

Meiji Twitterings: A Parody of Fukuzawa's *An Encouragement of Learning*

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“Even the parrots laugh! Parroting the Raw Enlightenment” 1875

Introduction

Mantei Ōga, the author of a parody of Fukuzawa Yukichi's *An Encouragement of Learning*, chided the best-selling author for “looking at the past with the eyes of a later age.”¹⁾ Fukuzawa was not alone in portraying the early Meiji period as a time in which Japan abandoned its dark feudal past and set upon a bright path leading to wealth, power, and equality with the West. The quest to achieve civilization and enlightenment (*bunmei kaika*) remains even today the dominate narrative of modern Japanese history. From the beginning, however, this storyline was challenged. This paper will look at Mantei Ōga (1818–1890), a popular writer who dared to engage in lively debate with Fukuzawa. He used humor and parody to poke holes in arguments seeking to transform Japan into a Western-style country and people—and he invited his readers to do likewise.

In recent years, historians have begun to take an alternate look at the period before and after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Japan's modernization was hardly heroic. There was substantial opposition to the Meiji reforms of the 1870s, sometimes in the form of uprisings led by farmers and former samurai; sometimes in the form of political challenges to the Satsuma–Chōshū dominated government; sometimes in the form of conservative, even reactionary, rejection of Western things and ideas. Japan's modernity, as elsewhere, was achieved only through constant mediation with its past. To understand this process, an appreciation of how people in the past saw their world is essential. A convergence of old and new media in the form of playful writings (*gesaku*), chapbooks, broadsheets, satirical cartoons, woodblock prints (*nishiki-e*), crazy verse, lampoons, newspapers, magazines, translations from Western books, public speeches, and other means allowing for information to spread with greater speed to larger audiences, gives us a valuable glimpse into early Meiji popular mentalities.²⁾ Strategies employing humor and parody deserve particular mention, if only because of their ubiquity.

This article deals with the power of parody to reflect upon the influx of new and unfamiliar ideas, including notions of freedom, equality, independence, and international-mindedness that flew directly in the face of the ideology that infused the Tokugawa order. In particular I will examine Mantei Ōga's parody of Fukuzawa Yu-



Figure 1: *The Sparrows of Learning* [*Gakumon suzume*] 1875. Front and back cover, Book 1, Part 1. (Copy held by NIJL)

kichi's *An Encouragement of Learning* (*Gakumon no susume*, 1872–76). Entitled *The Sparrows of Learning* (*Gakumon suzume*) and published in three two-part volumes in 1875, the series took the form of a twitter-like debate between two flocks of sparrows, one representing Fukuzawa's position and the other, the Eastern sparrows, representing the common sense of established views of the world [Figure 1]. The use of humor and satire was especially effective in making people reflect upon and re-think political and social realities.

My conclusion will deal with the unique role played by parody in stimulating public debate on political and cultural issues. In the hands of Ōga and other popular writers, parody contributed to the creation of a public or discursive space that encouraged debate on the advantages and disadvantages of Westernization. Just as Facebook, Twitter and other recent social networks have opened new avenues for political debate and action, so too did the explosion of new and more-open textual, visual, and oral media stimulate broad awareness of the range of political, social, and cultural issues facing immediate post-restoration Japan. Indeed, in the early Meiji period, the writings, artwork, and performances of humorists, comedians, and “playful writers” like Mantei Ōga may have been more important than the didactic works of scholars like Fukuzawa in the creation of an informed citizenry—a people who, to use Fukuzawa's words, would be a stimulus to the government and not its plaything.

Mantei Ōga—A Reevaluation

Biographical details on Mantei Ōga are sparse. He was born in 1818, the son of Hattori Nagasa, a wealthy man from Kazusa province northeast of Edo.³⁾ His name at birth was Kōsaborō, but at times he referred to himself as Chōsaborō. When his father lost his sight, he was able to buy elevated status (*kōtō*) in the ranks of the blind. He was also able to give his son an excellent education and purchase retainer status for him in nearby Shimotsuma domain. According to available sources, the young and willful Kōsaborō dashed his father's hopes. Around 1837, at the age of 18, declaring himself unfit for samurai service, he quit the domain and took up residence in Edo,

immersing himself in the playful world of urban popular culture.⁴⁾

Wealth gave him certain advantages; he quickly established himself within one of the leading groups of *gesakusha*—playful writers—centered around Shōtei Kinsai (1795–1862). He developed a close and enduring friendship with Kinsai’s leading disciple, Baitei Kinga (1821–1893). Included in the group were other late Tokugawa *gesaku* writers: Chikuyō Kinbei, Sugitei Kinshō, Yoshimori Kinjō, and Umenoki Ōsai. The young master (*waka danna*) was reputed to have been always ready to pay the bill for the group’s drinking parties; financial independence also allowed Ōga a measure of artistic freedom. The bohemian cadre of writers, artists, playwrights, and humorists often had to accept work as it became available. Ōga, however, was known for his single-authored works, many of them, following the example of the great Kyōkutai Bakin (1767–1842), didactic, if not academic, in nature.

Ōga’s masterpiece, indeed his lifework, was *The Eight Aspects of the Buddha, A Japanese Library* (*Shaka hassō Yamato bunko*). This compendium of the life of Shakyamuni and Buddhist teachings was published in 58 volumes, appearing between 1845 and 1871, lavishly illustrated by the leading artists of the day.⁵⁾ Alongside this rather serious work with its clear moralizing tone, Ōga proved himself to be the master of several genres, including so-called “funny books” (*kokkeibon*), collections of jokes and riddles (*chaban*), and major works of historical fiction including biographies of Shōtoku Taishi (*Shōtoku taishi Yamato kagami*, 1848–50) and Nichiren (*Kōso asahi-goromo*, 1849) and an dramatic account of love and rivalry between the Minamoto and Hōjō families in the early years of the Kamakura bakufu (*Gosho hōkō Azuma nikki*, 1854–61).⁶⁾

Mantei Ōga’s pre-1868 reputation has suffered alongside a general dismissal of the value of late Tokugawa popular art and literature. Donald Keene, for example, concludes that the long years of Tokugawa stability “atrophied the imaginations of most Japanese.” According to Keene, writers “after 1853 continued to grind out formless anecdotes or else varieties on the hackneyed materials of the proceeding two hundred years that appealed to the minds of the uneducated.”⁷⁾

And if association with the demise of the Tokugawa regime was not enough, criticism of the enlightenment project of the new Meiji government contributed further to Ōga’s near invisibility in Japanese literary and social history. We know a great deal about Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834–1901), Nakamura Masanao (1832–91), Nishi Amane (1829–97), Katō Hiroyuki (1836–1916), and other members of the Meiroku-sha, an intellectual society founded in 1874 in order to popularize Western ideas and values in Japan. But we know far less about Fukuzawa’s opponents, many of whom, like Mantei Ōga, were dismissed as out of step with the times. As the *Chōya shinbun* put it in February 1875: “there is one writer who has all along been protecting his old stock, and even now he continues to brandish his frivolous pen in the idiom of the old coterie. This person is Mantei Ōga, and his stories are fundamentally unworthy of discussion. ... The frivolous jokes he tells make people gasp, and everything he writes opposes the principles of the world. He rushes to the aid of women who dye their teeth and shave their eyebrows, or else he castigates those who cut their hair in the Western style. He advocates sword-wearing and scorns Western clothing, yearning for the days of old and cursing the present in utter abandon. ... I have come to the conclusion that his books are useless and harmful.”⁸⁾

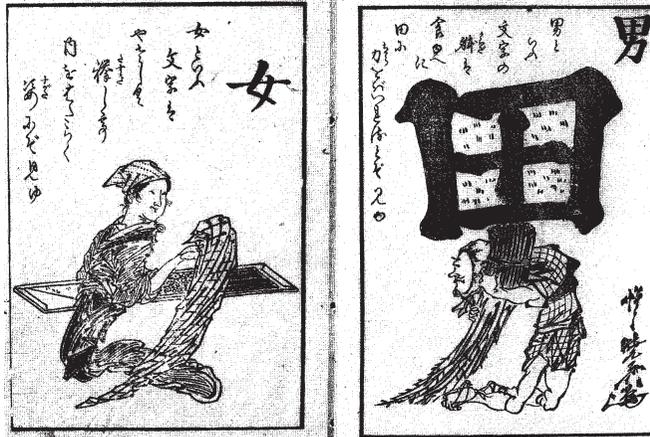


Figure 2: *An Instructor for Japanese Women* [*Nihon onna kyōshi*], 1874. “As can be easily seen from the character for woman (女), she is expected to work within the home.” (KKS 192)

Until recently, this bleak assessment of Ōga’s talents and importance as a writer was taken for granted. Donald Keene described him as a reactionary. “Unlike his compatriots who were busy learning English to prove their enlightenment, Ōga made fun of the English language, sardonically stating that it was no more than bad Japanese.”⁹⁾ Keene also noted that Ōga was opposed to the new government’s policy of promoting universal education, fearing the influence of Western ideas of freedom and independence on the youth of Japan. He quoted an 1874 work by Ōga that encouraged people to stay on the farm: “We should be cautious about giving a foreign education to farmers’ sons. If they succeed in learning too much, they will refuse to go down into the paddies, lest they dirty their beautiful clothes, and they will run off to the city instead.”¹⁰⁾

Ōga was correct in his assessment of the effects of the new learning. Nonetheless, Ōga’s name has all but been forgotten. Even his admirers seem embarrassed at his conservative views, but praise him for his eccentricities and his quixotic attempt to preserve Edo traditions in an increasingly hostile environment. Okitsu Kaname, in the 1960s, included some of Ōga’s works in compilation of works from the Meiji enlightenment period.¹¹⁾ He described Ōga as highly intelligent but reactionary to the point of digging his own grave.¹²⁾ Oikawa Shigeru, perhaps the foremost expert on Mantei Ōga, admits his interest in Ōga derives primarily from the illustrations by Kawanabe Kyōsai that grace many of Ōga’s works.¹³⁾ A caption to a Kyōsai illustration of Ōga’s 1874 *An Instructor for Japanese Women* (*Nihon onna kyōshi*) [Figure 2] included in a catalogue of Kawanabe Kyōsai’s comic illustrations captures the conventional understanding of Mantei Ōga: “Mantei Ōga was an old friend of Kyosai’s who took an extremely conservative stance against the Meiji enlightenment. He decried everything new and espoused such old systems as the inequality of men and women. He was attacked by the era’s new journalism, but he continued to express his ideas until the mid-Meiji era in the form of old-style novels which had long since lost their readership. Kyōsai remained faithful to his friend and continued to draw illustrations for his works. Only these illustrations preserve Ōga’s novels from obscurity.”¹⁴⁾



Figure 3: *An Intelligent Woman of Our Time* [*Tōsei rikō musume*], 1873. A Japanese young woman without eyebrows is truly beautiful, and a Western young man without beard is surely handsome.

John Mertz, writing in 2003, is perhaps the first scholar to take Ōga seriously as someone whose writings are “packed with logical arguments designed to tear at the fabric of Meiji Westernism.”¹⁵⁾ Mertz’s book, *Novel Japan: Spaces of Nationhood in Early Meiji Narrative* is an innovative approach to interactions between popular fiction and national discourse—how people came to understand the changing circumstances of their society and their nation. He explores the fluidity of boundaries that came to exist between so-called “tradition” and “modernity” and “East” and “West.” The playful prose of authors such as Kanagaki Robun and Mantei Ōga proved useful in identifying evolving concepts of nationality and class. One chapter of his book, “From Eyebrows to Highbrows,” took up a debate between Fukuzawa and Ōga over the adoption of Western cosmetic practices for women.

In 1872, Fukuzawa intruded into the world of popular fiction to lampoon married women who shaved their eyebrows and blackened their teeth. Instead of such disfigurement, Fukuzawa’s *The Disfigured Daughter* (*Katawa musume*) urged women to follow the more natural and rational standards of fashion in the West. Written in the vernacular and published as an inexpensive chapbook, Fukuzawa’s advice to Japanese women and his negative assessment of Japanese commoner culture (in immediate need of enlightenment) produced an immediate response. Early in 1873, Nishimura Setsudai published *The Disfigured Son* (*Katawa musuko*), seeking to turn the tables on Fukuzawa, claiming that Western customs were equally illogical. Later in 1873 Mantei Ōga entered this debate with his *An Intelligent Woman of Our Time* (*Tōsei rikō musume*) [Figure 3]. Ōga defended the integrity of Japanese culture: “In one country it is polite to sit down, while in another country obeisance is made standing up.” Neither custom should be considered absolute. And like Nakamura, noting that Western women poked holes in their ears, Ōga asks: “Who is the true barbarian?” As Mertz concludes, culture, for Ōga, was “more than just a random assortment of customs and habits—it was a vast and interconnected galaxy of objects, practices and significations. To import foreign culture successfully, one had to consider the consequences fully.”¹⁶⁾

Instead of a diehard reactionary, Mertz portrays Ōga as someone who was not necessarily opposed to Western ideas and institutions, but to their indiscriminate application by Fukuzawa and other “enlightened” members of Japan’s elite. Ōga was conservative, to be sure; but alongside other *gesakusha* active before and after the Meiji Restoration, he continued to use wit and humor to invite criticism and reflection on social and political norms. The new Meiji government attempted to enlist the services of popular writers, artists, kabuki actors, and professional storytellers to spread a new national morality, but compliance often took the form of thinly disguised criticism of the new order.¹⁷⁾

Poking Fun at Fukuzawa

Fukuzawa Yukichi published *An Encouragement of Learning* (*Gakumon no susume*) in seventeen installments between 1872 and 1876. The work was an instant classic. A bestseller when it first appeared, it continues to be read, admired, and analyzed up to the present day.¹⁸⁾ Even before the Meiji Restoration, Fukuzawa had established himself as the best known advocate of Western learning. He had already begun to publish (and teach) about the West, convinced that Japan’s future could only be secured through the introduction of Western civilization, a process that he termed civilization and enlightenment (*bunmei kaika*). *Conditions in the West* (*Seiyō jijō*) was published in 10 volumes between 1867 and 1870, constituting an encyclopedia of things Western. In 1868 he published an *Outline of Physics* (*Kinmō kyūri zukai*) and in 1869 came out with a primer on world geography, composed in verse (*Sekai kunizukushi*). In 1872 he published (in chapbook form) *The Disfigured Daughter*, as part of a campaign to reform Japanese cosmetic practices. Finally, that same year, convinced that the introduction of Western things was insufficient, he began to publish *An Encouragement of Learning*, advocating the need for a wholesale cultural revolution: Western learning centering around ideas such as equality, independence, utility, and rationality was essential if Japan were to flourish in the new world order. And in defining “learning” (*gakumon*), Fukuzawa championed the useful over the speculative; seemingly he had little concern for the arts, and no time whatsoever for the fantasy and playfulness of the *gesaku* world—the very core of late Tokugawa urban culture.

Fukuzawa and his books (so-called *Fukuzawa-bon*) were in high fashion during the early 1870s; but at the same time there were obvious targets for satirical comment. In 1870, both inspired and dismayed by Fukuzawa’s new world view, Kanagaki Robun (1829–94) began his parody version of Ikku Jippensha’s *Shank’s Mare along the Eastern Post Road* (*Tōkai dōchū hizakurige*, published in 12 volumes between 1802 and 1822). Entitled *Shank’s Mare to the Western Seas* (*Seiyō dōchū hizakurige*, 1870–76), Robun’s Kita and Yaji travel to London. They see the wonders of the West, but as Mertz points out, they also discover themselves as Japanese, and the portrait is hardly flattering.¹⁹⁾ One year later, Robun published his short story on the virtues of beef-eating: “You won’t get civilized if you don’t eat meat!” *Sitting Cross-Legged at the Beef Pot* (*Aguranabe*, 1871), while seeming to advocate Western style cuisine, in fact strikes another blow at Fukuzawa’s definition of civilization.²⁰⁾ Illustrations by Kawanabe Kyōsai strengthened the impact of Robun’s satire [Figure 4]. In 1872, Robun again used parody to mock Fukuzawa’s understanding of Western science. His *How to Use Cucumbers* (*Kyūri zukai*, 1872)



Figure 4: *Sitting Cross-Legged at the Beef Pot [Aguranabe]*, 1871. A satire on beef eating and on the new human-powered sedans (*jinrikisha*). The puller (the Japanese horse-man) consoles his customer (a Western beef-man): “Don’t worry. After you are eaten you will be reborn as a human.” (KKS, 26)

took advantage of a phonetic reading of Fukuzawa’s 1868 work *An Outline of Physics* (*Kyūri zukai*). Robun’s *Fukuzawa-bon* was filled with nonsense, having nothing to do whatsoever with Western science.²¹ In his hand, Fukuzawa’s academy became a school for water imps (*kappa*) to advance in society through advanced cucumber studies!

Awed and somewhat angered at Fukuzawa’s success (he was reputed to have become rich due to the popularity of his writings), Robun and fellow *gesakusha* took advantage of any opportunity to poke fun at the “teacher of Western learning.” In 1874 Kanagaki and Kyōsai teamed up to produce one of Japan’s earliest satirical newspapers. The short-lived *Illustrated Nip-Punch News* (*E-shinbun Nippon-chi*), modeled loosely on the English *Punch*, criticized Fukuzawa for his financial success.²² They tried to bring the high-flying Fukuzawa down to earth and censure him for not practicing what he preached [Figure 5]. At the same time, *gesakusha* writers and artists reaped their own profit; anything that smacked of Fukuzawa, for him or against him, was bound to sell well.

Mantei Ōga was the writer who engaged Fukuzawa most directly. In the four-year period between 1872 and 1875, he published a remarkable series of over 30 chapbooks, many of them in multiple volumes, marshaling his wit against Fukuzawa and others who sought the destruction of the established social, cultural, and intellectual order.²³ The books were small (*hanshi-bon*) and short, often less than 20 pages. Kawabata Kyōsai, who had earlier illustrated volumes of Ōga’s *Eight Aspects of the Life of the Buddha* series, contributed to the visual impact of Ōga’s message. The booklets covered a variety of topics: beef eating (one story inverted the world order and described a society in which animals relished the taste of human flesh); the equality of the sexes (Ōga maintained that men and women have separate roles); the importance of agriculture and commerce; Japanese and Western dress and cosmetic practices; religion (Ōga criticized people who saw religious observances as opportunities to eat and drink and



Figure 5: *Illustrated Nip-Punch News [E-shinbun Nippon-chi]*, No. 1, June, 1874. The captions read: (upper right) “He may even be out of Heaven’s reach. Look at how high he is!” (lower center) “Even if we throw these poles, we can’t reach him!” (center left) “The high flyer never seems to look down. For him, the sky is the limit. But the greedy crested hawk, intent on robbing small sparrows of their food, makes his teachings look like baby hawks stretching out their wings.” The meaning is: Fukuzawa is so arrogant, he never looks down. His books may sell well, but his greed shows that his teachings that may appear to be formidable are in fact insignificant. (*Bakumatsu ishinki no manga*, 75)

satirized the attempt to separate Shinto and Buddhism as a quarrel between gods); water pollution (a toad disillusioned with modernity warns people that butchers have disposed of their bloody waste in a local pond); fads for rabbits and Western dogs (much to the displeasure of Japanese breeds); quack doctors (who claimed that they could cure stupidity); and even the emperor was held up to ridicule (as an honorable fool convinced of his own self-importance).²⁴⁾

But the main target of Ōga’s brush was the new learning associated with “civilization and enlightenment.” Soon after Fukuzawa had begun to publish *An Encouragement of Learning* in 1872, the Dajōkan (the chief administrative organ of the central government) issued a new Fundamental Code of Education (*Gakusei*) that proclaimed that “learning is the key to success in life.” Following Fukuzawa’s lead, the cultivation of the individual, equality among classes, and practicality became the new standard for education. In championing this new approach to learning, however, the document criticized those who “indulged in poetry, empty reason, and idle discussions.”²⁵⁾ Fukuzawa had already dismissed poetry as an “impractical pursuit.” To Ōga and others who made their living through such “impractical pursuits,” these were fighting words.

Ōga’s first jab at Fukuzawa was *A Journey through Heaven and Hell* (*Odontaku shinbun kibun*, 1872, two vols.). “Now is the time,” he proclaimed, “for enlightenment and progress (*kaimei shinpō*).” But since the new age constantly required people to choose between heaven and hell, Ōga urged that “priority be given to opening hearts to wisdom rather than wasting money in a vain attempt to understand the science (*kyūri*) of all things.”²⁶⁾ Ōga followed this with two volume series on the importance of agriculture: *New Understandings: The Harvest Festival* (*Rikai shinbun, gokokusai*, 1872, two vols.).



Figure 6: *New Understandings: The Harvest Festival* [*Rikai shinbun, hōnen gokokusai*], Book 2, 1872. Mr. Number One in the World wants to be the greatest cultivator (colonizer) in the world. (KKS, 73)

The story, involving bales of rice that come to life, is improbable, but at one point the hero, Mr. Number One in the World (Sekai Dai'ichirō) is allowed to vent his anger against the intrusion of “civilization” and education that promotes the understanding of science (*kyūri*). His dream is to spread the abundance of agriculture throughout the world [Figure 6].

Ōga's next book, *The Thunderstruck Sage*, (*Seijin kimotsubushi*, 1872, two vols.) features Shunji, the young son of a merchant who deals in Chinese goods. He leaves home to study Confucianism under a well-known teacher. He succeeds in becoming a great scholar, but when he returns, he discovers that he is ill-equipped to deal with the real world. His wife divorces him and his students refuse to listen to him. In the end he abandons scholarship (*gakumon*), calling it a waste of time, and devotes himself instead to agriculture and commerce.²⁷⁾

In *The Scales of Wisdom* (*Chie no hakari*, 3 vols., 1874) a village chief installs a set of scales in his village in order to measure intelligence; scholars (*gakusha*), however, are found to be lacking in wisdom whereas farmers and merchants have it in abundance [Figure 7]. This theme is repeated in *Magobei the Manager* (*Magobei kakkei-ron*, 1874), the third in a series of a farce on what happens when Western learning comes to the Japanese countryside. In the end, Magobei urges the villagers to stop wasting their time and return to working the soil.²⁸⁾ Finally, *A Professor of Pleasure* (*Seirō hanka-tsu*, 3 vols., 1874–75) tells the (semi-autobiographical) tale of the son of a samurai family in the countryside who came to Tokyo intent upon studying the West. Instead of devoting himself to scholarship, he began to frequent the Yoshiwara licensed quarters and became a patron of a high-ranking geisha. He made his successful rise in the world as an authority on the pleasure district. In this way, Ōga mocked Fukuzawa's contention that only the powers of Western learning could bring about success in life.

The Sparrows of Learning

The Sparrows of Learning (*Gakumon suzume*), published in 1875, was Ōga's most sus-



Figure 7: *The Scales of Wisdom* [*Chie no hakari*] 1874. Weighing a wise man and a fool. (KKS, 163)

tained critique of Fukuzawa and the spectrum of new ideas coming in from the West. From among his various *gesaku* skills and strategies, parody was employed as the best means to engage Fukuzawa in debate. The series of three two-part booklets mimicked the first three issues of Fukuzawa’s *An Encouragement of Learning*.²⁹⁾ The books looked the same; they measured 19cm, were bound in Japanese fashion (*Watoji*), and consisted of 12 double-leaf pages. The woodblock text used a similar style, both in appearance and in grammatical usage, although each of Ōga’s booklets included one illustration by Kawanabe Kyōsai as a sort of centerfold [Figure 8]. Abandoning the puns and playful irreverence of his earlier “funny books,” Ōga’s language in the *Sparrows of Learning* adopted Fukuzawa’s straightforward style. The similarities invited inspection—and inspection revealed messages that were poles apart.

Book One of *An Encouragement of Learning* was published in February 1872. It was based upon a speech Fukuzawa had given in Nakatsu, his home town in northern Kyushu at the end of 1871. Local leaders were about to open a new school and invited Fukuzawa to speak on the importance of education for the new age. The text was originally intended to stand alone as a basic statement of Fukuzawa’s approach to learning; it touches upon many of the topics (equality, practicality and utility, independence, freedom, rights, and duties, and the relationship between personal and national advancement) that appear in later booklets. Book Two appeared in November 1873; it focused on importance of “rights and duties.” Book Three, taking up the issue of patriotism and the connection between personal and national independence, was published in December. Successive volumes were published on a regular basis. Book Seventeen completed the series in November 1876. Ōga began publishing *Sparrows of Learning*, from November 1875. Because it serves as a general introduction to Fukuzawa’s ideas, the analysis below will deal primarily with Ōga’s parody of Book One, although, as necessary, reference will be made to the debates contained in Book Two and Book Three. Ōga may well have hoped to continue the series beyond Book Three; sickness, however, brought an end to this three-year explosion of satirical and serious works demanding that people adopt a more critical approach to new ideas.

The first issue of the *Sparrows of Learning* included a frontispiece and preface that set



Figure 8: The War of Sparrows. The Eastern sparrow, armed with brush struggles with the Western sparrow, armed with pen, each seeking mastery over the world, (centerfold, *Gakumon suzume*, Book 1, Part 1), 1875. (KKS, 216)

the stage for lively debate. The elevated prose of the frontispiece used Fukuzawa's words against him. Ōga, like Fukuzawa, maintained that independence was the true mark of a scholar, but in "encouraging learning" Ōga maintained that it was essential to abandon all props, including dependence on Western learning.³⁰⁾

Learning is something completely invisible. It lacks all structural attributes. These days people often denote material goods, saying this is Chinese and that is Western, but when it comes to how these goods are used, no distinction can be made, no matter what the task may be. Indeed, it is only when a task is made convenient that learning becomes real. Such being the case, when someone encourages learning, this should first of all mean the removal of all Chinese or Western props. People should seek to clarify their own wisdom, and independently set upon the universal path, thereby penetrating into social and human affairs. Such people will not fail to hit the mark in whatever they say or do; such is the true scholar. (1.1)

The preface described the origin of the debate between the two groups of sparrows. Ōga belittled Fukuzawa as a mere translator of foreign ideas, and chided him for making money out his Western learning enterprises. He noted with alarm that a flock of Western sparrows were beginning to twitter his words incessantly. Alarmed, the Eastern sparrows could no longer stand idly by as their country's lifeblood was being sucked dry. The time had come to confront the ringleader (Fukuzawa) head-on in spirited debate.

Preface: A Debate between Two Sparrows

Our government's laws have recently been in a state of flux. Several books are now in wide circulation advocating enlightenment (*kaika*); we are encouraged to change our old ways—even change the words we speak and our clothing,

food, and shelter. Most of these books, 7 or 8 out of 10, simply mimic the words of foreigners.

The books strive to introduce things and ideas from overseas. We may easily learn the name of the translator, but to discern the true author is nearly impossible. These books flourish in competition with each other just like the multitude of fresh green sprouts that appear on the stump of a mulberry bush. Each title is cleverly distinct, but since they spout from the same rootstock, when they issue forth and spread their leaves for all to see, people soon realize that they derive from the same old mulberry stock. People laugh when they realize that they have spent their precious coppers to buy the same thing but with a different name, and tongues start wagging and resentment grows at the greed of the owner of the original stock.

So far, these expensive new books have gone no further than externalities; and even if enlightenment is allowed to spread widely throughout society, nothing in the cosmic universe, beginning with the movement of the sun and moon, will change; only the world of human beings, who rule over everything in our country, will be transformed. Everything else will stay as it is: water will be cold, fire hot, plum blossoms will not bloom on willow trees, cucumbers will not ripen on pumpkin vines, cows will moo, horses nee, and sparrows chirp.

But recently sparrows appeared at the radiant East Gate at Nikko with an odd-sounding twitter. These sparrows, born in our land so fortunate in happiness and abundance since the days of our ancestors, suffer from “nightblindness” (*torime*) and are unable to see the treasures in front of their eyes. Such birds have come to flock together and recklessly covet things and ideas from other countries; they have become addicted to civilization and new contraptions and have created a true uproar with all their unruly chirping. ...

The sparrows living under the eaves of the East Gate are now worried over the noisy twittering of these Western birds. They fear that their growing numbers and their mediocrity will overpower them and in the end destroy the very lifeblood of our country. They have decided to speak out against this fashionable chatter spreading so wildly. In order to decisively confront the raging waves of the current fashion, they feel it necessary to take the ringleader [of the Western sparrows] to task, even resorting to the use of disrespectful language. In order not to be ridiculed by natives and foreigners alike, we cannot escape insult. However, for the sake of the country, it is now unavoidable to confront the ringleader in spirited debate. The time has come to speak directly to the West Gate sparrows. Such is the debate that follows. (1.1)

The debate began with Fukuzawa’s famous words: “It is said that heaven did not create people above other people nor below other people.” The Western sparrow went on mindlessly repeating the master’s words: “Heaven’s aim is that all people are equal at birth without distinction of high and low or noble and mean. People should exert their body and soul in a manner worthy of lords of creation and freely use the myriad things of the world to fulfill the needs of clothing, food, and dwelling. So long

as they do not obstruct others, each may thereby pass their life in happiness.” (1.1) True to their word, the Eastern sparrows did not shirk from direct speech: “Shut your bill! Such nonsense! Heaven does create some people above and others below. Just take a look at the world today, and not just in Japan, either.” Equality, they claimed, is a sham. How could anyone claim that children of the rich and children of the poor had any chance of equal opportunity? The Eastern sparrows also mocked the contention that humans deserved to be called “the lord of creation.” How many people in the world, past and present, deserve such an accolade? “And yet, the number of fools is beyond reckoning.” The birds could only conclude that “The sincere eyes of heaven inform us that in all creation there are few as brutish as human beings.” (1.1)

Freedom, autonomy, and happiness were similarly dismissed. Right from birth, freedom was restrained; how could it be otherwise? “When children seek freedom from the constraints placed upon them by the guidance of their teachers or parents and teachers, the parents react with angry words and the children shriek in agony, throwing the house into unbearable confusion. But this denial of freedom is common to parents and children in societies everywhere.” (1.1) Adults similarly were constrained by law in order to guarantee social order. The Eastern sparrows boldly proclaimed that constraint rather than freedom was the true mark of human society. “The ropes that restrain freedom are ropes made by people. Human-made laws are necessary to temper the principles of heaven in order to produce a world in which human life is protected (*jinsin hogo*). If humans behaved, like birds and beasts, in accordance with heavenly principles, and were allowed to fly and walk about freely, they would only be laughed at and vilified.” (2.1) And as to happiness, this too was an impossible dream. The Eastern birds were realists: “There is no place in the world characterized by freedom; climates are harsh, harvests are poor, subject to frequent floods and famine. In is into this land that humans are born. So, if even the emperor ... is unable to live in happiness, how much more difficult it is for commoners?” (1.1)

The Western sparrows opened up another topic for debate, contending that standing in society depends upon education. Those who do “difficult work” (doctors, scholars, officials, and merchants) will be afforded high status, and those who engage in “easy work” (primarily manual labor) receive low status. Education was a key to social and worldly success: “Heaven does not give riches to people, but gives it to their labor. Therefore people who study will become wealthy and with high rank and people who do not study will become poor and lowly.” The Eastern sparrows challenged this logic. What, they asked, was meant by “difficult” or “easy” work? “A person who does so-called difficult work might in fact like to do that work, thereby making the work easy!” Again they invoked reality: “Look at the world around in which humans live: a novice given an important task for the family business will fall asleep trying to work late at night, but the same person, engrossed in song and dance, will stay awake until dawn without any difficulty.” (1.1) Moreover, the birds could not find a clear link between wealth and education. “There are many rich merchants and farmers in cities and prefectures throughout Japan, but we do not know of anyone who has excelled in education.” They quoted a popular saying: “if you bring together ten rich men, nine of them will be illiterate and unschooled.” (1.1) Finally they challenged any notion that scholarship was a path that led to riches. In an obvious reference to Fukuzawa,

the Eastern birds claimed that “except those who make great profit by translating foreign books, the work of scholars, in ages past and present, rarely makes them rich.” (1.1)

The Eastern birds demanded a more nuanced view of the importance of learning in society. “Learning is indeed a very important undertaking, but what shall we do with those who are taught but fail to learn and those who study but fail to do what they are taught? Right now there are many people who engage in violent behavior and who devote themselves to drinking, eating, and prostitution, but who can read texts and know the difference between right and wrong. And at the same time there are many who adhere to the needs of the times, who obey government regulations carefully and who, along with their women and children, somehow manage to eke out a living and enjoy happy times together, but who are unschooled. It should be more than obvious now that education does not make a person noble or happy nor that the lack of learning makes a person mean and lowly.” (1.1)

The Western birds countered, renewing their attack on learning that fails to serve people’s everyday needs: “Learning does not mean knowing difficult words or reading ancient literature or writing poetry or other accomplishments which are of no real use in the world.” Beyond the basics, people should read Western books translated into Japanese, or even study “letters written sideways.” Such learning was the key to success: “One may thereby attain personal independence, the independence of one’s household, and ultimately the nation too will be able to attain independence.” (1.2)

The attack on poetry angered the Eastern sparrows. “When you open your beaks, such senseless noise! How can you possibly think that poetry has no real use? How could poetry possibly bring on the ruin of anyone?” They defended the long poetic tradition of Japan: “from the times of the gods, *waka* have succeeded in softening the hearts of people; even in the cosmic realm of heaven and earth, *waka* is known to have the power to move the hearts of devils and gods.” (1.2) They were especially concerned to defend the playful, including underground verse, crazy poems, funny rhymes, and satirical verse: “They may be crazy poems, but with just a just a few characters they critique the usefulness of various enterprises and have the ability to inquire deeply into people’s secret thoughts, warning of the choice between good and bad. Just one verse is often able move a person in the direction of either wisdom or folly.” (1.2) Striking out at Fukuzawa, the Eastern birds counters, proclaiming that the real folly was caused by “half-baked scholars who steal this and that, paste it all together, and get rich by publishing fat books.” (1.2)

The Eastern sparrows went on to say that learning of the type Fukuzawa proposed was not for everyone. “You introduce various types of learning and say that ordinary people are able to excel in them. Here we have some doubts. ... Your well-meaning teachings say nothing of the depth and rigor required by scholarship.” (1.2) Moreover, they said, scholarship demanded time and money. “Peoples’ life spans are limited and everyone must do some sort of work to earn a living. If people work hard each day to earn their living, how can there be time left for study?” (1.2) And they found the encouragement to study about the West, must less even go to the West, baffling. “How many people who have not even seen the famous places within their own country will be willing to risk life and limb to take a dangerous trip of 1,000 or 2,000 *ri* over seas

and mountains, with no chance to make any money but every chance of spending a fortune? Surely no one will want to do this. What possible use can there be to give these sorts of people a guided tour of the countries and cultures of the world? I would like to hear if you think there is any value in it at all?" (1.2)

The Western sparrows agreed that learning should produce a respect for "limitations" but maintained that freedom and independence should not be confused with selfishness and arbitrary behavior. They nonetheless insisted that the new ideas of freedom and independence are important to transform Japan into a civilized country. "Commoners are now allowed to take on surnames and ride horses. A basis to establish equality between the four classes of people has been made so that rank is not attached to a person at birth." The Japanese birds thought this a weak argument and contested the importance of freedom; instead they emphasized strong government and the rule of law as essential features of a civilized society. "You say that men and women equally have freedom given to them by heaven, but this is the argument of a frog at the bottom of a well. ... It has been the wisdom of our government to separate human beings from birds and other creatures of the world and use a national legal system to guarantee stability. Indeed, such control has been a compassionate blessing because it has allowed the citizens of our country to live out their lives without falling into error. ... The laws of a country are like a lucky charm intended to protect the people of that country. Even though people's freedom may thus be denied, it is best for the people to remain bound by legal restraints throughout their lives." (1.2)

And while they agreed that the government should be applauded for allowing commoners to take names and ride horses, the Eastern birds worried that some people may not be ready for the responsibilities that come with these new freedoms. As to riding horses, a privilege formally reserved for the samurai class, they referred to news items that some people let their horses to run about recklessly, causing harm of others and to themselves. "If this is the encouragement of the independence of the individual, it is like giving a suckling baby a gold coin—a treasure that will cause harm." (1.2)

The debate returned to the nature of Japanese society before the recent change in government. The Western sparrows decried the "ugly customs" of the former Tokugawa regime that used its power to restrict the freedom of the people. This prompted the Eastern sparrows to rise to the defense of the old regime. Was it not the Tokugawa bakufu that preserved the peace for over two hundred years? "It was only after Tokugawa Ieyasu united the country and, with benevolence and power, crushed the power of the warlords so that the mind of the emperor could rest at ease and the people sleep in peace. The various lords submitted to his authority and in obedience to shogunal decree, undertook duties serving the state (*kuniyaku*), thereby allowing for the entire country to be at peace for a long time." (1.2) They also took aim at the unnamed Fukuzawa, who had served the Tokugawa before the Meiji Restoration: "It is alarming for you to say these sorts of thing now; you who once basked in the saving grace of Tokugawa power. ... To ridicule it now—is this not like a criminal turning the tables on those who helped him?" (1.2)

Pushed into a corner, the Western sparrows sought to bring the first debate to a close. "Reason," they were willing to admit, "will not suffice as a means to rule over foolish people, that being the reason why government is harsh." They went on to

conclude: “In this age, for those who have the mind to serve their country, they must necessarily torment their bodies, rectify behavior, and devote themselves to study, thereby together playing a part in preserving the peace of the nation. This alone is the reason why I advocate the encouragement of learning.” Hearing the admission that harsh government is necessary to rule over foolish people, the “sparrows of learning” announced their agreement: “For the first time we have heard something that makes sense.” (1.2)

Ōga took advantage of his *gesaku* skills to craft arguments against Fukuzawa’s ideas. He employed allegories, asides, puns, references to Chinese, Japanese, and even Western classics, and the full force of satire in getting his message across. But, and most importantly, he was a critical thinker able to marshal serious and intelligent arguments against his opponents. In some cases, he attempted to beat Fukuzawa at his own game. He questioned the logic and the utility of encouraging Western learning. Did Fukuzawa really understand the meaning of words like “rights” and “equality”? The Western sparrows contended that people are equal in terms of rights (*kenri tsūgi*), even though they may differ in their outward appearance. They gave the example of a member of the nobility in his elegant dress and a coolie in rags; in terms of their rights, however, they enjoyed equality. The Eastern sparrows objected: “In society the rights of the vassal are different from that of the lord. ... Their outer appearance is roughly the same, but in terms of wealth, they differ, the lord being rich and the vassal poor. How can anyone think that they share the same rights?” (2.1) And as to equality, they concluded that there were only three places where Western sparrow’s ideas had any chance of respectability: the Great Heavenly Plain where the Japanese gods reside, the Buddhist Paradise, and Hell. When either the very rich or the very poor enter “one of these three worlds it will be just as you suggest—a world in which there is no distinction between exalted and base and high and low, and everyone is equal.” (2.2)

Ōga employed cultural arguments, but these were often weak. He claimed, for example, that Western words and ideas were not applicable to the “climate” of Japan. “In the West you say that people are all the same using words like “reciprocity” (*reshifuroshichi*) and “equality” (*ekuuworichi*), but ... you should realize that these words are from a different climate. Words in our country naturally will reflect our climate. Therefore they are easy to pronounce, and you must know how difficult it is to pronounce words like *reshifuroshichi*.” (2.2)

A stronger version of this argument was Ōga’s persistent claim that Fukuzawa was overly committed to Western learning. Throughout the debate Fukuzawa was criticized for his own lack of independent thought; he copied Western ideas and presented them as his own. It is Ōga, rather than Fukuzawa, who championed universalism. As he has the Japanese birds proclaim: “You do not seem to understand that people’s abilities should be known by what they can do and not by what country they come from. ... Shit from the West does not suddenly become *miso* (bean paste) when it travels to the East. If to twitter on foreign ideas makes you a scholar, then a professional storyteller can become a professor at a university.” (2.1)

Ōga found strength in his approaching of the harsh realities of contemporary Japan.

In Book Two, the Western sparrows argued that tyrannical government was brought on by the existence of stupid people. “In dealing with people, harshness or moderation in the law must be proportionate to the person involved. ... There are some ignorant and illiterate persons, who do not know the principles of right and wrong. Their only talents are those of eating, sleeping, and rising. They are deeply greedy and cheat people. They know neither the laws of the nation nor their own duties. They give birth to many children, but they do not know how to educate them. They are without shame and they ignore the law. It is quite impossible to use reason in dealing with such foolish people. There is no other way but to use force so as to prevent greater harm. For this reason, there have been tyrannical governments in the world. This is exactly the situation not only of the former regime but also of other countries in Asia since ancient times. Tyrannical government has been necessary in order to deal with assassinations, uprisings, and other violent acts. Consequently I say that if people want to avoid tyrannical government, they must immediately set their minds to the pursuit of learning, to elevate their own talents and virtues to a position of equality with the government. This is the means of the learning which I am encouraging.” (2.2)

Here Ōga was able to use Fukuzawa’s words in an argument against the “encouragement of learning.” The Eastern sparrows seized upon the opportunity. “Now, finally, you have done a good job in describing the true nature of ‘stupid people,’ especially in listing their faults such as being ignorant and illiterate money-grubbing, without talents of any sort, even to the extent of saying they may engage in violent behavior. Therefore, it is even more obvious that the government must enhance its power. The reason for this is that you are thinking only of events of the past. From the time of the Restoration, however, even though education has flourished, not everyone has become enlightened. Indeed, there are many incidents of robbery, injury by jinrikisha, bankruptcy, arson, drowning, suicide, and other hellish incidents that you can read about in the newspapers.” (2.2) Why is it, they ask, that the number of crimes seems to be increasing despite the introduction of new ideas from the West?

One *gesaku* convention Ōga employed in his debates with Fukuzawa was *reduction ad absurdum*, described by Adam Kern in his study of eighteenth century *kibyōshi* comic book culture, as “a bold satirical technique” that took an argument “to its logical extreme in order to reduce it to absurdity.”³¹ Book Three, for example, takes up the issue of patriotism. The Western birds contend that personal independence will contribute to national independence. They give an analogy to strengthen their point: “The people of the nation are divided into masters and guests. The masters are the one thousand intelligent persons who direct the affairs of the state. The rest are ignorant guests. Being only guests, they have few real concerns. They rely entirely on their masters without taking any initiative themselves. Therefore, their solicitude for their country will not be as great as their masters’. Their attitude will indeed be like that of strangers. As long as we are talking about the internal affairs of the nation, they may be bypassed. But if war should break out with a foreign country, the absurdity of this arrangement will be clear. The ignorant and powerless masses may not betray their country, but there will be many who will desert the cause, saying that ‘since we are only guests, our lives are uncalled for.’ Thus the population of the coun-

try is a million strong, but considerably less in actual fact when it comes to defending the nation. It will be quite impossible for that nation to secure its independence.” (3.1)

The Eastern sparrows countered by taking this argument to its extreme. “If what you say is true, then the 999,000 guests should be given an education to become equals with the 1,000 wise persons. This would mean that the country would be rid of all idlers, everyone commanding respect and independent in spirit. If suddenly confronted with war with a foreign country, everyone in the war council would stick stubbornly to their opinion. One person would advocate a move forward, another would urge retreat. One would demand a move to the right, another to the left. These generals, each of them convinced of the correctness of their own views, would be engaged with each other in emotional argumentation. ... Although confronted by foreign enemies, conflict between compatriots will take place. If a country is at war, it is unheard of for all members of the army, without exception, to be generals. Even if someone tried, it would be simply impossible. As we said before, what is difficult for one general to achieve will be easy for 10,000 soldiers. If 1,000 wise men give good commands to the 999,000, a nation with a population of 1,000,000 will not have problems dealing with external or internal disturbances, nor will there be any difficulty for that nation to secure its independence.” (3.1)

Ōga’s arguments did not always hit their mark, nor did they stand the test of time. In Book Two for example, he tries to find fault with Fukuzawa’s approach to learning, saying that some subjects in Fukuzawa’s proposed curriculum (non-material subjects such as ethics, theology, and metaphysics and material subjects such as astronomy, geography, physics, and chemistry) hardly qualify as useful knowledge. Some scholars may end up producing knowledge that simply “accords with what is obvious, and therefore does not make any difference if you know it or not.” The Eastern sparrows again restored to *reduction ad absurdum*: “We could, for example, waste a great deal of money to investigate the place, whether it be mountain, sea, or rice field, where food is produced and set a tray of food in front of a guest indicating the origin of all items of food. The rice, for example, came from country X, County X, Village X, produced by X-emon in X field. Or the fish was caught in Country Y, Sea Y, by fisherman Y-suke. ... However, there is no need to know where the food was produced, so long as the taste of the food is the same.” (2.1) In light of the slow food movement and health concerns over the globalization of food, Ōga’s argument falls flat. In the 1870s, however, he was able to tap into popular suspicions over the true usefulness of Western approaches to learning.

Conclusion

Parody was Mantei Ōga’s most powerful weapon. The Western sparrows were reduced to mere ciphers, parroting the words of the great master of civilization and enlightenment. They were themselves clear evidence of Fukuzawa’s failure to cultivate independent minds. Parody, by its very nature, invites reflection. Which was the authentic text: the “Encouragement of Learning” or the “Sparrows of Learning”? With texts to compare, the message of each would be all the more scrutinized. As Linda Hutcheon notes, parody makes demands on the readers own knowledge and experience.³²⁾ She refers to the Greek origins of the word, *parodia*, meaning “counter song,”

and shows how it had contributed to the standard definition of parody as “an opposition or contrast between texts.” Hutcheon maintains that humor or ridicule is not necessary for parody; it may contribute to its impact, but more important is “repetition with difference.” The power of parody derives from the degree of engagement of the reader who is forced to “bounce” between the two texts.³³⁾ The Japanese terms that are often used to translate parody, *mitate* and *yatsushi*, include similar demands for reflection or taking a second look at a text or performance.

Ōga’s parody of Fukuzawa’s text is well described by Hutcheon’s term “imitation with a critical difference.”³⁴⁾ Readers, many of whom would have been familiar with the Fukuzawa original, are encouraged to reflect, to “take a second look,” but with far more critical eyes. Laurent Jenny describes parody as “a mechanism of perturbation” whose function is “to prevent meaning from being lethargic.”³⁵⁾ And humor adds to this effect. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, perhaps the leading authority on the social and political meaning of humor: “Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all side, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above or below, break open its external shell, look into its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it.”³⁶⁾ In the hands of Ōga and other *gesakusha* writers and artists, parody similarly has the potential to ridicule, re-evaluate, and teach. Its message to some may be conservative, to others revolutionary.³⁷⁾ In this project, Ōga draws upon a long *gesaku* tradition centering around the *kibyōshi* comic book, which engaged its reading audience in puns, puzzles, and parodies designed to “put readers in a skeptical frame of mind, encouraging them to question authority and to regard social reality as a text that is constructed and, consequently, that can be deconstructed.”³⁸⁾ In Ōga’s case, readers were invited to reflect upon, doubt, and criticize Fukuzawa’s popular text, but at same time, think twice about the broader direction the Meiji modernizers were pushing Japan. He invited no less than a national debate on the future of Japan.

Ōga and his eccentric friends, a group of artists, humorists, and writers, and thinkers who saw it their role to “poke holes” in establishment institutions and views, were aided in their quest to seek alternative ways of understanding the world in which they lived by a unique convergence of old and new media. In the 1870s, the *gesaku* press, woodblock prints, satirical cartoons, punning, riddles, word games, ranking sheets, crazy verse, and comedy routines, all media coming out of the irreverent urban culture of the late Edo period, co-existed and in many cases collaborated with newspapers and other more open textual, visual, and oral media. This convergence of old and new media allowed, or perhaps demanded, a radical reshaping of political and social discourse.

Parody, pulp fiction, and other playful productions in the early Meiji period are often vilified as subjects unworthy of study. Mantei Ōga is all but forgotten; copies of the *Sparrows of Learning* were tossed into trash bins. His book, nonetheless, was a serious and sustained critique of one of the most important texts of modern Japanese intellectual history. For this alone it deserves more attention. Beyond that, Ōga’s writings, especially his parody of *An Encouragement of Learning*, urged people ask questions and engage in dialogue. He was a conservative thinker, but more importantly, he de-

manded critical thinking and a healthy skepticism of the deluge of new ideas coming into Japan.

This paper has attempted to recreate the intellectual atmosphere that existed in the years immediately following 1868. These were complex years; by no means were government officials, scholars or the so-called “commoners” united around a single vision of the new Japan and its future. The forces of Western-inspired change were not as powerful as some historians would have us believe; nor did Edo culture and its values disappear overnight. A study of Mantei Ōga, a writer active for thirty years before 1868 and for twenty years thereafter, helps us appreciate the ambivalent loyalties of nearly all people in Japan during these years of transition.

In the end, Ōga, the conservative, and Fukuzawa, the progressive, shared much in common. Sickness prevented Ōga from continuing the *Sparrows of Learning* beyond Book Three. But he may have found too much to agree with in successive installments of *An Encouragement of Learning*. In Book Four, noting that “in Japan there is only a government, and as yet no people,” Fukuzawa intensified his call for an active citizenry that “will be a stimulus to the government instead of its plaything.”³⁹⁾ Moreover, at the end of Book 4, Fukuzawa, acknowledging the emergence of the new discursive space, began to answer some of the “objections to my main argument,” including the contention (advanced in part by Ōga) that a strong government is best to get things done. “To this I answer that we cannot rely only on government power to promote civilization.”⁴⁰⁾ Later, in Book 12, published well after Ōga’s books hit the streets, he encouraged public speaking, and in Book 15 Fukuzawa urged people to adopt a spirit of skepticism toward all authority. Here he tried to show that “doubt from within” was the motive force behind the progress of civilization, and criticized the so-called “teachers of enlightenment” (thereby distancing himself) for believing in the new through the same faith with which they once believed in the old.” According to Fukuzawa, “The reformers ... were not motivated by self-originated doubt. ... How superficial they are in uncritically believing things Western and doubting things Eastern!”⁴¹⁾ The ironic inversion of national character that followed, turning the tables on the “civilized” West, could easily have been written by Ōga.⁴²⁾ Indeed, Fukuzawa may well have been listening to the twittering of Ōga’s sparrows, causing him to re-contextualize and rethink his own conclusions regarding the encouragement of learning.

Notes

- 1) Mantei Ōga, *Katsuron gakumon suzume*, Book 2, Part 2, (1875). I have used the text from the library at the National Institute for Japanese Language (Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo). The NIJL holds volumes 1–4 and 6 in excellent condition. I have also examined on-line copies of the entire series available from the Waseda University Library and a copy in the archives of the Kawanabe Kyōsai Memorial Museum of the original set of six volumes stored in the British Library. I thank my colleague, Ken Robinson, for his friendship and editorial skills. The text is much improved as a result of his careful reading. I also thank Tanaka Yusuke for help with translating difficult passages from Mantei Ōga’s text.
- 2) For a study of the power of song and poetry, especially “underground verse” such as *senryū*, *kyōka*, *hayariuta*, and *rakusho* (graffiti), in the late Tokugawa and early Meiji period, see Dean Anthony Brink, “At Wit’s End: Satirical Verse and Contra Formative Ideologies in *Bakumatsu* and Meiji Japan,” *Early Modern Japan*, 2002, on-line version: <https://kb.osu.edu/dspace/bitstream/1811/668/1/v9n1Brink.pdf>

- (accessed November 7, 2009). See also Yamamoto Seinosuke, *Senryū Meiji seisō-shi*, (Tokyo: Makino Shuppan, 1983), and Ishida Bunjirō, *Shinbun zasshi ni arawareta Meiji jidai bunka kiroku shūsei*, 2 vols., (Tokyo: Jidai Bunka Kenkyūkai, 1934–35).
- 3) Ōga's birth dates are unclear and are usually calculated back from a source dated 1845 (Kōka 2) that refers to him as 25 years old. Most biographical references conclude he was born in 1818 (Bunsei 1), although, given calendar and age calculation differences, some sources have him born in 1819 (Bunsei 2). He died on August 30, 1890. For details, see Okitsu Kaname, *Tenkanki no bungaku*, (Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1960), 81–83.
 - 4) Okitsu, *Tenkanki*, has compiled an assortment of sources on Ōga's life and works; see especially 78–85.
 - 5) Ōga's work can be compared with Bakin's *Chronicle of Eight Dogs* [*Satomi hakken-den*]; Bakin's "life-work" was composed between 1814 and 1842, taking 28 years to complete in 106 volumes. It was reprinted in two thick typeset volumes in 1885.
 - 6) For a summary of Mantei Ōga's writings in the period before the Meiji Restoration, see Okitsu, *Tenkanki*, 85–93. Several of Ōga's "riddle books" are included in Taihei Shūjin, ed., *Kuchiage chaban-shū shūsei*, Taihei Bunko 54, (Tokyo: Taihei Shoya, 2005).
 - 7) Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 14. Recently several scholars have revived interest in Edo period popular literature. Adam Kern seeks a re-evaluation of *kibyōshi* (pictorial fiction), hoping to overcome enduring biases against the comic book form. See his *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006). See also Robert Leutner, *Shikitei Sanba and the Comic Tradition in Edo Fiction*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1985). See also Andrew Markus, *The Willow in Autumn: Ryūtei Tanehiko (1783–1842)*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1992). Popular literature in the late Tokugawa period, particularly the period between 1853 and 1868, remains largely unstudied.
 - 8) *Chōya shinbun*, February 25, 1875, quoted in John Mertz, *Novel Japan: Spaces of Nationhood in Early Meiji Narrative*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japan Studies, University of Michigan, 2003), 96–97.
 - 9) Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 26. Keene notes that Ōga, born in 1818, was 50 years old at the time of the Meiji Restoration: "The older the writer at the time of the Restoration, the less likely he was to condone the destruction of Japanese tradition. Perhaps the most reactionary was Mantei Ōga." Keene includes a quote from an 1873 work by Ōga dealing, albeit humorously, with the workings of the universe: "The English call the heavenly body the "sun" because if one sleeps late in the morning, instead of rising with the sun, one will waste (*son*) one's time; and the moon is so called because if one can see it clearly that means that there are no clouds (*mu-un*)!" (Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 27) The quote is taken from Okitsu, *Tenkanki*, 97; original in *Illustrated Chinese-Japanese Encyclopedia, Lamppoon Edition* [*Wakan sansai zu-e*], (1873), section on "Endless Debates over the Nature of the Universe" [*chikyū no mizukakeron*]. For reprint, see Yamaguchi Seiichi, ed., *Kawanabe Kyōsai sashie*, vol. 1 (Warabi, Saitama, Kyōsai Kinenkan, 1985), 96 (Hereafter KKS). This compendium contains the Kyōsai illustrations (*sashie*) that were included in Mantei Ōga's numerous early Meiji publications.
 - 10) Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 27, quoting Okitsu, 101. The text is *Tarōbei and the Debate that Goes Round and Round* [*Tarōbei mizukakeron*], published in 1874. Frontispiece is on page 154 of *Kawanabe Kyōsai sashie*.
 - 11) Okitsu Kaname, ed., *Meiji kaika-ki bungakushū*, vol. 1, (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1966). Included are *An Intelligent Woman of Our Time* [*Tōsei rikō musume*], (1873); *The Scales of Wisdom* [*Chie no hakari*], (1874); *The Half-Enlightened Professor of Pleasure* [*Seirō hanka-tsu*], (1874); and *A Toad Fed Up with Modernity* [*Kinsei akirekaeru*], (1874). A brief introduction to Ōga and his works is included, 444–447. Okitsu published a more detailed study of Mantei Ōga in *Tenkan-ki no bungaku: Edo kara Meiji e*, (Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku Shuppan-bu, 1970), 78–114.
 - 12) Okitsu, *Tenkanki*, 107.
 - 13) Oikawa Shigeru, "Mantei Ōga no chosaku ni miru Kawanabe Kyōsai no giga," (Tokushū: e o yomu, mōji o miru, Nihon bungaku to sono baitai), *Ajia yūgaku* 109 (April 2008), 153–163.
 - 14) Oikawa Shigeru and Israel Goldman, supervisors, *Kyōsai no giga kyōga* [Comic Genuis: Kawanabe Kyosai], (Tokyo: Tōkyō Shinbun, 1996), 105.
 - 15) Mertz, *Novel Japan*, 98.

- 16) Mertz, *Novel Japan*, 74.
- 17) In 1872 the Ministry of Religious Instruction issued three prescriptions seeking to define the purposes of literature: 1) Respect for the gods and love of country; 2) The way of Heaven, Earth, and Man; and 3) Obedience to the Emperor. In a direct attack on the pernicious effects of *gesaku* writings (including the use of humor to criticize members of the political elite), the Ministry provided a list of appropriate themes for literature. See Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 20–22; Okitsu, *Tenkanki*, 19–31. The Ministry’s plan backfired as many of the “appropriate themes” became objects of satire. Even Ogawa Tameji’s “Dialogue on Enlightenment” [*Kaika mondō*], published in 1873 can be read as a critique of the enlightenment agenda, despite its open, but overly solicitous attempt to comply with the Ministry’s directive. See Michael Cusumano, “An Enlightenment Dialogue with Fukuzawa Yukichi: Ogawa Tameji’s *Kaika mondō*, 1874–75,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 37, no. 3, (Autumn 1982), 375–401.
- 18) Biographies and studies on Fukuzawa in Japanese abound; one of the most recent is Hirayama Yō, *Fukuzawa Yukichi*, (Kyoto: Mineruba Press, 2008). There are also numerous reprints (and translations into modern Japanese) of Fukuzawa’s *Gakumon no susume*, including the handy pocketbook edition: Iwanami Bunko edition with comments and annotations by Koizumi Shinzō, *Gakumon no susume*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1978). *Gakumon no susume* has been translated into English: *An Encouragement of Learning*, David Dilworth and Umeyo Hirano, trans., (Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 1992). Earl Kinmouth has studied the social impact of Fukuzawa’s works, including *An Encouragement of Learning*. See his *The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981). Major English language studies on Fukuzawa include Carmen Blacker, *The Japanese Enlightenment: A Study of the Writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), and Albert Craig, *Civilization and Enlightenment: The Early Thought of Fukuzawa Yukichi*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
- 19) For a fascinating study of Robun’s parody, see Mertz, *Novel Japan*, 31–55. At the end of Book Fourteen of *Shank’s Mare to the Western Seas*, Yaji and Kita discuss the future of women in the modern world: “These days,” remarks Kita, “I wouldn’t be surprised if women went about seducing men and busying them as prostitutes; they’d sure make a lot of money.” Yaji responds, “Naw that’s something you don’t need to worry about. There’s no way you’ll ever see any of that money. No matter how many sex fiends fill the world, there’s not a woman alive who would fall for anyone like you, with your dark skin, pug nose, bald on top, bug eyes and drooping ears, your butt sticking out and breath stinking, and your big flat feet. Nobody.” (Mertz, *Novel Japan*, 54) In Japanese, see Okitsu Kaname, *Kanagaki Robun: Bunmei kaika no gesakusha*, (Yokohama: Yūrin Shinsho, 1994).
- 20) See Mertz, *Novel Japan*, 1–30. Donald Keene has translated a section of *Aguranabe* (rendered as “The Beefeater”) in *Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology*, (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 31–33.
- 21) Robun’s parody of Fukuzawa’s primer on Western science has been reprinted in the National Institute of Japanese Literature’s reprint series: *Kappa sōden kyūri zukai*, (Tokyo: Kokubungaku Shiryōkan, 2005). Okitsu, *Tenkanki*, summarizes its (nearly non-existent) plotline, 210–12.
- 22) Information on the *E shinbun Nippon-chi* is included in Haga Tōru and Shimizu Isao, eds., *Bakumatsu ishinki no manga*, (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1986), 72–77.
- 23) Ōga’s impressive publication record was interrupted between 1876 and 1878. The last volume (vol. 3, part 2) of *Sparrows of Learning* [*Katsuron gakumon suzume*] came out in late 1875. The last page of this text promised the series would “be continued,” and other works were advertised, including a parody version of Japan’s enlightenment, *Meiroku zasshi*, to be titled *Journal of the Sixth Darkness* [*Mōroku zasshi*]. Sickness is the reason usually given for the hiatus. Ōga resumed publication in 1878 with his humorous attacks on social conventions, but the number of his publications was much reduced and included re-prints of some of his more popular books. He also began to publish travel guides to pilgrimage sites and hot springs. Finally, in his last years, he published what may be called the last great work of Edo popular literature: the *Flowers of Wisdom and Goodness* [*Meiryō futabagusa*], issued in eight volumes between 1883 and 1888. This *kibyōshi*-style historical novel recounted the origin and early years of the Tokugawa bakufu, evocative of an age that had clearly passed but was fondly remembered. Ōga thereby invited comparison with the first 20 years of the new Meiji regime. Ōga also rejected Western-style binding and typeset text, the format that had become standard in the “modern” publishing industry. His last novel was published in “traditional” Japanese-style

- binding, woodblock text, and brilliant woodcut illustrations by Kunichika and Chikanobu. Ōga died in 1890 at the age of 72. His unmarked grave is in Ryōkanji temple (Toshima-ku, Tokyo).
- 24) See the section on Emperor of Supreme Happiness [*Uchō Tennō*], in his parody version of a famous Edo period encyclopedia: *Illustrated Chinese-Japanese Encyclopedia, Lampoon Edition* [*Wakan sansai zu-e*], 1973, section on “ethics.” Illustration reproduced in *Kawanabe Kyōsai sashie*, vol. 1, 107.
 - 25) An English translation of the preamble to the 1872 Fundamental Code of Education may be found in Yoshida Kumaji, “European and American Influences in Japanese Education,” in Nitobe Inazō, ed., *Western Influences in Modern Japan*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 34–5.
 - 26) A Journey through Heaven and Hell [*Odontaku shinbun kidan*], 1872. On-line edition of vol. 2 accessible from the Digital Library of the Meiji Period, National Diet Library. Illustrations by Kawanabe Kyōsai are included in *Kawanabe Kyōsai sashie*, 55–64.
 - 27) *New Understandings: The Thunderstruck Sage* [*Rikai shinbun, seijin kimotsubushi*], 2 vols., (1872). See *Kawanabe Kyōsai sashie*, 83–88.
 - 28) The three-part series consists of: *Gonbei the Sower* [*Gonbei tanemakiron*], (1874), *Tarōbei the Waterer* [*Tarōbei mizukakeron*], (1874), and *Magobei the Manager* [*Magobei kakkeiron*], (1875). Double meanings are employed throughout: *Gonbei tanemakiron* refers to a saying about sewing seeds with crows looking on and hence “wasted effort.” A *mizukake-ron* is similarly a “fruitless debate”; and *kakkei-ron* is close to *kokkei-ron* meaning a “humorous debate.”
 - 29) The titles were homophones. The phrase *gakumon suzume* (学門雀) translates literally as “sparrows at the gate of the school.” This immediately brings to mind the proverb “The sparrows of Kangaku-in can twitter the *Mōgyū*” (*Kangakuin no suzume ga Mōgyū o saezuru*), referring to the sparrows (or low-born youth) who gather or work around the gates of the ancient academy of Confucian studies. Their presence at the gates of learning allows them to recite sections of the *Mōgyū*, a Tang period primer.
 - 30) *Gakumon suzume*, vol. 1, part 1, frontispiece. Hereafter quotes from *Gakumon suzume* will be indicated in text. For example, vol. 1, part 1 will be abbreviated as (1.1). The portions of the text attributed to the Eastern sparrows are taken almost word for word from Fukuzawa’s *Gakumon no susume*. In translating these sections, I have referred to existing translations of the Fukuzawa text (particularly the translation by David Dilworth and Umeyo Hirano), revising the translation as necessary.
 - 31) Kern, *Manga from the Floating World*, 212.
 - 32) Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, (1985; paperback repr., Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 5.
 - 33) Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, 30.
 - 34) Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, 7.
 - 35) Laurent Jenny, “The Strategy of Form,” in *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader*, ed., Tzvetan Todorov, trans. R. Carter, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 59, as quoted in Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey P. Jones, and Ethan Thompson, “The State of Satire, the Satire of State,” in *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*, eds., Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey P. Jones, and Ethan Thompson, (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 18.
 - 36) Mikhail Bakhtin and Michael Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982), 23.
 - 37) Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, 77.
 - 38) Kern, *Manga from the Floating World*, 15.
 - 39) Dilworth and Hirano, trans., Fukuzawa, *An Encouragement of Learning*, Book 4, 26.
 - 40) Dilworth and Hirano, trans., Fukuzawa, *An Encouragement of Learning*, Book 4, 29.
 - 41) Dilworth and Hirano, trans., Fukuzawa, *An Encouragement of Learning*, Book 15, 95.
 - 42) “Let us imagine that Westerners bathed every day, while the Japanese barely once or twice a month; the teachers of enlightenment would exclaim that the people who are civilized and enlightened are always clean, stimulate their skin, maintain the laws of hygiene, etc., and the uncivilized Japanese do not understand these principles! ... Or if Japanese women hung gold rings from their ears, wore girdles, and had jewelry on their dresses, the proponents of enlightenment would cite a bit of biological theory and raise serious objections about the terrible unenlightenment of the Japanese.” For full quote, see Dilworth and Hirano, trans., Fukuzawa, *An Encouragement of Learning*, Book 15, 96–97.