

CHRISTOPHER HILL

## How to Write a Second Restoration: The Political Novel and Meiji Historiography

*Abstract:* The Meiji political novel was closely connected to contemporary changes in techniques for the representation of history. Suehiro Tetchō's novel *Setchūbai* (Plum blossoms in snow, 1886) shares many of the concerns of the historiography of its time, in particular the desire to explain the place of 1868 in Japanese history. The novel positions 1868 as a step in the establishment of democracy in Japan, to be followed by the founding of a liberal parliament in 1890. At the same time, the novel's philosophy of history disqualifies fundamental dissent from the reformist programs espoused by the Meiji government and liberals alike.

The rise and fall of the Meiji political novel, a largely forgotten episode in Japanese literature, was closely connected to attempts to devise new ways of representing history and the battles over the meaning of the events of 1868 that dominated political and intellectual life in the middle of the Meiji era. The modern canon, taking stylistic innovation as its narrative line, discounts the writers who created the political novel because of their reliance on the styles and plot devices of Tokugawa fiction and European novelists such as Benjamin Disraeli and Alexandre Dumas *père*.<sup>1</sup> Activists more than literati,

I would like to thank the referees for *The Journal of Japanese Studies* for their suggestions regarding this essay. The essay draws on material from my book *National History and the World of Nations*, forthcoming from Duke University Press.

1. John Mertz examines the history of the genre and its place in the canon in chapter seven of *Novel Japan: Spaces of Nationhood in Early Meiji Narrative, 1870–88* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2004); see also Atsuko Sakaki, "Kajin no kigū: The Meiji Political Novel and the Boundaries of Literature," *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2000), pp. 83–108. On the genre's sources, see P. F. Kornicki, "The Survival of Tokugawa Fiction in the Meiji Period," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (1981), pp. 53–54, and "Disraeli and the Meiji Novel," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (1984), pp. 29–55. The standard work on the genre is Yanagida Izumi's three-volume *Seiji shōsetsu kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1935–39; reprinted 1967–68).

for the most part these writers appropriated the styles and plot devices of existing genres and turned them to the new thematic ends of communicating political philosophy and stirring up their compatriots. In the process, however, they helped create new methods for emplotting time in narrative and contributed to a transformation of the methods of historical representation that was far more significant than their instrumental approach to fiction would suggest.

Examples of the political novel's concern with history abound: one of the best known, Yano Ryūkei's *Keikoku bidan* (Inspiring instances of statesmanship, 1883–84) is set in fourth-century Thebes and tells the story of young patriots who throw off the imperial yoke of Sparta to establish a republican state, as a way of allegorizing the Meiji Restoration and the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement (*Jiyū Minken Undō*). The critic Maeda Ai, following the reasoning of Georg Lukács on the European historical novel, argued that the political novel indeed was the true historical literature of the Meiji period. Where the European historical novel emerged in the nineteenth century as an attempt to give narrative coherence to the social changes driven by capitalism, in Maeda's view, the Meiji political novel responded to a similar need during the political and economic upheavals of the early Meiji period.<sup>2</sup>

Meiji political novels were not limited to negotiating social change within one national territory, however. They also explored the relationship between a unitary Japanese history (which they were writing) and the histories of other nations. A prominent example is Tōkai Sanshi's *Kajin no kigū* (Chance encounters with beautiful women, 1885–97), which recounts, among many events, the history of the Carlist rebellion in Spain, resistance to Russian and Turkish campaigns in the Caucasus, the colonization of Madagascar, and the fall of Urabi Pasha in Egypt. These novelists undoubtedly gestured toward other histories to inspire readers with stirring examples like the fall of the Bastille, but in the process they also suggested that the histories of other countries could be abstracted as models for the history of the Japanese nation. A universalistic view of history thus runs through the political novel, resulting in frequent assertions that Japanese history was, should have been, or perhaps would yet be an instance of a universal tendency toward the development of democracy. The argument depended on devices to represent the events of 1868 as a step toward the establishment of democracy in Japan rather than the foundation of an emperor-centered state. The desire to counter the latter narrative always underlay the efforts of political novelists to construct imaginative histories of democratic struggle.<sup>3</sup>

2. Maeda Ai, "Meiji rekishi bungaku no genzō—seiji shōsetsu no baai," in *Kindai Nihon no bungaku kūkan* (Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1983), pp. 3, 6–7.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–29.

In Japan the difficulty of deducing the Meiji regime and its European-inspired reforms from the past of the archipelago was acute, all pronouncements that 1868 was a restoration notwithstanding. The problem was the result both of the internal circumstances of the regime's rise and of the press of European imperialism on East Asia, which transformed the order of power in the region. As the position of China in East Asia weakened and the Tokugawa regime itself faltered under European and American pressure, Japanese intellectuals were pushed into a series of reconsiderations of existing ideas of history.<sup>4</sup> The scope of the change extended to basic conceptions of space and time. The creation in East and Southeast Asia of what Thongchai Winichakul calls sovereign national "geo-bodies" embedded in a network of interstate relations was a radical displacement of existing conceptions of space, from spatial sensibilities in local areas to the hierarchy of states in the Chinese diplomatic system. The shift generated other conceptual changes, most importantly in dominant ideas of history, which could not account for the appearance of this new territorial form.<sup>5</sup>

Inside the territory claimed by the Meiji state, too, the past had been in play since the early part of the nineteenth century. The politicization of the Meiji regime's relationship to the past can be traced to scholars of the Mito school such as Fujita Yūkoku, who used historical arguments to call for a restoration or revival (*chūkō*) of the prosperity of the realm through moral rectification. Although these writers' goal was reform of the Tokugawa shogunate, the rhetoric of restoration became the basis of demands to replace it with a state organized around the emperor.<sup>6</sup> In the Meiji state, pragmatic reformers prevailed over true believers in imperial rule, but by accepting the mantle of restoration they nonetheless signaled a break with precedents for governance and previous views of the historical, as opposed to mythical, formation of political institutions.<sup>7</sup> The sheer novelty of the government's programs, such as conscription, land-tax reform, and the construction of railroads, also drew debate to the issue, because they positioned the "restored" state at the leading edge of social change. (That the year 1868 was referred to as Meiji 1, reflecting the government's declaration of a new era name, could only strengthen the impression.) The arguments the state used to establish its foundation and to justify many of its reforms pointed in opposite directions, so to speak: one into the past and the other into the future.

4. Miyachi Masato, "Bakumatsu Meiji zenki ni okeru rekishi ninshiki no kōzō," in Tanaka Akira and Miyachi Masato, eds., *Rekishi ninshiki*, Nihon kindai shisō taikai 13 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1991), pp. 510–11.

5. Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), pp. 131, 138–39.

6. H. D. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration: The Growth of Political Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 37.

7. George L. Wilson, *Patriots and Redeemers in Japan: Motives in the Meiji Restoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 25–26.

Supporters of the regime or its reformist projects faced the obligation to produce the present and the promised future from the pre-1868 past in a manner that restricted political dispute to the realm of policy rather than allowing it to bring the new government or the proposition of reform per se into question. Early efforts in this direction can be found in arrangements made in 1869 to continue the *Rikkokushi* (Six national histories), a series of annals whose last volume had been completed some nine and a half centuries earlier. After several reorganizations, the group of scholars convened for the task, now named the Shūshikan (College of Historiography), began work on *Fukkōki* (Record of the restoration, 1872–89) and *Meiji shiyō* (Outline of Meiji history, 1876–86) and ultimately created the foundation for academic historiography in Japan by combining Confucian and Rankean methods. Narita Ryūichi argues that the synthesis fundamentally connected the writing of history to the history of the nation-state.<sup>8</sup> The new methodology did not lend itself to outlining a *process* by which the new political configuration could be said to have emerged from the past, however. That project was undertaken early in the Meiji period by writers of “histories of civilization” (*bunmeishi*) such as Fukuzawa Yukichi and Taguchi Ukichi who attempted to create a Japanese past for contemporary projects of civilization and enlightenment. In contrast to the government’s early annalistic projects, the genre founded by Fukuzawa’s *Bunmeiron no gairiyaku* (Outline of a theory of civilization, 1875) and Taguchi’s *Nihon kaika shōshi* (Short history of Japanese civilization, 1877–82) elaborated a view of social change as a process, beginning in distant times and extending into the future, with people rather than states at its center. Takekoshi Yosaburō, Yamaji Aizan, and other liberal dissenters associated with Tokutomi Sohō’s Min’yūsha took up the genre’s mantle and completed the transformation by emplotting history as the emergence of a unified people.<sup>9</sup>

Although the authors of histories of civilization and the Min’yūsha writers introduced liberal notions of social evolution to debates on the nature of the polity in Japan, political dispute continued on the terrain of theories of

8. Margaret Mehl surveys the work on annalistic histories in *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1998), pp. 16–34; see also Numata Jiro, “Shigeno Yasutsugu and the Modern Tokyo Tradition of Historical Writing,” in E. G. Pulleybank and W. G. Beasley, eds., *Historians of China and Japan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 264–87. On the new historiography and the nation-state see Narita Ryūichi, “Jikan no kindai—kokumin-kokka no jikan,” in Komari Yōichi et al., eds., *Kindai chi no seiritsu*, Iwanami kōza Nihon no bunkashi 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2002), pp. 11–12.

9. See in particular Takekoshi’s *Shin Nihonshi* (1891–92), collected in Matsushima Eiichi, ed., *Meiji shiron shū I*, Meiji bungaku zenshū 77 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1965), and Aizan’s “Nihon no rekishi ni okeru jinken hattatsu no konseki” (1897), in Ōkubo Toshiaki, ed., *Yamaji Aizan shū*, Meiji bungaku zenshū 35 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1965), pp. 314–24.

social evolution themselves, which could be used to a variety of ends.<sup>10</sup> The book that made Sohō's reputation, *Shōrai no Nihon* (The future Japan, 1886), drew on English philosopher Herbert Spencer to show that the time for democracy had come and could not be avoided. But Katō Hiroyuki convincingly, if cynically, used the same logic of social stages to argue the opposite. According to Katō, the theory of social evolution not only refuted the doctrine of natural rights on which many advocates of democracy relied, but also showed that it was certain disaster to introduce democracy to a country that, like Japan, had not reached the appropriate stage of development.<sup>11</sup> The extent of disagreement between the Min'yūsha and ideologues of the Meiji government like Katō should not be exaggerated: all saw protection of the independence of the Japanese state as the foremost task of the moment and on this point had common cause with the government too. The shared assumption that the state, the people, and history were the essential touchstones of debate on the polity suggests the extent to which intellectuals of various political stripes looked to the past to explain the relationship of the nation-state to those it claimed as subjects. All of the parties to the debate shared a common concern with reforming a populace that, according to evolutionary theories of society, was "backward," that is, with securing the acquiescence of the populace in the transformation of social relations to suit newly enunciated goals of national sovereignty and capitalist modernization.

Political thought in the campaigns for democracy of the 1870s and 1880s known as the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement, in which the Meiji political novel was born, reflected such changes in conceptions of history. Although even the movement's more radical factions shared many positions with the Meiji government, such as the view that the habits of the people must be reformed, they differed in connecting such reforms to a general narrative of progress that included constitutional government.<sup>12</sup> The activist-ideologue Ueki Emori, for example, argued that constitutional government was the inevitable outcome of social metamorphosis and that the reform of 1868 must be followed by a "second Meiji reform" (*Meiji daini no henkaku*) in the near future, an idea developed by Maruyama Na-

10. John D. Pierson, *Tokutomi Sohō, 1863–1957, a Journalist for Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 125–26.

11. See Katō Hiroyuki, "Jinken shinsetsu" (1882), in Matsumoto Sannosuke, ed., *Meiji shisō shū I*, Kindai Nihon shisō taikēi 30 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1976), pp. 95–135. For more on the blow Katō's essay dealt to natural-rights theory, see Douglas R. Howland, *Translating the West: Language and Political Reason in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), pp. 136–38.

12. For the history of the movement, consult Stephen Vlastos, "Opposition Movements in Early Meiji, 1868–1885," in *Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 402–25.

masa into demands for a “second restoration” (*daini no ishin*).<sup>13</sup> Such arguments about “second” events were arguments on the place of 1868 in the general process of social evolution and asserted that the Meiji government had usurped what should have been the democratic outcome of the fall of the Tokugawa.

The earliest example of the Meiji political novel, Toda Kindō’s “Jōkai haran” (Storms in the sea of passions, 1880), suggests the utility of narrative fiction for evolutionary arguments on the polity. In this turgid tale, a young lover called Wakokuya Minji (his name translates punningly as “Popular Government in Japan”) is torn between two geisha, O-Ken (“Miss Rights”) from a brothel called the Sakigakeya (“House of the Vanguard”) and Yakko of the Hikutsuya (“Slave” of the “House of Servility”). While Minji wavers, O-Ken is pursued by the rich but nefarious Kokufu (“National Government” or “State”). In the end O-Ken and Minji marry and are reconciled with Kokufu, who throws a reception in a hall called the Kokkai (“National Assembly,” or, in the usual English translation via German, “Diet”). Subtle writing this is not, but the plot of “Jōkai haran” transforms political struggle into a process whose *telos* is democratic unity, arrived at with a narrative closure that makes democracy the logical outcome of history.<sup>14</sup>

As the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement collapsed in the mid-1880s under police persecution and restrictions on the press, such fiction continued the debate on the polity in the form of speculative future tales (*miraiki*), which relied heavily on theories of social evolution for their arguments for a democratic future. One of the best known, Suehiro Tetchō’s *Setchūbai* (Plum blossoms in snow, 1886), advocates the establishment of an English-style parliament through the prophesy of a golden age of prosperity and social concord. The example of *Setchūbai*, which I consider in detail in this essay, shows that the narrative strategies of the political novel not only opened debate on the nature of the polity but also delimited debate in a narrow liberal frame, a position against radical political change that was characteristic of the new representations of history that appeared in the Meiji period.

It is possible in fact to regard the Meiji political novel as a variety of historical writing, not only because of the genre’s concern in its stories with the history of Japan and other countries, but also because its typical narrative forms mirror so frequently the effort in historical writing conventionally defined to redefine history as a process of national evolution. The common view of the political task of national history is that it must bridge the gap

13. Tanaka Akira, *Meiji Ishin-kan no kenkyū* (Sapporo: Hokkaidō Daigaku Toshō Kan-kōkai, 1987), pp. 51–53, 58–59.

14. Toda Kindō, “Jōkai haran,” in Yanagida Izumi, ed., *Meiji seiji shōsetsu shū I*, Meiji bungaku zenshū 5 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1966), pp. 3–10. Mertz provides a careful reading of the story and its political assertions in *Novel Japan*, pp. 140–50.

between the present regime and its predecessors by connecting the Meiji government, for example, to the most ancient institutions of the imperial court in Japan, in order to efface the new state's novelty and convey upon it the legitimacy of age. In reality, the task is considerably more difficult. Rather than simply throwing a span across the gap of a revolution, linking the present to a past that resembles the present save in its incomplete development, national history must confront a heterogeneous past of institutions and identities that may resemble the nation-state and nationality only remotely, if at all.<sup>15</sup> Few of the elements of the past may be suitable for transformation into precursors; many may not be reconcilable with the present in any form.

National history cannot simply erase such nonnational aspects of the past from its account of the formation of the nation because they would continue to emerge and contradict assertions that the nation's rise began in the mists of time. National history similarly must confront a heterogeneity in the present, perhaps still more difficult to address, that Ernst Bloch identified as the problem of "non-contemporaneity."<sup>16</sup> Earlier identities and social practices rooted in localities or occupational groupings, among others, remain visible in the present, contradicting declarations that "the people" exist in a condition of unity.<sup>17</sup> Evidence of noncontemporaneity supports alternative views of history, alternative identities based on such views, and thus ultimately dissent against the nationalization of society. Neither arguments in the manner of Eric Hobsbawm, that the invention of tradition produces a national past, nor of Benedict Anderson, that a sense of simultaneous experience among individuals produces a national present, adequately explain how such heterogeneity is contained and denatured.

For national history, the problem of heterogeneity must be solved in epistemological terms: the diverse, sedimented forms of identity, community, and social practice that exist in the early period of formation of nation-states, and the new possibilities that appear in the interstices of the nationalized society, all of which expose the contingent face of the nation-form, must be unrecognizable *as such*. That is, they must be recognizable only in a form that is subordinate to the nation as the keystone of knowledge of past and present alike. The epistemological problem is solved by a temporality

15. Etienne Balibar discusses this challenge in "The Nation-Form: History and Ideology," in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 88.

16. Ernst Bloch, "Summary Transition: Non-Contemporaneity and Obligation to Its Dialectic," in *Heritage of Our Times*, trans. Neville Plaice and Stephen Plaice (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); see especially pp. 108–12.

17. David Howell has demonstrated the importance of such alternative political geographies in nineteenth-century Japan in *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 4–5.



that defines the relationship of past to present as *national* past to *national* present and recasts the various nonnational aspects of human life, when- and wherever they exist, as stages to be surpassed or aberrations to be eliminated as obstacles to progress and unity. We can trace the operations of such a temporality by examining the forms that narrative takes in national history, in particular the caesuras that take shape through periodization and the recounting of climactic events. The mechanisms of such narrative are more complex than those of a linear story. If we pay close attention to the ways that, in the terms of narratology, national history transforms story (events) into narrative, we find that political ruptures play a crucial role, not as anomalies to be explained away by a bridging historical explanation, but as barriers to be deployed against alternatives to the forms of state and community that emerge from them. We can call such a narrative strategy containment, quarantine, or prophylaxis.<sup>18</sup> Its political significance is particularly evident in Tetchō's treatment of 1868 and its reprise—the opening of the Diet—in *Setchūbai*.

Suehiro Tetchō was an established liberal journalist when he tried his hand at the political novel with *Nijūsannen miraiki* (A tale of the future of the year 23) in 1886. The title refers to the year Meiji 23, or 1890, the year the government set in 1881 for the opening of an elected assembly. In the first part of the novel, two observers discuss the political world of Meiji 23: as a consequence of the foundation of an "imperfect Diet" (*fukanzen naru kokkai*), the legislature is riven by conflict between radicals and conservatives and unable to pursue the national interest. When one of the men suddenly awakens at his desk at the *Chōya shinbun* (the newspaper where Tetchō worked), the reader learns that the year is only Meiji 19, 1886. The description of an "imperfect" Diet has been a bad dream. The second half of the text is an expository critique of factionalism in the face of the unified and authoritarian oligarchy that controlled the Meiji state. The preceding dream of the future has been a way to bring urgency to the issues.<sup>19</sup> *Nijūsannen miraiki* quickly became a model, and more than 20 future tales concerned with 1890 appeared in the following four years.<sup>20</sup> (One writer paid Tetchō the tribute of knocking off *Nijūsannengo miraiki* [A tale of the future

18. I take this idea loosely from Fredric Jameson's discussion of totality in *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 52–54.

19. Suehiro Shigeyasu [Tetchō], *Nijūsannen miraiki* (Tokyo: Izui Matashichi, 1886).

20. Tetchō's influential *Nijūsannen miraiki* actually was the third future tale to appear and took its title from a little-known story of the same name by Ryūsō Gaishi from 1883. Kyoko Kurita explains the history in "Meiji Japan's Y23 Crisis and the Discovery of the Future: Suehiro Tetchō's *Nijūsannen miraiki*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (2000), pp. 5–16. Kurita's analyses of stories by Ryūsō and Tetchō in the later part of the article, which include the unusual assertion that Tetchō was a nativist, leave much to be desired.



after the year 23] in 1887.) Critics often consider their popularity to reflect the democracy movement's impasses, when the first political parties had dissolved and the government was imposing ever-greater restrictions on dissent. Kōuchi Saburō and Hitaka Mutsurō thus argue that the very form of the future tale acknowledged the death of previous optimistic expectations of the future. In their view, the novels' sketches of the future incorporate both a critique of present politics and a programmatic vision of the years ahead to correct such optimism.<sup>21</sup>

Tetchō weighed in again with *Setchūbai* in 1886 and its sequel *Kakanō* (Song birds among flowers) in 1887, explaining that where *Nijūsannen miraiki* was the description of a sick man's condition, the new books offered a prescription to cure him, by showing how to establish a "perfect Diet"—for Tetchō, a bicameral assembly on the English model.<sup>22</sup> Like *Nijūsannen miraiki*, *Setchūbai* opens with a conversation between two unnamed gentlemen, a convention of Tokugawa-era fiction that attests to the reliance of political novelists on borrowed forms.<sup>23</sup> Sitting in one man's Tokyo home, the men hear the sound of cannons and trumpets in the distance and recall that the day is the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Diet. It is March 3 of Meiji 173, or the year 2040. The emperor and the nation's representatives are celebrating the occasion outside the Diet building itself. (The emperor, who was 16 in Meiji 1 or 1868, would be 188 years old.) Musing on the importance of the anniversary, the guest remarks:

We truly have been blessed to be born into such a prosperous world and live out our old age in comfort. This city of Tokyo, stretching more than ten miles in every direction, is covered with tall brick buildings. Telegraph lines stretch out like a spider's web, steam trains come and go from all points, and the electric lights are like trailblazes along the streets. In Tokyo harbor, trading ships of every country are moored and the booming trade outdoes even London and Paris. There are hundreds of thousands of troops on land, hundreds of men-of-war afloat on the sea, and there is no place in the world where the Rising Sun does not wave. Education has spread throughout the country and literature thrives. No other country in the world

21. Kōuchi Saburō and Hitaka Mutsurō, "Seijiteki 'miraizu' no hassō yōshiki—Suehiro Shigeyasu *Nijūsan nen miraiki* o chūshin toshite," in *Hassō no shōyōshiki*, Nihon shisōshi kōza 3 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1960), pp. 226–28, 230–31.

22. Suehiro Tetchō, *Setchūbai*, in Yamada Yūsaku and Maeda Ai, eds., *Meiji seiji shōsetsu shū*, Nihon kindai bungaku taikai 2 (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1974), p. 327. The comment is in a marginal note lost in many modern reprints.

23. Kamei Hideo, *Transformations of Sensibility: The Phenomenology of Meiji Literature*, ed. Michael Bourdagh (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002), p. 215. Tetchō's use of a conversation to frame the story of *Setchūbai* also responds to problems that writers faced as they tried to create new narrative styles in the Meiji period; on this point see my essay "Mori Ōgai's Resentful Narrator: Trauma and the National Subject in 'The Dancing Girl,'" *positions: east asia cultures critique*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2002), pp. 365–97.

can compare. What's more, if one considers the political situation, we have a revered and majestic emperor above and a Diet rich in wisdom and experience below. Through competition between the progressive and conservative parties, cabinets change smoothly, laws are set down according to the constitution, and there is freedom of both press and assembly. Indeed, I think such an absence of abuse is without precedent in history. Our country, known throughout Asia up to a hundred years ago as poor and weak, and despised by the countries of Europe and America, was able to advance its fortunes so much in a short time because his majesty the emperor was a virtuous ruler and early issued a proclamation founding a constitutional system of government. Soon after he established the Diet on this day in Meiji 23, the course of events steadily improved. Our children and grandchildren owe everlasting loyalty to the imperial house because we have arrived where we are today.<sup>24</sup>

The host concurs with the connections his guest draws among the emperor, a healthy Diet, and the material signs of progress—such as tall brick buildings—that mark this as a particularly Meiji vision of the future. He recalls, however, hearing from a grandfather that that around Meiji 13 (1880), strife between the government and the people was high, with the situation so bad from Meiji 16 to 19 that political thought among the people died out. A book from just this time called *Nijūsannen miraiki* said that an imperfect Diet would certainly be created. “These being such distant matters,” the host concludes, “we have not the slightest idea how the situation turned around and this blessed world came about.” The guest happily reveals that through a coincidence and some philological labor he has discovered two old texts describing the political situation of that earlier period in vivid detail: a book called *Setchūbai* and its sequel, *Kakan’ō*, that recount the lives of a prominent activist and his wife. He has copied the first. The host notes that it is by the author of *Nijūsannen miraiki* and therefore certain to explain well the era before the opening of the Diet. They turn to the table of contents and the story contained within the frame begins.<sup>25</sup>

The story itself commences in Meiji 19 (the year in which the historical knowledge of the gentlemen in the frame fails and *Setchūbai* appeared) and ends in Meiji 23 (the year in which the Diet opens), with the final scene of *Kakan’ō* establishing the circumstances through which the guest of the frame discovered the books 150 years later. Together the frame and the story thus establish three temporal continua: a known past up to Meiji 19, an unknown past between Meiji 19 and 23, and an age of smooth progress that begins in Meiji 23 and continues to the gentlemen's present. The middle

24. Suehiro Tetchō, *Setchūbai*, in Yanagida Izumi, ed., *Meiji seiji shōsetsu shū II*, Meiji bungaku zenshū 6 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1967), pp. 112–13. Further references are to this edition, which reproduces the first rather than the revised edition of 1890.

25. Ibid., pp. 113–14.

continuum is Tetchō's readers' near future and the gentlemen's past, equally unknown to all. Its events are filled in by the story within the novel, through what is prolepsis from the perspective of the reader but from the perspective of the gentlemen is the recovery of an authoritative, source-based history. In a circular manner, the gentlemen's impressively civilized world emerges as "proof" of the veracity of the history, which we discover is ultimately a political argument on how to achieve just such a golden age. The position of the gentlemen in the future thus establishes the authority of the two novels' assertions about the present political impasse. Note moreover that by giving the date of the frame as Meiji 173, Tetchō explicitly connects his happy future to the originary date of Meiji 1. Because Tetchō would have been able to avoid the offense of implying the emperor's death by using common-era dating or the *kigen* system (which begins with the reign of the mythical Emperor Jimmu, 660 B.C.E), his use of the reign name suggests the importance for him of sketching out a continuous course of progress commencing with a first beginning in Meiji 1 and kept on the proper path through a second beginning in Meiji 23. The narrative scheme of the novel amounts to a liberal theory of social evolution whose truth derives from its invocation of the future.

The story of the near future revolves around the political and romantic adventures of Kunino Motoi, a democratic activist, and Tominaga Haru, a beautiful and wealthy sympathizer. Kunino's name is a homophone for "Foundation of the Nation," while Haru's translates as "Spring of Eternal Wealth." As a young man, Kunino left his home to seek education and a political career in Tokyo, where he went by the name of Fukaya Umejirō. (The first character of his alias, *ume* or plum, gives the first clue to the novel's title.) In Tokyo Kunino met Haru's father, a former samurai who wanted to devote his fortune to the nation and who became Kunino's mentor. Kunino became engaged to his mentor's daughter as Fukaya but deferred meeting her until he had made his reputation. The state's crackdown on political activism forced Kunino underground, and his mentor died shortly after. Haru's mother died a few years later, leaving her with a photo of Kunino as a young man and her wealth in the hands of an uncle who has forged her father's will.

In Meiji 19 Haru attends a speech in which Kunino establishes his name as a man of political vision. He now goes by Kunino, and Haru does not recognize him because an illness has changed his appearance. In an echo of Benjamin Disraeli's *Endymion* (1880), she becomes Kunino's benefactress and romance soon flickers, but Kunino is equally unaware of her identity because she now goes by her uncle's surname of Fujii, and they remain chaste in honor of Haru's betrothal.<sup>26</sup> The rest of the story resolves the mistaken

26. On the parallel to *Endymion*, see Yanagida Izumi, *Seiji shōsetsu kenkyū*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1968), pp. 455–56.

identities as Kunino and Haru work for unity among the movement's antagonistic factions, a project to which Tetchō dedicated himself in life.<sup>27</sup> Kunino is wrongly thrown into prison when the police think he plans an anarchist attack with a radical friend, and he fights off a political rival who traps Haru's uncle in debt and demands her hand in return. Kunino becomes publicly engaged to Haru to buy time until Fukaya reappears, and she finally shows him her fiancé's photo, resolving all questions of identity, passion, and morality. Moved by their virtue, the uncle reveals a second will that leaves nearly all of Haru's father's estate to Kunino (as Fukaya). They will live on Haru's small inheritance and devote Kunino's to the movement. Their joyful anticipation of the wedding, we are told, "may even have been greater than that with which the people of our country in Meiji 18 or 19 awaited the coming of Meiji 23."<sup>28</sup>

In a turn of phrase typical of such romances, we thus learn that the plum (Fukaya Umejirō) that had been buried in snow in the cold winter was warmed by the warm spring (Tominaga Haru) breeze. The sequel, *Kakan'ō* (which limitations of space prevent me from examining), expands the drama of conflict and reconciliation within the movement to the nation as a whole and ends with a political settlement among moderates in the government, advocates of democracy, and progressive industrialists; the emperor's gift of a liberal constitution; and the country's first elections in Meiji 23.<sup>29</sup>

The closing scene of *Setchūbai* is laden with support for the political positions that Kunino propounds in the novel: the union of a political intellectual and a wealthy heiress figures the alliance of the educated and propertied classes that Tetchō considered the basis for democracy in Japan. By this logic their marriage is the foundation for the second, democratic restoration for which many in the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement called.<sup>30</sup> Although it has been the object of much criticism, Fredric Jameson's idea of national allegory still offers the most useful framework for understanding this kind of figure as it applies to the nation-form. Jameson argues rather reductively that the experience of colonialism and imperialism, which define what he calls the "third world," has made "third-world culture" essentially allegorical. All third-world texts are allegorical, he says, in a specific way: they should be read as national allegories. In third-world literature, according to Jameson, "the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling

27. Yoshio Iwamoto, "Suehiro Tetchō: A Meiji Political Novelist," in Edmund Skrzypczak, ed., *Japan's Modern Century* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1968), pp. 88–89.

28. Suehiro, *Setchūbai*, p. 162.

29. I discuss *Kakan'ō* in chapter four of "National History and the World of Nations: Writing Japan, France, the United States, 1870–1900" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1999).

30. Yanagida, *Seiji shōsetsu kenkyū*, Vol. 2, p. 425; Iwamoto, "Suehiro Tetchō," pp. 90–91.

of the experience of the collectivity itself.”<sup>31</sup> Tetchō’s comment that *Nijūsannen miraiki* was the diagnosis of a sick man and *Setchūbai* the cure supports such a reading of *Setchūbai* by highlighting its self-consciously allegorical nature. Ideologue Ninomiya Kumajirō, who wrote a preface for *Setchūbai*, was the first of many commentators to recognize this quality of the book in a comment that the “moral” (*gūi*) was appropriate to the times.<sup>32</sup>

Aijaz Ahmad and others have pointed out that Jameson’s argument depends on assimilating large parts of the world to the label “third world,” under which their only similarity is a history of colonialism. By this reasoning, literature that does not constitute a nationalist response to such a history—the only response Jameson imagines—is exceptional and somehow inauthentic.<sup>33</sup> That scholars have continued to turn to Jameson’s essay, however, attests that Jameson recognizes something whose importance Ahmad, for one, all but dismisses: the ubiquity of national allegories in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Recent research by Doris Sommer and Katie Trumpener on the appropriation of the novels of James Fenimore Cooper and Walter Scott, Cooper’s inspiration, in Latin America and the British dominions indeed suggests that national allegory constituted a worldwide genre in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>34</sup> That writers like Tetchō acknowledged the allegorical aspect of their fiction compounds the importance of accounting for it. Clearly something about the device of allegory made it particularly suited to the ideological demands of an era when the international systems of states and markets were rapidly consolidating. Its usefulness, I would suggest, was not limited to the possibility of emplotting the history of the nation as the life of an individual. As a device centered on the relationship between two stories—two sequences of events in time—allegory is also particularly suited to dealing with the challenge that alternative views of history and the identities they may support pose to the nationalization of social relations.

As Sommer has shown in nineteenth-century Latin American allegories of the nation, the romantic plot and the political plotting in *Setchūbai* depend on each other to the point that the desires for romantic and political

31. Fredric Jameson, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” *Social Text*, No. 15 (1986), pp. 69, 85–86.

32. Suehiro, *Setchūbai*, p. 112. Ninomiya was Tetchō’s secretary and research assistant at the time.

33. Ahmad’s critique appears in “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory,’” *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992); see especially pp. 98, 102, 104.

34. Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 55–56; Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 246–47. Ahmad points out examples of such allegories in the so-called “First World”; see “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness,” p. 110.

union are coextensive rather than simply analogous.<sup>35</sup> The circumstances that initiate the entwined plot tell us much about the stakes. Haru was drawn to the speech where she first glimpsed Kunino out of a conviction that “in today’s world women too need to know a little about politics in order to help men stand abreast with the countries of Europe and America,” she tells him later, repeating a common position of early Meiji thought.<sup>36</sup> When Haru decides to support Kunino’s activities, however, she encloses money in a letter in which she disguises her handwriting as a man’s. With this step Haru crosses a line from passive education to the active participation in public life that, in the world of *Setchūbai*, is reserved for men. Her move creates a disruption in public life that drives the rest of the plot. When Kunino and Haru first come face to face, in a country spa where he is recovering from prison, they arouse the suspicions of her uncle and Kawagishi, Kunino’s rival, who conspire to keep them apart. The uncle traps her with the false will while Kawagishi spreads a rumor that Haru keeps lovers. Shocked, Kunino comes close to rejecting her before his principles force him to act against their enemies, thereby gaining both her hand and his political reputation. The disruption caused by Haru’s active participation in politics propels Kunino’s political and romantic success, but, success achieved, the question of Haru is settled by a narrative resolution that will place her back in the household.

We can find at least three different meanings in the betrothal, its interruption, and restoration, all of which support Tetchō’s vision of Japan as a democracy on the English model. Haru’s move into public life would not have been necessary but for the state persecution that forced Kunino underground and out of touch with her father. When her resources are back in his hands, the natural coalition between intellectuals and the propertied classes that had been blocked by the state is restored. In this sense, the betrothal is a figure for a class alliance. In addition to such a figure of union, the betrothal marks exclusions in two different directions that indeed make the union possible. Inasmuch as the political alliance is directed against what Kunino calls “the unpropertied and ignorant lower classes,” that is, against people who are neither Haru’s propertied father nor the educated Kunino, we can read the alliance as an argument about the masses, who are to be governed rather than to govern.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Haru’s impending disappearance from public life mirrors the position of democratic moderates on the franchise, which was not to include women regardless of education or property. On this point, moderates were aligned with the Meiji state, which ultimately banned women from attending political meetings or joining political organizations, in response to the prominent role of some women in the campaigns

35. Sommer, *Foundational Fictions*, pp. 41, 48.

36. Suehiro, *Setchūbai*, p. 134.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

for democracy.<sup>38</sup> The passing of Haru from her father to Kunino shows both the containment of the masses and women and the means by which they are to be contained, a moderate liberal party.<sup>39</sup>

These three readings of the betrothal are mutually supportive: the elision of women and the masses conjures up the specter of a promiscuous political desire—recall Kunino’s reaction to rumors of Haru’s lovers—that must be kept under control by responsible, male elites.<sup>40</sup> Here the fact that Kunino and Haru are engaged rather than married at the end of *Setchūbai* produces a fourth reading: until the moment of their union, they must defer the consummation of their desire and indeed sublimate it as service to the nation.<sup>41</sup> Those whose aim is national progress must likewise suppress their desire for universal suffrage and other promiscuous “extremisms” until the future of the nation is secure: in politics, prudishness is prudent. Allegorically, the betrothal figures a moment of national unity and awakening, but the element of self-restraint extends from Kunino and Haru to the nation as a whole and introduces an element of futurity—deferred desire—to the closure of a narrative that we have already seen is framed by an elaborate conceit set in a distant age. The importance of the allegory lies precisely in the fact that the plot of *Setchūbai* reaches a certain closure yet remains open and oriented toward the future.

If we recall that the gentlemen’s “history” in *Setchūbai* has not yet happened, we can see that, through their unfolding, national allegories self-consciously create the history of something that does not yet exist: neither these histories nor the nations whose past they claim to tell exist prior to the elaboration of the allegory in narrative. We must therefore set aside the view that allegory uses a “local” story to explicate a story or concept that is not present in the text itself—for example, a second story that Jameson calls the “experience of the collectivity” of the nation. Accepting that such a collectivity exists apart from its representation would concede the allegory’s argument. Instead, we should follow Sommer’s lead in turning to Walter Benjamin, who treated allegory as a dialectical movement between two registers

38. Sharon H. Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings, “The Meiji State’s Policy Toward Women, 1890–1910,” in Gail Lee Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 155.

39. Mertz observes a similar outcome in the allegory of “Jōkai haran,” in which the marriage of O-Ken figures a subordinate relationship between people and government. *Novel Japan*, pp. 148–49.

40. On this point, I am indebted to Andreas Huyssen’s observation of a similar elision of anxiety toward the masses and toward women in late nineteenth-century European thought. See “Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism’s Other,” *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 52.

41. This is a common feature of love in the Meiji political novel, Yanagida observes. “Seiji shōsetsu no ippan (I),” in Yanagida Izumi, ed., *Meiji seiji shōsetsu shū I*, *Meiji bungaku zenshū* 5 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1966), p. 430.



or levels rather than a structure of parallel explication. Reading German tragic drama of the baroque period, Benjamin argued that allegory is not an illustrative technique but a form of expression.<sup>42</sup> In contrast to symbol, apprehended in a “mythical instant,” Benjamin observed that allegory depends on the category of time. The introduction of time gives allegory a dialectical character and endows it with the potential for historical breadth or, in Benjamin’s words, the ability to offer a “secular explanation of history.”<sup>43</sup> The German tragic drama sought to explain the relationship between man and nature, but the idea of allegory as a movement *between* registers that privileges neither would also apply to other issues. Moreover, although Benjamin says that allegory works through the category of time, we should also see that what the dialectical movement between registers produces is *history*, a history that sublates the stories told in the registers themselves.

Through Benjamin’s analysis, we can see that one aspect of national allegory is a dialectical argument on the relationship between nation and national subject that proceeds through the movement between the histories that make up each register. The arc in *Setchūbai* from mistaken identity to reunion is at once an arc encompassing the personal histories of Kunino and Haru; an arc in political history from disarray to the realization of a democratic coalition; and finally an arc in national history from what the gentlemen of the frame recall as the poor, weak, and despised state of the nation in Meiji 19 to the commencement in Meiji 23 of the secure and prosperous era in which they live. In one register, Kunino and Haru have found each other; in the other, the nation has collectively found itself. In both, mutual dedication and sacrifice are the solution to the present calamity. If we consider the passage between registers, the novel’s contention is that survival and self-fulfillment for the subject come in union with something that is both greater than and identical to the subject, and that the sum of such unions constitutes the survival and self-fulfillment of the nation. Clearly these are an active set of political assertions rather than the explanation of a situation that already exists. The assertions are made through the elaboration of the tales in both the individual and national registers, which jointly constitute an argument on the political constitution of the nation-state.

We should note, however, that the stories in the two registers of national allegory do not reach closure in the same way. Even though the story of Kunino and Haru is completed in their betrothal, the national story only reaches closure in the form of a promise that the national union sketched out as future history will in fact take place. Sommer observes that, conceptually

42. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 2003), p. 162. In *Foundational Fictions*, pp. 41–45, Sommer provides a more extensive discussion of Benjamin than I am able to offer here.

43. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, pp. 165–66.

speaking, national allegories in Latin America are written backward, from the point of view of their concluding reconciliation.<sup>44</sup> The narrative structure of *Setchūbai*, which announces the fruit of the union before the story of Kunino and Haru begins, only makes the conclusion that we should draw clearer: although seemingly focused on creating history, national allegories are in fact obsessed with the future, whose indeterminacy they harness through the promise of a national unity to take shape in some later moment. The essential temporal opposition in the allegory then is between *individual past* and *national future*: what *has happened* for the individual *will have happened* for the nation. A blank but bounded expanse of time lies between, its content unclear but its outcome nonetheless determined.

We can further explore the contribution such a temporality makes to Tetchō's argument for a second, democratic restoration by comparing the position of the reader of *Setchūbai* and the gentlemen of the frame *vis-à-vis* the period Meiji 19 to 23 (1886–90) when the events of the story occur. Here we discover that the precise character of national history's orientation toward the future, and the means through which it quarantines objections to the reorganization of social relations by the nation-state, is a future anteriority based on assertions about what will have happened when viewed from a future imagined moment.<sup>45</sup> Until the gentlemen discover the novel and its sequel, the period between Meiji 19 and 23 is the unknown distant past for them; for the reader it is the unknown near future. Precisely because it is unknown for the gentlemen, such a proposition of the near future constitutes a political opening for the survival of the democracy movement in the face of government persecution. *Setchūbai* and *Kakan'ō* effectively are a call for the reader to take responsibility for such a future by following Tetchō's programmatic lead at a time of crisis. But even though the dearth of knowledge in the frame about the period of the story suits Tetchō's desire to cast it as a period of political possibility, the potential content of the future that the frame presents is far from indeterminate. Rather, this period exists only in relation to the establishment of political harmony that is to be its culmination, after which history is the routine clocking of cabinets and cargoes. The story of Kunino and Haru defines the period's content in detail, culminating in a second Meiji reform or second restoration to take place at its end. The work of the allegory is to determine the content of the future, not in the sense of divining it but of establishing and limiting it, as Jürgen Habermas has observed of narratives of progress in general.<sup>46</sup>

44. Sommer, *Foundational Fictions*, p. 49.

45. I am grateful to Harry Harootunian for bringing the importance of the future anterior in national history to my attention.

46. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity's Consciousness of Time and Its Need for Self-Reassurance," in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), p. 12.

Thus, as much as this structure reopens an imaginative space for political action, it also delimits it sharply: with the arrival of Meiji 23, political possibility will end (from the perspective of the gentlemen in the frame, has ended), to be replaced by a progress whose path will be (has been) as predictable as it is uninterrupted. Wresting political agency from the state apparently brings with it an anxiety about true political possibility that the frame is at pains to control. At the heart of such an attempt to contain possibility is the epistemological authority that Tetchō contrives by shifting the point of enunciation of the narrative from the moment of political possibility itself (Tetchō's present) to the known future after Meiji 23. By shifting the point of enunciation into a determined future, the frame of *Setchūbai* circumscribes such possibility and "proves" that there is but a single path to the future (albeit one not yet followed). The movement toward the goal of Meiji 23 in Tetchō's novels is strangely self-extinguishing: the agents of history in Meiji 19, political intellectuals would seem to ultimately remove themselves from the arena of true politics, in the sense of debate over fundamental social arrangements, and become managers of an autonomous progress. No doubt this appearance is due in part to the reliance of the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement on direct appeals to the authority of the emperor to establish representative institutions against the wishes of the state.<sup>47</sup> Such arguments did not allow for true popular sovereignty but instead presumed the surrender of political agency once the proper imperial decision had been made. The importance of the temporal divide of Meiji 23 in the narrative form of *Setchūbai*—not only as the culmination of the allegorical struggle of Kunino and Haru but also as the beginning of the historical knowledge of the gentlemen of the frame—suggests, however, that there is more at work than simple deference to imperial authority.

By presenting the events between Meiji 19 and 23 as the prehistory of a known future, Tetchō removes political dispute from the constitution of the nation: politics precedes the promised moment of national unity but does not enter it. The different possible readings of the betrothal of Kunino and Haru, as the formation of a political alliance and as the exclusion of women and the unwashed from it, indicate that the strategy for representing history that emerges from the conceit of the frame of *Setchūbai* is directed as much against those who are to be managed in the golden age as against the oligarchy that controlled the state, Meiji liberals' rivals to be history's managers. The temporal divide of Meiji 23 is central to such a strategy because it shelters the society fostered by the perfect liberal Diet from dissenting points of view, whose time is over. Resistance in the present appears to be anachronistic and fundamentally ignorant of the nature of society. Tetchō's

47. Vlastos, "Opposition Movements in Early Meiji," pp. 403–4.

novel offers an explanation of how the future of harmony and prosperity will have emerged from the present, but the divide in time of Meiji 23 stabilizes the foundations of his ideal society by excluding politics from social relations.

In *Setchūbai*, the ultimate target of such temporal maneuvers is not Meiji 23 but Meiji 1: not 1890 but 1868. By presenting the year of the opening of the Diet as a new beginning and a second restoration, Tetchō's future history seeks to wrest the origin of the new nation-state of Japan out of the hands of the government and its first "restoration." Displaced to Meiji 23, the new origin casts the events of the 1850s and 1860s as simply steps toward the manifestation of liberal democracy in Japan and suggests that the political positions of those days by definition have no place in the future. We can say, then, that the final aim of the narrative structure of *Setchūbai* is to establish 1868 as the forerunner of the liberal democracy Tetchō desires rather than an end in itself, as supporters of the new government would have had it be. The assertion depends on the authority of a narrative frame that, by occupying the future, commands the political struggles of the Meiji period as history and offers a promise of political and social harmony as their resolution. Because the fanciful future of *Setchūbai* "proves" nothing, we should invert the proposition by putting it right side up: the authority claimed by the novel's argument for a "perfect Diet" inheres in its promise of future unity, as the solution to the crisis that it finds in the present.

Such a strategy in *Setchūbai* is obviously directed against the Meiji government, but Tetchō's reliance on a theory of social evolution to advance his political argument contributes to an effort in the Meiji period to deal with the problem of the past in which both government ideologues and liberals took part. In producing the present from the past, the most important goal of liberal and conservative modernists alike was to disqualify dissent from the project of remaking social relations in the name of the nation. The way that *Setchūbai* addresses such dissent reflects several strategies characteristic of the representation of national history in the Meiji period. Tetchō's use of narrative caesuras, as seen in his treatment of the founding of the Diet, locates alternatives to the Meiji programs of reform in the past as positions that have been superseded and are out of reach for the present. Such caesuras fix the relationship between the national and the nonnational as an irreversible relationship in history rather than a relationship in politics. Tetchō's tactic of arguing through the construction of an imagined future is inseparable from such disqualification of dissent. The preoccupation with the future in representations of history in the Meiji period is the basis for calls to defer aspirations for political and economic equality until the present crisis has been resolved. Crisis indeed is the middle term in the structure that national history gives to past, present, and future. Viewed in the context of the

general transformation of representations of history in the Meiji period, Tetchō's political novel reveals the importance of such invocations of crisis as the basis for a structure—a way of emplotting the history of the nation—that survived the period and persisted in the twentieth century as a rationale for ongoing demands of sacrifice for the sake of the future.

YALE UNIVERSITY