

Early Chinese Poetry by Mori Ōgai

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1. Introduction

Up to now Mori Ōgai's lyrical opus has been accorded little attention in the scholarly world, be it in Japanese Studies, literature or other fields.¹⁾ This seems incomprehensible if one considers the important role which the writer attributed to poems of all genres in his work. Apart from translating German, English and Chinese lyrics as for example in the anthology 於母影 *Omokage* (Vestiges) in 1889, the うた日記 *Uta Nikki* (Verse Diary) in 1907 or 沙羅の木 *Sara no ki* (The Sala Tree) in 1915, Ōgai also wrote poems himself. Here I would like to address his Chinese poetry or 漢詩 *kanshi*. Producing *kanshi* throughout most of his life, Ōgai liked to record occurrences from his everyday life, employing this genre in a similar way to a diary. Thus, *kanshi* often provide insight into the writer's thoughts and concerns, especially when compared to his prose. In the Collected Works of Ōgai or 鷗外全集 *Ōgai Zenshū* published by Iwanami, *kanshi* are contained in Volume 19.²⁾ The wide range of themes he takes up is astonishing: we find depictions of landscapes in the classical Chinese tradition as well as sociocritical issues including child labour in Japan's rural provinces or lyrical elaborations on historical events and the lack of knowledge about the past by the young generation; furthermore, there are poems in which he describes personal concerns such as his insecurity about his future career or indicates his resignation about his confinement by his function as an official serving the Meiji state and verse alluding to the transience of human existence. Last but not least, Ōgai used this genre as a vehicle for the articulation of his views about the relationship between the ruler and ruled, an issue that remained one of his key concerns all his life. Iritani Sensuke claims that Ōgai continued producing *kanshi* because he must have felt the need to do so when reflecting on his busy life, having to combine the two contradictory lives of public official and writer.³⁾

The great variety in contents displayed by Ōgai's *kanshi* proves that writing such poems for him was something that went much beyond the common means of attaining prestige which was typical of the intellectual and elite bureaucrat at the time. While the genre *per se* is conservative due to the historical evolution as a medium primarily used by bureaucrats in China, it is interesting to note that it was also employed as a vehicle to articulate political views—an apparent paradox. However, the fact that only a limited circle of readers—mostly intellectuals who were involved in governmental affairs—could actually understand such poems, may have conveyed a feeling of intimacy and familiarity which impelled authors to be more frank than

they might have been in vernacular lyrical forms or prose. Today, the eminent popularity of *kanshi* among Japanese intellectuals in the Meiji period has mostly been forgotten.⁴⁾ As regards verse form, Ōgai's favourite seems to have been the seven-syllable quatrain or 七言絶句 *shichigon zekku*, the seven-syllable regular verse or 七言律詩 *shichigon risshi* and the five-syllable ancient verse form or 五言古詩 *gogon koshi*. Most of the poems which he composed before and after his graduation from university and during his stay in Germany belong to the category of seven-syllable quatrain. In later years the writer preferred to express himself in seven-syllable regular verse and five-syllable ancient verse form.⁵⁾

Although we do not know when Ōgai started to compose Chinese poetry, the first *kanshi* that has been found stems from 1880. In 1882 at the age of 20 he composed 57, in 1884 40 poems. Until the end of 1884 he had produced 101 *kanshi*. The number then decreased and did not reach another climax until 1915, when he wrote 26 pieces. Altogether, Ōgai wrote 224 poems of this genre that we know of.

Ōgai's great familiarity with Chinese poetry can be understood better if one considers the fact that during his education at the Neo-Confucian fief school 養老館 Yōrōkan in his native 津和野 Tsuwano he was instructed to read classical Chinese writings. Ōgai's frequent usage of the ancient 5-syllable poem and his taste for 7-syllable short and regular verse prove his attachment to classics such as the Chinese anthology of literature 文選 *Wen-hsüan* or the Selection of Tang poems 唐詩選 *T'ang shih hsüan*. Ōgai admired many Chinese poets but above all, he respected 杜甫 Tu Fu, 李白 Li Po and 白居易 Po Chü-i. In Tu Fu's tradition Ōgai liked to express his regret about the evanescence of human emotion. The depiction of landscapes coupled with social issues is a characteristic that Ōgai also took over from Tu Fu. Other influences were 蘇東坡 Su Tung-p'o and 陸游 Lu Yu. After moving to Tokyo and taking up his medical studies the ambitious student's interest in Chinese poetry was promoted by 佐藤応渠 Satō Ōkyo (1818–1897), 伊藤孫一 Itō Magoichi (later known as Ariyoshi Yuzuru) (1862–1936) and 依田学海 Yoda Gakkai (1833–1909). Satō had been practicing as a doctor for Chinese medicine in Tokyo since 1855. His consulting rooms were located in the district of 千住 Senjū in the immediate neighbourhood of Ōgai's home. During his study, Ōgai started to take lessons with Satō in classical Chinese prose and lyrics as well as in Chinese medicine. In numerous Chinese poems as well as in the 独逸日記 *Doitsu Nikki* (A German Diary), Ōgai refers to Satō.

Itō, who also came from Tsuwano, and Ōgai were close friends between 1875 and 1879. Itō, however, had to break off his studies due to financial problems and went back to his home region. After that Ōgai broadened his knowledge about Chinese poetry under the guidance of Yoda; this master—student relationship is the topic of several *kanshi* Ōgai wrote.

2. Discussion of Poem

Here I would like to introduce the first part of a series of poems (altogether 124 lines) which Ōgai supposedly composed in the late spring or early summer of 1880. The Japanese version is based on the Anthology of Ōgai's historical literature or 鷗外歴史文学集 *Ōgai Rekishi Bungaku shū*.⁶⁾ The English translations are my own. Most of

Ōgai's *kanshi* have yet to be translated into Western languages. Only seven Chinese poems Ōgai wrote about women in Berlin in his *A German Diary* between 1884 and 1888 have been translated into German by Schöche.⁷⁾ In this paper I attempt to make a first step to remedy this situation by introducing and translating selected verse.

Reply in the form of a poem to a letter of Shō Keishi 松溪子 (舊藁) (old manuscript)

詩以代東復松溪子 詩以て東に代え、松溪子に復す

Part 1 (1-4)

螢飛照新緑	螢飛んで新緑を照らし
鵲叫裂古竹	鵲叫んで古竹を裂く
夜長愁亦長	夜長ければ愁へも亦た長く
無聊剪残燭	無聊にして残燭を剪る

Flying the firefly radiates light on the young leaves,
calling the cuckoo causes the old bamboo to splinter.
Long is the night, deep is my sorrow.
In low spirits I trim the wick.

As the title indicates, this poem was addressed to Shō Keishi; this was the pen name of Ōgai's friend Itō Magoichi.⁸⁾ The characters *matsu* (pine) and *tani* (valley) indicate Itō's origin from Tsuwano (see Part 4.1 below). The topic of this introductory part of the poem is summer and change, which are symbolized by the flying firefly and the young leaves. The firefly usually emerges between the end of May and June; this insect invariably causes the Japanese reader to associate a pleasant summer evening.⁹⁾ At the same time, the short life of the firefly suggests transience.¹⁰⁾ In poems of the Six Dynasties in China (222–569) women expecting their lover were depicted who utilized the light of the firefly to peek outside through the bamboo curtain.¹¹⁾ In the short story うたかたの記 *Utakata no ki* Ōgai uses the firefly as a symbol of transitory human life: After the main character Marie died by drowning in the lake, a firefly flits up to the sky, incorporating the fleeing soul of the girl.¹²⁾ The first four lines consisting of 5 characters each may be influenced by the 長恨歌 *Ch'ang-hen-ko* (Song of Unending Sorrow), which was composed by Po Chü-i. Bynner translated the passage as follows, "Over the throne flew fire-flies, while he brooded in the twilight. He would lengthen the lamp-wick to its end and still could never sleep."¹³⁾ Levy wrote as follows, "Night Palace, fireflies in flight, in thought he sighed. Sleepless as the solitary lamp stirred and died."¹⁴⁾ We can take it that Ōgai referred to the Chinese text in merely semantic terms and that he did not adopt the original issue of how to solve the struggle between one's personal feelings and duty towards the state.

Admittedly, the metaphor of the flying firefly is very popular in Chinese lyrics; therefore one cannot claim with certainty that Ōgai exclusively referred to the above-mentioned song. However, despite the different atmosphere the usage of the firefly together with the image of the long night and insomnia suggests immediate influence. Contrary to the common association with rather dark and depressing thoughts, the firefly radiates positive feelings since it is combined with "young leaves". The voice of the cuckoo—a popular topos in Japanese poetry—underlines the silence immediately

before and after the call of the bird. The cuckoo usually emerges between March and May, thus enforcing the image of (early) summer which dominates the entire poem. Its distinctive call is intensified by the image of the splintering bamboo.¹⁵⁾ The latter symbolizes the existing, old and traditional and forms a contrast to the fresh and new life incorporated by the young leaves. The second part of the poem addresses the issue of loneliness and downheartedness late at night. The third line resembles a line of the 古詩十九首 *Ku-shih shi-chiu shou* (Nineteen Ancient Poems), a series of anonymous poems: “Short is the day, long the bitter night.”¹⁶⁾ Here again, the semantic expressions are almost identical, but the atmosphere differs considerably. While in the Chinese poem the implication is that due to the transience of life man should indulge in pleasure, Ōgai depicts his own sleepless nights. The term *buryō* (ennui, loneliness, tedium) displays the author’s downheartedness and could be interpreted as insecurity about his future. The last line resembles a poem by 季商隱 Li Shang-Yin, which is included in the 唐詩三百首 (300 Tang Poems): “You ask me when I am coming. I do not know. I dream of your mountains and autumn pools brimming all night with the rain. Oh, when shall we be trimming wicks again, together in your western window? When shall I be hearing your voice again, all night in the rain?”¹⁷⁾ The context is entirely different, however. While in the Chinese poem the dominant theme is the author’s pain of being separated from his wife, Ōgai’s lyrics are filled with quiet retrospection. Melancholy is the only common trait here.

What strikes the reader is the rather abrupt change in atmosphere after the second line. The first verses could be understood as a hopeful appeal to change, light dominates. Although fireflies usually emerge at night, this first part seems full of light. The cuckoo as a symbol of summer enforces this impression. In the second part one recognizes the author’s feelings of wistfulness and unrest. The marked contrast between the first and second part could be seen to reflect the young Ōgai’s complex feelings at the time: On the one hand he had innumerable opportunities, being an ambitious medical student; on the other hand he felt insecure about his personal and professional future.

Part 2.1 (5–10)

吾有刎頸朋	吾に刎頸の朋有り
千里寄尺牘	千里より尺牘を寄す
筆勢自縦横	筆勢は自ら縦横
黒香猶馥郁	墨香は猶ほ馥郁たり
書辞何慇懃	書辞何ぞ慇懃なる
風采殊可掬	風采殊に掬すべし

I have a friend—I would give my life for him.
 From thousand miles’ distance he sends me a letter.
 Free and frank is his handwriting,
 pleasant is the fragrance of the black ink.
 His words, how sincere they are!
 His appearance, so close it seems he’s here.

Line two focuses on friendship. It is highly probable that Ōgai referred to Kako Tsurudo (1855–1931), his closest friend throughout his life. Like Ōgai, Kako was born into a house of doctors serving the daimyō, but he came from Shizuoka prefecture. Seven years older than Ōgai, he also studied medicine at Tokyo University. Their friendship seems to have developed after they shared a room in the university dormitory.¹⁸⁾ Letters between the two that have been left to posterity indicate their deep friendship. Ōgai even gave instructions about his last will to Kako only few days before his death. When he was faced with important decisions, he always turned to his older friend for advice. For example, a letter that has been left implies that Kako had recommended Ōgai to join the war ministry. The writer who would have preferred a career as a researcher at Tokyo University finally followed Kako’s advice for various reasons that cannot be discussed here. The term *funkei no tomo* (a friend one would give one’s head for) in line five suggests the author’s intense feelings for his comrade. Line two resembles an expression in 顏氏家訓 *Yen-shih Chia-hsün*, a collection of recommendations how to live from the time of the Six Chinese Dynasties. The author Yan chidui points out that when writing letters in shortened Chinese characters, one needs to take care since such writings would become a “face of thousand miles.”¹⁹⁾ Ōgai, however, describes the distance which separates him from his friend. Therefore, there is only a semantic similarity here.

In the second half of the poem the later writer expresses his joy and gratitude when reading this letter. The term *hissei ji jūō* (writing free in length and breadth) refers to a verse from the 南史 *Nan-shih*, the History of the Southern Dynasties.²⁰⁾ It is a letter by 范泰 Fan Yeh (398–446) to his nephew. He elaborates his own way of writing and emphasizes that those parts of his work have turned out best which emerged in complete (stylistic) liberty: “But as for the Introductions and Disquisitions in my chapters from the one on scrupulous officials down to those on the six barbarian tribes, in those my brush gallops away unbridled. They are the most original writings in the world.”²¹⁾ While Fan expresses his disapproval of formal conventions of writing, Ōgai uses the phrase to indicate his admiration of his friend’s calligraphic abilities.

Part 2.2 (11–16)

曩投以木桃	曩に投ずるに木桃を以てし
瓊瑤辱報復	瓊瑤報復を辱けなくす
擲地試其聲	地に擲って其の声を試みれば
鏘金又戛玉	鏘金又戛玉
几頭幾券舒	几頭に幾たび卷舒し
不厭百回讀	百回読むを厭はず

What I tossed at him was nothing but a wooden peach,
 what I received with shame resembled a jewel.
 I let it fall to the ground to hear what sound it would make.
 Like silver did it ring, and like a jewel.
 Many times I opened and closed the letter at my writing desk,
 I do not hesitate to read it even hundred times.

This section addresses friendship and respect, a topic which Ōgai repeatedly dealt with in his lyrics. The metaphor of jewel used for the letter shows the author's great respect for it. His own letter, however, he compares to a wooden peach. The sound of the jewel falling to the ground is ambiguous: On the one side, the reader associates a musical instrument of pleasing sound, on the other hand this comparison with a jewel is supposed to evoke a smoothing sound if one touches it. Both metaphors illustrate the elegant language of Kako Tsurudo, Ōgai's best friend. There are evident allusions to classical Chinese poems. In the 詩經 *Shih-ching* (Book of Songs), for example, there is a passage in which a peach, jewel and the sound of writing are mentioned: "There was presented to me a peach, And I returned for it pouring for it a beautiful *yaou*-gem; Not as a return for it, But that our friendship might be lasting."²²⁾

There are different interpretations: Some suppose that it was a depiction of man and woman approaching one another, others assume that the poem calls for appreciating the support of friends in hard times. Ōgai's usage of the peach is quite different, however. He compares his own writing to a peach, a fruit which was considered as something trite, while the precious letter by his friend is symbolized by a jewel. Furthermore, the image of the letter producing a rare, pleasing sound resembles a passage in 世說新語 *Shih-shuo hsün-yü* (A New Account of Tales of the World) compiled by 劉義慶 Liu Yi-ch'ing, where after the completion of his work 天台賦 *Tien-t'ai-shan-fu* the bureaucrat and poet 孫綽 Sun Ch'o urges a friend to toss the newly finished volume to the ground since it had a sound like a rare instrument.²³⁾

Ōgai supposedly referred to correspondence with his friend Kako, but we know nothing about its contents.

Part 3.1 (17-24)

憶嘗在江東	憶えば曾て江東に在り
興君交初熟	君と交はり初めて熟す
唯知出同郷	唯だ同郷に出づるを知り
何屑問氏族	何ぞ屑しとせん氏族を問ふを
論世吐肺肝	世を論じて肺肝を吐き
談文披心腹	文を談じて心腹を披く
連鑣賞開化	鑣を連ねては開化を賞し
並榻聽落木	榻を並べては落木を聴く

If I think back, it was by the eastern creek of the Sumidagawa:
 There our first encounter took place and our friendship grew.
 Just to know that we came from the same place was enough.
 We did not care to ask each other about our families.
 In all intimacy we talked about the state of the world.
 We discussed literature and expressed our opinions openly.
 Bridle to bridle we departed to enjoy the bloom,
 bed to bed we listened to the autumn leaves falling at night.

This section, too, deals with friendship. Ōgai describes his relationship with Itō Son'ichi, who, like Ōgai, came from a family of doctors in the service of the daimyō of

Tsuwano. This common trait is expressed by the term *dōkyō* in line 19. Itō left a lasting impression on Ōgai since he inspired him to spend more time with classical Chinese writings; some time the two friends spent together reciting *kanshi* for pleasure. Throughout this part of the poem, closeness between them is being suggested, e.g. *shizoku* in line 20, which means “family,” suggests that they have common relatives. In a similar vein, the phrase *haikan wo haku*, a rather drastic image of spitting lung and liver, is a metaphor for exposing one’s most intimate feelings. Typically, there is a *parallelism membrorum* of this sentence to the following line: *ron’yo* (talking about the state of the world) corresponds to *bundan* (discussing literature), *haikan to shinpuku* (heart and stomach). Even the verbs are utilized as a parallelism: *haku* (to vomit) corresponds to *hiraku* (to open). Lines 23 and 24 are also composed symmetrically: *Hyō wo tsuranete* (bridle next to bridle) correlates to *tō wo narabete* (bed to bed). This section is characterized by *the sic transit gloria mundi* theme (e.g. the image of the falling autumn leaves) as well as unrestrained *joie de vivre* symbolized by social outings, reciting Chinese poems and drunkenness. Ōgai assumedly adopted this from the great Li Po.

Part 3.2 (17–24)

豪気傾千觴	豪気千觴を傾け
放歌共落々	放歌共に落落たり
悲憤荊卿歌	悲憤す荊の卿歌
慷慨漸離筑	慷慨す漸離の筑
携手撫風光	手を携へて風光を撫し
蹢躅笑酔脚	蹢躅酔脚を笑ふ

Brimming with *joie de vivre* we drained thousands of cups,
 gaily we recited Chinese verse with our loud voices,
 sadness and indignation we felt hearing the song of the Noble Jian,
 regret we sensed at the sound of Jianli’s play of lute.
 Hand in hand we let our looks run over the landscape,
 tottering we laughed about our insecure legs.

Here the author remembers the happy times he spent together with his friend Itō Magoichi. The expressions *raku raku* (magnanimity), *hōka* (reckless loud singing) and *gōki* (generosity, audacity) assumedly indicate the mood of elation the two friends found themselves in. 荊卿歌 The *Chien-ch’ing-ko* (Song of the Noble Jian) mentioned in line 27 refers to the failed attempt by Jian on Emperor 秦 Ch’in in the time of the warring states (403–221 BC). Finally Jian was murdered himself. Before departing to carry out the deed he sang the famous 易水歌 *Yi-shui-ko* (Song of Yi-shui), being accompanied by 高漸離 Kao Chien-Li’s lute play. One day Jianli hid a piece of plumber inside the lute to kill Emperor Ch’in with it. The attempt failed, Jianli died. Here Ōgai follows the convention of alluding to events of Chinese history.

The terms *mansan* (tottering) and *suikyaku* (insecure legs) illustrate the recklessness and drunkenness of the friends. It is not clear why Ōgai mentioned the relationship between Chien and Chien-Li here. All in all these verses are dominated by zest for

life and happiness about having found a friend with whom to share joy.

Part 4.1 (31–36)

一朝忽天涯	一朝忽ち天涯
君帰三松谷	君三松の谷に帰る
董生抱利刀	董生は利刀を抱き
賈子賦忌鵬	賈子は忌鵬を賦す
騏驎力不衰	騏驎力衰へずんば
何必歎樞伏	何ぞ必しも樞伏を歎かん

One morning all of a sudden
You went back to the Three Pine Valley.
Dong Zhongshu carried a sharp sword in his chest.
Jia Yi wrote about portentous owls.
As long as the powers of the magical horse do not fade,
there is no reason to regret the recumbent stud in the stable.

There is no doubt that in this section Ōgai refers to his fellow Itō, who returned to his home region Tsuwano rather unexpectedly. The expression *sanshō no tani*, literally the valley of the three pines, stands for Tsuwano, the castle there also being referred to as *sanbonmatsujō* or Three Pine Castle. *Tengai* (horizon) can be assumed to indicate the geographical isolation of Ōgai's hometown. 董仲舒 Tung chung-shu (ca. 179–ca. 104 BC) was a scholar at the beginning of the Han dynasty; he was known for proposing to make Confucian thought the basis of state and society.²⁴⁾ The metaphor of the sword symbolizes Tung's sharp analytical skills with regard to politics.²⁵⁾ Even after retreating from the secular world and living a hermit life in isolated mountains, Emperor 武 Wu (159–87 BC) is said to have sent an envoy to ask for Tung's advice.²⁶⁾

The Han scholar 賈誼 Chia Yi (201–169 BC) is said to have been irritated so much by an owl which had intruded into his room that he wrote a piece about this species in order to lessen his own misfortune.²⁷⁾ In classical Chinese symbolism owls were considered birds of misfortune and were perceived as the opposite of the serendipitous phoenix. The motif of the noble man who has decided to retreat from all secular matters and pursue a peaceful life in harmony with nature instead of striving for high-ranking office and glory appears in numerous poems written by Ōgai. *Kiki* (literally magic horse)—a horse which can run one thousand miles per day—is a metaphor for the author's talented friend.²⁸⁾ *Rekifuku*, literally a slumbering horse, denotes a capable hero who waits for the right moment to use his skills in practice.²⁹⁾ This usage also makes the young Ōgai's distinctly Confucian values evident, namely the conviction that gifted individuals are expected to utilize their skills for the benefit of society.

Part 4.2 (37–44)

山重水複間	山重水複の間
想君鎖幽屋	想ふ君の幽屋を鎖すを
壁古住蠨蛸	壁古くして蠨蛸を住ましめ

逕荒存松菊	径荒るるも松菊を存せん
志士甘漁樵	志士漁樵に甘んじ
英雄伴麋鹿	英雄麋鹿を伴ふ
松籟夜絶音	松籟夜音を絶ち
天半聞唳鶴	天半唳鶴を聞かん

A secluded hut between mountains and rivers,
that's where you have probably retreated.
On the neglected walls longleg spiders have made their home.
The ways to the hut may be overgrown,
but nevertheless pines and chrysanthemums remain as in old times.
High-minded men indulge in fishing and wood-cutting.
Heroes live side by side with elk and deer.
At night the sound of the wind blowing through the pine trees quietens down.
One can hear the screams of the cranes flying across the sky.

The term *sanchō suifuku no aida*—literally between high mountains and winding rivers—indicates the deserted region. The term *yūoku*—literally deserted hut—is a *pars pro toto* for the eremitic life style of Ōgai's friend. The description of the spider in line 39 is an allusion to a line from the Book of Songs.³⁰ Line 40 refers to a passage by 陶潜 T'ao Ch'ien (365–427).³¹ This section ends on a melancholic note: After depicting the total quietness in the pine wood at night, the poet sketches a landscape with cranes flying across the sky. This episode may be influenced by lines from the 論衡 *Lun-hêng* by 王充 Wang Ch'ung (27–97).³² Forke translates as follows: “When it is near mid-night, the cranes scream (, and when at dawn the sun is about to rise, the cocks crow.)”³³ Here the influence of nature on the animals is being depicted; the cranes are only one of several species that are mentioned. In contrast, Ōgai uses the birds as an aesthetic-poetic means, nothing reminds of Wang's objective tone. Japanese readers tend to associate cranes with melancholy. By referring to the screams of the cranes, the poet enforces the feeling of quiet and loneliness.³⁴

The ideal of the noble man, who has retired from the secular world and opted for an eremitic life in nature, is a leading topos throughout the poem. At the same time, in line 35–36 the author indicates his conviction, if implicitly, that such noble men should use their talents for the sake of society. The expression in line 41 *gyoshō*—fishing and wood-cutting—is a *pars pro toto* for hermit life. Here Ōgai may have alluded to the 赤壁賦 *Ch'ih-pi-fu* (Rhapsody of the Red Wall) by Su Tung-p'o (1036–1101) written in 1082.³⁵ The same is true of the picture of elk and deer living side by side with heroes: *ei'yū biroku wo tomonau*. Watson translates as follows,

“What then of you and me? Fishermen and wood gatherers by the bank of streams, companions to fish and crayfish, friends of deer and elk (, riding this leaf of a boat, dipping gourds into the wine jar and pouring for each other—we are no more than summer flies between heaven and earth, a grain of millet on the waste of sea!).”³⁶

In the Chinese original the atmosphere is characterized by resignation about the evanescence of human life. Ōgai, however, merely depicts a quiet and poetic landscape. What strikes the reader as interesting is the inherent tension between escapism from worldly matters and reality.

3. Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to draw the reader's attention to a rather neglected part of Ōgai's work, his Chinese poetry. While I leave it to Japanese experts on *kanshi* to judge the literary value of his poems, I personally believe that they can be used as a means to obtain valuable insight into his thought and life. While Ōgai left a great number of poems which seem to contain mere depictions of landscapes, the *kanshi* I have translated and commented on here mostly focus on the theme of friendship. They testify to the great value which the young writer attached to encounters with whom he could share experiences and thoughts. Ōgai's deep respect towards masters such as Yoda is palpable from the tone of admiration in some lines. The persons described come from various social backgrounds and belong to different generations, showing Ōgai's openness and eagerness to expand his intellectual horizon. Some of his verse is full of melancholy while other parts are dominated by unrestrained *joie de vivre*. Ōgai tends to indulge in feelings of nostalgia about the good old times he spent together with his friends.

Apart from the theme of friendship and intellectual exchange Ōgai frequently addressed the struggle between the interests of the individual and society, be it in the form of superiors, the state or other entities. While some subtle rebellion is being insinuated between the lines, an atmosphere of resignation is perceivable in some of his lyrics. This indicates the author's frustration about balancing his lives as an official, intellectual and writer.

Another recurring topic, which in a way is directly related to the above-mentioned issue, is eremitic life and the obligation of men who are endowed with great talents to contribute to society. The notion that communion with nature after removing oneself from human society is conducive to spiritual inspiration and enlightenment can be presumed to have been directly adopted from T'ao Ch'ien and other Chinese eremitic poets. Whereas Ōgai seems to depict the peaceful and happy existence of men of high virtue with some sympathy, endorsing the concept of 無為 *wu-wei* (non-action), in other sections (compare the image of the recumbent stud) he implicitly indicates his belief that men of talent should find a way and time to be of use to the world. Ōgai himself seems torn between a wish to turn his back to secular affairs on the one hand and to lead a life unfettered by the quest for glory, fame and prestige, and an urge to do his best to be useful to society on the other hand, the latter view having been the one he had been indoctrinated with by his mother from his early childhood onwards. It could be an interesting topic to research this evident issue of the individual's position in society by focusing on Ōgai's attitude towards the concept of non-action in his *kanshi*.

What has become clear by taking a look at these *kanshi* is that Ōgai followed the tradition of great poets like Tu Fu who is known for his subtle, highly allusive and complex style. In accordance with *kanshi* convention, many passages borrow heavily

from Chinese poems but in most cases, there is little similarity beyond the semantic level, the context being entirely different.

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Notes

- 1) For reasons see Kotajima Yōsuke, *Kenkyū no kaiko to tenbō — Ōgai kanshi kenkyū no genzai, Ōgai no chiteki kūkan*, Vol. 3 (Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1997), 430cc.
- 2) *Ōgai Zenshuu (OZ)*, 38 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1979), Vol. 19, 575–616.
- 3) Iritani Sensuke, *Kindai bungaku toshite no Meiji kanshi* (Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan, 1989), 188.
- 4) For a historical survey of the significance that the writing of poetry and prose in Chinese played in the lives of Japan's elite compare Timothy R. Bradstock/Judith N. Rabinovitch, *An Anthology of Kanshi (Chinese Verse) by Japanese Poets of the Edo Period (1603–1868)* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 1–39.
- 5) Ch'ên Sheng-pao, *Ōgai no Kanshi* (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1993), Vol. 1, 12.
- 6) Hereafter referred to as *ORBS* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000).
- 7) *OZ*, Vol. 35, 191; Heike Schöche, *Mori Ōgai Deutschlandtagebuch* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag, 1992), 252–3.
- 8) *ORBS*, 11.
- 9) *Nihon Daisaijiki* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1982), Natsu (Summer), 314.
- 10) *ORBS*, 12.
- 11) Satō Tamotsu, *Kanshi no Imēji* (Tokyo: Taishūkan, 1992), 406.
- 12) *OZ*, Vol. 2, 23.
- 13) Witter Bynner, trans., *The Jade Mountain—A Chinese Anthology* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), 123.
- 14) Howard Levy, trans., *Translations from Po Chū-I's collected works* (New York: Paragon, 1971), Vol. 1, 135. Compare the original version in *Si-bu bei-yao (SPPY)* 12:9a: 殿螢飛思悄然孤燈挑尺未成眠。(T'aipeh: Ch'ung-hua shu-ch'u, 1965).
- 15) *ORBS*, 12.
- 16) *Gushi Shijiu shou jishi* (Peking: Zhonghua Shuju chuban, 1955), 22; Jean-Pierre Dieny, trans., *Les Dix-Neuf Poèmes Anciens* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 36. Compare the original lines in *Poem Nr. 15: 晝短苦夜長*.
- 17) Bynner, *The Jade Mountain*, 73. Compare original lines: 何當共剪西窗燭 in: *Tang-shi san-bai shou* (1981), 215; Mekada (1975), 106.
- 18) Fukuda Kiyoto, *Mori Ōgai* (Tokyo: Shimizu Shoin, 1992), 35.
- 19) 江南諺伝、尺牘書疏、千里面目也。Uno Seiichi, *Ganshi Kakun* (Tokyo: Meitoku Shuppansha, 1982), Vol. 2, 232.
- 20) *Nanshih* 南史, 范泰, *SPPY* 33:6b. Compare: 吾雜伝論皆有精意深旨、至於分循吏以下及六夷諸序論、筆勢縱放、實天下之奇作。
- 21) Ronald C. Egan, "The Prose Style of Fan Yeh," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 39.2 (December 1979), 341.
- 22) *Book of Songs: 投我以木桃、報之以瓊瑤* (毛詩, *SPPY* 3:17b); Ishikawa Tadahisa, *Shikyō*, *Shinshaku Kanbun Taikei* 110 (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1997), Vol. 1, 178–9; *Kanshi Taikei* Vol. 1, 259–63.
- 23) Compare 孫興公昨天台賦成以示范螢期云卿試 地要昨金石聲范日恐子之金石非宮商中聲然每至佳句云, *Si-bu cong-kan chu-pian ci-bu* (henceforth *SPTK*) 四部叢刊初編子部 (Shanghai: Shanghai Shang-wu yin-shu kuan), shu-yin chian-gan fu-shih shuang chien-hsi ts'ang-ming k'ê-pên 縮印江安傅氏雙鑑樓藏明刻本. *SPTK* 27:44.
- 24) Alfred Forke, *Geschichte der mittelalterlichen chinesischen Philosophie*, Hamburgische Universität

- (Hamburg: Friederichsen, De Gruyter & Co., 1934), 47–8.
- 25) *ORBS*, 20; Eugen Feifel, *Geschichte der chinesischen Literatur* (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms, 1982, 4th edition), 134–7.
 - 26) Feifel, *Geschichte der chinesischen Literatur*, 134–5. Compare *Documents of Han* 漢書 (*Han-shu*): *SPPY* 56:1a and *Shiji* 121:9a, b; *Ajia Rekishi Jiten* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1995), Vol. 7, 72.
 - 27) See 服似鵬 in *Documents of Han*: *SPPY* 48:4a and *Shih-chi* 84:9a; Feifel, *Geschichte der chinesischen Literatur*, 176.
 - 28) *ORBS*, 21.
 - 29) *Ibid.*
 - 30) 蠨蛸在戶 in 毛詩: *SPPY* 8:6b.
 - 31) In the poem “Return Home” there is the following passage: 三經就荒、松菊猶存 “The three paths have become overgrown, But pines and chrysanthemums remain.” (Verse 17–18) in: A. R. Davis, *T’ao Yüan-ming: His works and their meaning* (Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 193; Vgl. Hightower, *The Poetry of T’ao Ch’ei* (Clarendon 1970).
 - 32) 夜及半而鶴唳 in *Lun-hêng* 論衡: *SPPY* 15:2a.
 - 33) Forke, *Geschichte der mittelalterlichen chinesischen Philosophie*, 110.
 - 34) *ORBS*, 22.
 - 35) *Ibid.*
 - 36) Burton Watson, trans., *Selected Poems of Su Tung-p’o* (New York, London: Columbia University Press, 1994), 95. Compare translation by Cyril Drummond Le Gros Clark, *The Prose-Poetry of Su Tung-P’o* (Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, 1935), 127–8: “You and I have fished and gathered fuel on the river islets. We have consorted with the fish and the prawns, we have befriended the deer.”