim of the novel is to convey human feelings and the desires that underlie them; he tries to ground the popularity of the realist novel in the modern West, with its depiction of “manners and modes of life,” in a Spencerian view of evolution. (SUZUKI 2006: 163)

Tsubouchi’s ambivalence—or perhaps one should rather call it conceptual indecision—was equally evident in his acclaimed novel “Characters of Modern Students” (*Tōsei shosei katagi* 当世書生気質), published in 17 small volumes between 1885–86. Tsubouchi’s portrayal of the turbulent life of a Meiji student in the new capital, Tōkyō, was far from coherent with the new requirements of the novel that he had delineated in his treatise. As Munakata Kazushige astutely observed in his commentary to the paperback edition: “[...] The antiquated style of ‘Characters of Modern Students’ is even more striking if compared to Futabatei Shimei 二葉亭四迷 [1864–1909]. This work employs precisely the typical *gesaku* style that he had so heavily criticized in his ‘Essence of the Novel’” (MUNAKATA 2018: 313). Tsubouchi thus held “imitation” (*mosha* 模写) to be a pivotal technique for a realistic depiction of “human feelings”... in theory. In practice, he defaulted to an “imitation” of the superficial depictions of human nature inherent in *gesaku* literature.

According to Sadami Suzuki (2006: 165–67) and Peter F. Kornicki (1982: 35–39), Tsubouchi Shōyō’s “The Essence of the Novel” was not as widely discussed in contemporary newspapers or magazines as might have been expected.

ed. Treatises discussing literary construction, characterization, or plot were still scarce in the 1880s. However, as Marleigh Grayer RYAN (1975: 10) pointed out, “The Essence of the Novel” was neither praised nor slated by the critics. The same cannot be said for his “Characters of Modern Students”. Clearly, TSUBOUCHI Shōyō was unable to free himself from the predominant literary tradition of the Edo period. Nonetheless, as Tomi SUZUKI explained, “Essence of the Novel” was the first work that “[...] established a common ground for evaluating all existing Japanese prose fiction according to a ‘universal’ standard, along a nineteenth-century Western, evolutionary axis in which the earlier Japanese *shōsetsu* [...] was placed at the stage of the Western romance and prior to the stage of the Western novel, the ‘true *shōsetsu*’” (SUZUKI: 1996: 20).

The decade during which TSUBOUCHI Shōyō published his “Essence of the Novel” was undoubtedly one in which several factors coincided to boost the emergence of what is nowadays called “modern literature” (*kindai bungaku* 近代文学). The movement for the “unity of spoken and written language” (*genbun itchi* 言文一致) was, as KARATANI Kōjin (2009: 57–69) stated, a crucial factor.²² In actuality, the movement began at the end of the Edo period with MAEJIMA Hisoka’s 前島密 (1835–1919) small treatise “Regarding the abolition of using Chinese characters” (*Kanji on-haishi no gi* 漢字御廃止之義, 1866). The text advocated for a reform of the Japanese writing system, which would see kana syllables serve as the only reliable notation system given their complete lack of phonetic ambiguity (as compared with Chinese characters). Not only did MAEJIMA’s reformist ideas raise awareness in terms of the intricacies of the Japanese writing system. It also shed light on the discrepancy between written and spoken language that was evident in virtually every kind of written text. However, the desired unity of language was first put into literary practice in YAMADA Bimyo’s 山田美妙 (1868–1910) “A satiric and didactic novel: The long-nosed goblin” (*Chōkai shōsetsu Tengu* 嘲戒小説天狗), published 1886 in the literary magazine “Rubbish Literature” (*Garakuta bunko* 我楽多文庫).²³ Another crucial factor was the implementation of academic teaching in the field of “literature” at Japanese Universities. As SUZUKI Sadami (2006: 140–42) illustrated, the “Decree for Imperial Universities” (Teikoku daigaku rei 帝国大学令), issued in 1886, not only precipitated the foundation of a faculty of letters at imperial universities all over the country. It also paved the way for the establishment of departments of literature, where courses in Western, Chinese or Japanese literature were available. This laid the foundation for academic research on Japanese literature, which in turn led to the publication of Japan’s first treatises providing an overview of the history of literature.²⁴ Finally, it is worth mentioning the formation of “literary circles” (*bundan* 文壇) as another decisive factor in the emergence of “modern literature”. In 1885, a group of writers around the acclaimed author OZAKI Kōyō 尾崎紅葉 (1867–

1903) came together as “Friends of the inkstone” (*Ken'yūsha* 硯友社), with numerous other literary circles founded shortly thereafter. These literary circles allowed for an exchange of ideas as well as providing an opportunity to publish literature, given that the majority published their own magazines. “Rubbish Literature”, for example, was published by the “Friends of the inkstone” alluded to above. As Itō Sei (2006: 89) would have it, literary circles were “a special world with a very special way of life in which members could experience how it is to live a life full of pure and unadulterated thought”. At the same time, the circles rather resembled “religious groups in which harsh mutual criticism [...] was mercilessly practiced among their members.”

In the 1880s, the preconditions of literary writing began to differ significantly from those of the Edo period. Accordingly, the very nature of literature itself—traditionally having *gesaku* at its center—also began to change. The market for newspapers and magazines grew exponentially during the first decade of the Meiji period, with a general consciousness for political, social, and cultural changes soon emerging as a result. For this readership, the Meiji period thus came into focus as a period of fractions and challenges, a time in which one’s own life was often predetermined by social structures and limitations. The ruling class, moreover, was “visible for the first time, naked in its arbitrariness” (MERTZ 2003: 278).²⁵ Writers of the Meiji period thus had to react to a heightened awareness on the part of their readers, complying with the new requirements of the modern novel. Reaching their readers meant taking stances in their work with regard to social and political changes. It meant tackling problems of modernization, nationalization and individualization. Admittedly, Meiji writers could, to some extent, rely on the stylistic devices of *gesaku* literature that “contain[ed] elements that made it relatively easy for [them] to slip into realism” (RYAN 1975: 10). However, Meiji writers needed to bridge the gap between the extradiegetic “reality” experienced by their readers and the intradiegetic “reality” of their novels. They had to conceive of new strategies for the characterization and character constellation of their dramatis personae. The characters they created were now supposed to act as if they had a life of their own, beyond the narration. To a certain extent, literary characters came to constitute a means, in and of themselves, for the provision of self-knowledge and self-validation for the contemporary reader. They provided the modern readers of Meiji literature with a means of reconstructing predominant, or alternative, concepts of life. According to YOSHIDA Seiichi (1968: 25), the Meiji period was characterized by an extremely high degree of social mobility as compared with the former Edo period. As such, the majority of characters depicted epitomized, to a greater or lesser degree, those who had either succeeded in crossing their social limitations, or who had tried and failed to do so.²⁶

In more recent literary studies, characters are first and foremost understood as mental projections created by the reader in the act of reading—specifically in relation to reading fictional work. However, readers can put together the relevant information concerning a specific literary character in a variety of ways. More often than not, basic information about the *dramatis personae* is provided by an authorial (omniscient) narrator who both introduces the characters, as well as giving occasional supplementary information. Of course, the characters themselves remain the primary source. They provide the fundamental building blocks through their way of thinking and talking, for example, or in their interactions with other characters. Finally, further information is supplied through the world of the intradiegetic story in which all of the characters are embedded. As the reader progresses, they bring all this information together and project a certain image of the character inwards. This begs the question: are researchers like Fotis JANNIDIS (2004: 197–99) accurate when they assert that the reader makes their character projections solely on the basis of the literary text, or more specifically, the discourse of the literary work? Quite the contrary seems to be true; a reader complements the information provided by the literary text with that which they have gathered over the course of their own lives. As Ralf SCHNEIDER (2000: 80–97) has convincingly pointed out, this pertains to a cultural, social, and literary knowledge base that the reader themselves brings to any literary work. In other words, the character projection constructed in the act of reading is the result of a reciprocal process involving both author and reader. A writer thus generally relies on widely-acknowledged character schemata that are unequivocally identifiable for the reader. By way of this device, the writer both facilitates the process of reconstruction and prevents the reader from “misreading” the literary character (EDER / JANNIDIS / SCHNEIDER 2010: 14). In the case of Meiji literature, writers resorted to character stereotypes such as the “educated loafer” (*kōtō yūmin* 高等遊民) or the “fallen noble” (*reirakusha* 零落者), as the majority of contemporary readers had been exposed to such schemata through the mediascape of the Meiji period. Magazine or newspaper publications such as short novels or serialized novels, in particular, commonly resorted to typified characters. Such character depiction could easily be externalized to an extradiegetic knowledge base that was shared by the vast majority of contemporary readers.

However, there is more to the story. The recourse to such character schemata should be understood, first and foremost, as an unavoidable means of compensating for the lack of literary techniques that could accurately depict a character’s individuality and actions within a specific social context. This was especially true for the first half of the Meiji period. In this regard, Janet A. WALKER (1979: 28) emphasized that “[...] Meiji literature, at least that literature that concerns itself with the revelation and discovery of the individual, can be seen as the his-

tory of Meiji individual's attempts to validate the self." Only when new literary techniques for depicting a character's individuality and subjectivity came into general use at the beginning of the 20th century did character schemata begin to lose their relevance in most genres of literary work (EDER / JANNIDIS / SCHNEIDER 2010: 38–39).

Dealing with Meiji literature thus becomes quite a challenge for modern readers and researchers in this respect, since the knowledge base shared by Meiji authors and readers was the result of a very particular set of discourses, determined by their specific time and context. As such, reconstructing the underlying episteme of these discourses, and gaining access to the knowledge base of the time, makes "archeologists"—in the true Foucauldian sense of the word—of both readers and researchers alike. Nothing short of a thoroughly "archeological" reconstruction can render Meiji literature accessible in all its complexity, and all its inconsistency.

The intention of this book

Crossing the Borders to Modernity is an attempt to contribute to this Herculean "archeological" project. The volume aims to analyze how a representative selection of Meiji authors positioned themselves in their writings, in terms of social and political changes. What specific problems did they identify in view of the rapid development from an isolated, feudal and agricultural society to an imperialist, modern industrial nation? What solutions did they offer to their readers? With a total of seventeen articles, this volume pays particular attention to the fictional construction of alternative concepts of life beyond the propagated social ideals. Literary texts, as could be seen so far, are decidedly suitable for reproducing the different positions of a particular discourse. For this, authors use numerous strategies of characterization and character constellation. Through the characters and their actions, it is not only possible to show existing structures, but also to try out alternatives. Accordingly, the volume will not only deal with the fictional portrayal of the crossing of borders, but also with the fictional description of those who cross borders, those who are caught between tradition and modernity, between East and West and between different social groups.

The authors MORI Ōgai 森鷗外 (1862–1922) and NATSUME Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916) were well acquainted with both the East and the West. The slightly younger Ōgai studied Medicine in Berlin and worked in the medical corps of the Japanese army, but he also published well known stories such "The Dancing Girl" (*Maihime* 舞姫, 1890), with which he gained respect as both an intellectual and a writer. Due to his personal experiences in Germany, he saw the modernization of Meiji Japan and consequently the adaptation and acquisition of Western culture as an opportunity, but also as a threat, one which could leave a spiritual

vacuum for the individual. As Shion KŌNO's article demonstrates, he thus concentrates on the construction of fictional characters whose life choices reveal a struggle between the modern dictums of logic and science on the one hand, and a traditional life of everyday superstitions on the other. For KŌNO, the struggle between a life of science and an endorsement of supernatural forces plays out in various arenas; in the family; between the urban and the rural; or even between Japan and the West. His analysis shows that Meiji Japan was faced with many obstacles in its process of modernization.

NATSUME Sōseki, well known for his book "I am a Cat" (*Wagahai wa neko de aru* 吾輩は猫である, 1905–07), studied English Literature in London and took a similar position regarding modernization, yet his books show greater concern with the inner struggle of his fictional characters. Toshiaki KOBAYASHI depicts Sōseki as a "literary genius" and "a pioneer at the forefront of Japan's project of modernity". His article focuses on the outsider characters that appear at various junctures in Sōseki's books. Among them, the so-called "educated loafers" are the representation of the modern self that developed in Meiji Japan in the course of rising individualism.

While the male protagonists in NATSUME Sōseki's works are complex and well developed from the beginning, his female characters lack, however, depth and complexity. Timothy J. VAN COMPERNOLLE's article emphasizes the possibility of crossing disciplinary boundaries by analyzing the concept of ekphrasis in the fiction of NATSUME Sōseki, that is, the verbal representation of visual representations. With the "educated loafer" serving as a mirror for the anxious male individual, VAN COMPERNOLLE points out that visual representations of women in Sōseki's work show the intellectual insecurity of the male protagonists, as they fail to understand the modern women. Since male characters in Sōseki's works often act oddly, almost comically, Indra LEVY's article consequently poses the question: "Can the Meiji man laugh?" In her analysis of "I am a Cat" she shows that the Meiji man—at least in Sōseki's works—could indeed laugh. And yet humor has the potential to threaten the nation given that the power of jokes, as LEVY has it, resides in its capacity to critique all forms of authority. Humor, as such, could thus pose a threat to the new national community of Meiji Japan.

OZAKI Kōyō 尾崎紅葉 (1867–1903), most widely known for his work "The Demon Gold" (*Konjiki yasha* 金色夜叉, 1897–1902), took another approach to the dilemma of modernization. Taking a step in the opposite direction, he focuses on the literature of the Edo period and its glorious past of *gesaku*. However, as Matthew KÖNIGSBERG's article shows, OZAKI Kōyō's oeuvre underwent significant thematic development throughout his writing career. Abandoning the pleasure quarters of the *gesaku*, his "Tree Wives" (*Sannin zuma* 三人妻, 1892) endeavors to reproduce society as it is, and not as it could or should be.

Social structure was a central topic for Meiji authors, who were exposed to a variety of influences, from traditional concepts of the Edo period to Western reflections on society, as well as Christian thought. On the basis of three works—TOKUTOMI Roka's 徳富蘆花 (1868–1927) “Footprints in the Snow” (*Omoide no ki* 思出の記, 1901), KINOSHITA Naoe's 木下尚江 (1869–1937) “Pillar of Fire” (*Hi no hashira* 火の柱, 1904) and SHIMAZAKI Tōson's (1872–1943) “The Broken Commandment” (*Hakai* 破壊, 1906)—Massimiliano TOMASI illustrates the various narrative purposes for which Christian themes and topoi were used as representations of social change or of modernity itself.

Women were directly affected by such changes in society, as state ideology demanded they fulfil the role of “good wife, wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*). That female authors of the time would process the role of women at the time was thus a given. According to Stephan KÖHN, the mostly forgotten author MIYAKE Kaho 三宅花圃 (1868–1943), wrote insightful counter-discourses to the processes of Westernization and re-nationalization in Japan by creating young female characters who enjoyed a certain freedom of choice. Any mention of MIYAKE Kaho today tends to be in connection with HIGUCHI Ichiyō 樋口一葉 (1872–96), one of the best known female writers of Meiji Japan, as both women studied at the Bush Clover Hut (Haginoya 萩の舎). After the success of MIYAKE Kaho's first work, “Warbler in the Grove” (*Yabu no uguisu* 藪の鶯, 1888), HIGUCHI Ichiyō set out to emulate what MIYAKE Kaho had achieved, though admittedly Ichiyō's motivation was primarily financial. Where MIYAKE Kaho portrays freedom, or at least the possibility of freedom, for women, HIGUCHI Ichiyō's female characters struggle with their prescribed role in society, as Gala Maria FOLLACO adeptly shows. It seems that they can attain freedom only through death or madness, to escape the tension between their inner emotions and the social expectations with which they are faced. Male characters on the other hand, question their social role constantly, and this places them outside the conventional male model. The relationship of these wounded characters is often interpreted as romantic involvement. However, Kinji YAMAMOTO points out that there is a deeper level of understanding necessary, as HIGUCHI Ichiyō's stories tend to show two separate persons engaged in independent struggle. In “Child's Play” (*Takekurabe* たけくらべ, 1895–96), the two protagonists appear vulnerable and perhaps attracted to one other, but they never enter into a romantic relationship, attending instead to their socially expected fate.

Many writers of the Meiji period formed personal networks with one another. As emphasized by Makoto GOI, it is thus no surprise that TAYAMA Katai 田山花袋 (1872–1930) was in contact with many famous writers when he published his major work “The Quilt” (*Futon* 蒲団, 1907), a work which sparked a trend in Naturalist fiction. GOI goes on to show, however, that with readers of the time in-

interpreting the protagonist of “The Quilt” through their knowledge of the author, this very network thus expanded further still.

Associating the author with the protagonist in this way was a well established practice, especially as many stories offered similarities in the respective biographies of author and protagonist. That this equally holds true for the work of NAGAI Kafū is demonstrated in Martin THOMAS’ analysis of “Streets of Light” (*Tōka no chimata* 灯火の巷, 1903). Often criticized for his indifference to social or political issues, NAGAI Kafū’s take on social issues is embedded in the characters of his short stories, torn as they are between social expectations and their own desires. With the medium of the short story neglecting much information on the characters, it falls to the reader to fill the gaps with whatever knowledge they can. Readers thus place characters within their own time frame of social development.

Semi-autobiographical stories are typical for many authors of the Meiji period. This is also true for the short stories of KANNO Suga 菅野スガ (1881–1911), commonly known for her involvement, and eventual execution, in the High Treason Incident (*Taigyaku jiken* 大逆事件) of 1910/11. Chantal WEBER shows that although KANNO Suga does not form part of the canon of Meiji literature, her female characters face the same inner struggle between the social expectation of *ryōsai kenbo* and the desire for individual development that was characteristic for many of her contemporaries’ protagonists. Her characters are thus quite representative of the literary trends of the time.

Where KANNO Suga was somewhat of a loner in the literary world and not commonly read, SHIGA Naoya 志賀直哉 (1883–1971) was both well-known and veritably idolized by his many disciples, who admired his flawless style and accuracy in expressing thoughts and impressions. Frank JACOB analyzes three of his early short stories—“As Far As Abashiri” (*Abashiri made* 網走まで, 1910), “The Razor” (*Kamisori* 剃刀, 1910) and “The Paper Door” (*Fusuma* 襖, 1911)—in order to show how the protagonists cross borders. SHIGA Naoya, in turn, reflects on the historical context of the Meiji period and offers as protagonists young men torn between old traditions and modernity, struggling to rebel against the older generation.

SHIGA Naoya formed part of the group responsible for the journal “White Birch” (*Shirakaba* 白樺), whose members shared high social status and economic independency. Despite the disparity among its members in terms of personality and literary styles, the journal had the coherent objective of establishing a distinct new literature that would contrast with Naturalism. Hiroshi TAKITA writes on SHIGA’s close friendship with his influential contemporary, and associate at the journal, MUSHAKŌJI Saneatsu 武者小路実篤 (1885–1976). TAKITA’s novel approach to “Happy Man” (*Omedetaki hito* お目出たき人, 1910) shows that

MUSHAKŌJI Saneatsu's protagonist is not a mere happy fool, unaware of his surroundings, but rather an individual connecting to other individuals without thereby sacrificing his own subjectivity.

Around the time the "White Birch Society" (Shirakaba-ha 白樺派) was founded, NAGATA Mikihiko 長田幹彦 (1887–1964) published his first book, "Downfall" (*Reiraku* 零落, 1912). As Martha-Christine MENZEL explains, the unorthodox newcomer's first book fundamentally criticizes the achievement-oriented society of the Meiji period, calling for the radical exploration of the inner self. "Downfall" is set in rural Hokkaidō, where the protagonist dwells on his personal needs split between tradition and modernity, past and present, as well as East and West.

The dichotomy of East and West—Japan's relation to Western countries—constitutes a central theme in both the politics and the literature of the Meiji period; according to the theory of social evolution Japan had not yet reached the same status of enlightenment and civilization as the Western countries. The related topic of domestic mixed residence (*naichi zakkyo* 内地雑居) in the literary imagination constitutes the point of focus for Yoshitaka HIBI's essay. The issue touched on various areas such as the economy, ethnicity or sexuality. Stories on domestic mixed residence such as TSUBOUCHI Shōyō's "A dream of the future: Domestic mixed residence" (*Naichi zakkyo mirai no yume* 内地雑居未来之夢, 1886), offer stereotypical depictions of the foreigner: the hard working Chinese in competition with their Japanese co-workers; American missionaries; and French merchants, fascinated with Japanese geisha.

TSUBOUCHI Shōyō is known for his interest in Western literature and culture. In "The Essence of the Novel" he postulates a new, modern literature that responds to that which originates in the West. He equally shows a deep interest in Richard WAGNER's (1813–83) musical dramas and the concept of pure and romantic love. Ingrid FRITSCH shows that the enthusiasm for Richard WAGNER among Japanese intellectuals was widespread during the Meiji period. This began with ANESAKI Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949) who offered idealistic concepts of love as well as the possibility of creating a united nation through traditional cultural myths. Though Wagnerism was influential for writers, it disappeared with the beginning of the Taishō period (1912–26).

The articles of this volume show different approaches to a representative selection of literary characters, together with their authors; some well-known, some known only in other contexts, some almost entirely forgotten. What the majority of them have in common, however, is that their stories mostly take place in an urban landscape. This is no coincidence but rather a manifestation of modernism. Whereas the rural symbolizes the good old times of the Edo period, it was in cities like Tōkyō or Ōsaka that the rapid modernization of the nation took center stage. As a guiding theme, the literary characters are torn between

the nostalgic traditional way of life or the modern path, between individual desire and social obligation. In the final analysis, for all the literary characters depicted in this volume,—just as for most of their contemporary readers—crossing the borders to modernity offered both an opportunity and a challenge; to find their place in Meiji society. It is perhaps this very possibility of a fundamental “change” of circumstances that is the greatest fascination for readers of Meiji literature, both then and today.

NOTES

- 1 For further details on the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate, see JANSEN 2000: 294–332.
- 2 For a detailed outline of the Boshin War, see NAGURA / HÖYA / HAKOISHI (2018).
- 3 SASAMOTO-COLLINS (2013: 11) noted: “In 1868 alone, the government issued 1,171 officially recorded edicts and administrative instructions.”
- 4 For further details, see YAMAMURA 1986: 382–99.
- 5 See JANSEN 2000: 377–89.
- 6 HUFFMAN’s *Creating a Public. People and Press in Meiji Japan* provides a detailed account of the development and change of press from the very beginning in 1868 to the end of the Meiji period in 1912. For a short analysis of the early press, see also YANAGISAWA 2004: 37–42.
- 7 A censorship decree for book publications was already issued in April 1868, the Publication Ordinance (Shuppan jōrei 出版条例). On censorship in Meiji Japan see SASAMOTO-COLLINS 2013: 16–26.
- 8 E. g. among the five female students, who were left in the United States, TSUDA Umeko 津田梅子 (1864–1929) became a pioneer in women’s education and founded the Women’s Institute for English Studies (Joshi Eigaku juku 女子英学塾) after her return to Japan. For a full account of TSUDA Umeko, see ROSE (1992).
- 9 The original can be found in OKAKURA Tenshin 岡倉天心 (1979): “‘Kokka’ hakkan no ji 『国華』 発刊ノ辞”. In: *Okakura Tenshin zenshū* 岡倉天心全集 3. Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 42–48. OKAKURA Kakuzō’s best known publications are “The Book of Tea” (1906) and “Ideals of the East” (1903), both advocating the heritage of Japanese culture. Nevertheless, OKAKURA together with Ernest FENOLLOSA (1853–1908) was crucial in the modernization of Japanese aesthetics. For further reference, see WESTON (2004).
- 10 The Civil Code came only 1898 into force.
- 11 For a further description of this discussion see JANSEN 2000: 389–95.
- 12 An English translation of the Meiji Constitution can be found online: <https://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c02.html> (last access: 02.09.2021).
- 13 For further details, see DUKE 2014: 291–94.
- 14 For a translation and an analysis of the Rescript, see DUKE 2014: 346–69.

- 15 For a further analysis of the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology, see KOYAMA (2014) and UNO 2005: 495–506.
- 16 For a description of the origins of the term *risshin shusse*, see KINMONTH 1981: 56–59.
- 17 As in the Edo period, popular literature was widely considered to be “vulgar” (*zoku* 俗)—in marked contrast to pieces of literature written by medieval nobleman that was generally deemed “elegant” (*ga* 雅)—, the term *gesaku* suggested that the authors wrote these pieces of alleged vulgar literature only as a pastime (therefore: “just for fun”) and not as a serious business. Needless to say, the opposite was true.
- 18 In addition, one should keep in mind that many bestsellers from the Edo period were published over a period of several years as a kind of serial novel, and the underlying plot thus had to be fragmented into loosely linked units to enable a reader to join—or leave—the serialization at any point.
- 19 In particular, the second principle propagating that from now on “natural laws and human nature should be made clear and unmistakable” was a serious problem for *gesaku* authors whose habit it was to “make fiction the master and reality the guest” in their works. See OKITSU 1984: 81.
- 20 For the impact of translated Western literature in the early Meiji period see ŌTA 1959: 3–44.
- 21 For a complete translation of TSUBOUCHI’s widely cited text “The Essence of the Novel”, see TSUBOUCHI (1981).
- 22 In the literary tradition of the Edo period, narrative passages (*ji no bun* 地の文) were usually reported in written (that is classical) Japanese, while conversational passages (*kaiwa no bun* 会話の文) were composed in colloquial (that is contemporary) Japanese. The *genbun itchi* movement therefore intended to bridge the gap between written and spoken language by propagating the use of a homogenized language style in a novel. See also TWINE 1978: 337–43 and TOMASI 1999: 340–52.
- 23 According to KARATANI (2009: 70–74), MAEJIMA Hisoka’s early claim for reforming the Japanese writing system did also pave the way for the “theater reform movement” (*engeki kairyō undō* 演劇改良運動) of the late 1870s, which was, in turn, a prerequisite for the subsequent “literature reform movement” (*shōsetsu kairyō undō* 小説改良運動).
- 24 In 1890, the “National Literature Reader” (*Kokubungaku dokuhon* 国文学読本) by HAGA Yaichi 芳賀矢一 and TACHIBANA Senzaburō 立花銑三郎, and the “History of Japanese Literature” (*Nihon bungaku shi* 日本文学史) by MIKAMI Sanji 三上参次 and TAKATSU Kuwasaburō 高津鍬三郎 were published. For early academic research on national literature, see SASANUMA 2006: 41–63.
- 25 For that very reason, the first regulations for the press were released as early as 1869 followed by several revisions that tried to tighten the regulations.
- 26 For a representative selection of commonly used literary characters see, for example, the special issue “People from the Meiji period as seen in literature” (*Bungaku ni mirareta Meijijin* 文学に見られた明治人) of the academic journal *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kanshō* 国文学：解釈と鑑賞 33 (5) (1968).

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