

# ON BOOKSELLERS, AUTHORS AND READERS IN THE WORKS OF BAKIN

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In this article I shall focus on matters relating to booksellers, authors and readers which form a fundamental prerequisite to the study of Bakin.

The characteristic of early modernity in the history of Japanese literature is the fact that literary works were published or, to put it in different words, that they became commodities. It is said that Bakin was the first author to be able to make a living from his literary work alone. In his *Iwademo no ki* he wrote as follows:

Writers of *gesaku*<sup>1</sup> such as Fūrai Sanjin, Kisanji and Harumachi were popular authors but they did not receive any payments for their writings from their publishers.<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the year they received quantities of books and woodblock prints from their publishers, and in the case of a work that was particularly successful and sold many copies the publishers would take the author out for an evening's entertainment in the pleasure quarters but that was all. In the Kansei era [1789-1801] the *kusazōshi*<sup>3</sup> of Kyōden<sup>4</sup> and Bakin were hugely popular; the publishers Kōshodō and Senkakudō<sup>5</sup> came to an agreement and fixed on a fee for the first time, in order to prevent the two of them from writing for other publishers. Kyōden and Bakin allowed this arrangement to continue for six or seven years; then their writings became ever more popular and other publishers began to complain. Kōshodō and Senkakudō were unable to resist this pressure and gave out Kyōden and Bakin's works far and wide [to other publishers] and allowed them to be printed them.

These are Bakin's own words. There is some doubt to be had with regard to the point that Kyōden and Bakin were treated equally from the outset. In the mid Kansei era Kyōden was at his peak and it is not credible that Bakin was yet able to match Kyōden's fame. Furthermore, if it was true of Bakin [that he enjoyed such treatment] then it is difficult to believe that it did not also apply to Ikku, who was at a similar stage in his career.<sup>6</sup>

In Kamigata [Osaka and Kyoto] it is probable that there was already a professional arrangement in place [by this time] tying authors to their publishers and that authors' livelihoods were to a certain extent guaranteed. In Edo [modern Tokyo], however, as Nakamura has pointed out, it is not yet possible to be sure whether a system of

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<sup>1</sup> *Gesaku* was a derogatory term for fictional writings that novelists used self-deprecatingly of themselves and their works. PK. (The initials PK indicate that these notes were added by the translator.)

<sup>2</sup> Fūrai Sanjin = Hiraga Gennai (1728-1780); the other two writers are Hōseidō Kisanji (1735-1818) and Koikawa Harumachi (1744-1789). PK.

<sup>3</sup> *Kusazōshi* was a term for the lighter genres of fiction, including *kibyōshi*, *sharebon* and *gōkan*. PK.

<sup>4</sup> Santō Kyōden (1761-1816). PK.

<sup>5</sup> Kōshodō was the shop-name of the publisher Tsutaya Jūzaburō and Senkakudō that of the publisher Tsuruya Kiemon. PK.

<sup>6</sup> Jippensha Ikku (1765-1831). PK.

payments for manuscripts was in place by the Tenmei era [1781-89].<sup>7</sup> In the section on manuscript fees in Kobayashi Zenpachi's *Nihon shuppan bunkashi* [A history of print culture in Japan] he writes that from around the Hōreki era [1751-64] publishers in Edo began to pay manuscript fees to authors of light literature, while Kōzato Haruo suggests in the section on manuscript fees in his *Edo shosekishōshi* [A history of the book trade in Edo] that manuscript fees may have been in existence earlier in Osaka and Kyoto. In both cases there is no clear basis for these claims. There is a story to the effect that Kyōden refused to accept any fee for his *sharebon* and so the publishers by way of thanks would treat him to meals or give him bolts of silk, which was called "success treatment".<sup>8</sup> For his *Shōgi kinuburui* of 1791 the publishers gave him a gift of one *ryō*<sup>9</sup> and thereafter gave him a fee of one or two *bu* for each work he wrote.<sup>10</sup> His *Shikake bunko* was an extraordinary success so they gave him three *bu* and invited him out for a night in the pleasure quarters.<sup>11</sup>

If this is all true, then the account in *Iwademo no ki* becomes unreliable. It seems that it was the publishers that initiated the payment of manuscript fees, and if Kyōden refused a fee that was entirely his own business. Moreover, in the Kansei era Bakin was yet to publish the first work that bore his name while by 1791 Kyōden was already in receipt of fees. Nakamura, too, cites the case of *Shōgi kinuburui* as the first documentary mention of fees paid to authors. And yet the case of *Shōgi kinuburui* is not a sufficient basis on which to form a generalisation. I turn to the more convincing testimony in *Gesaku rokkasen*<sup>12</sup>:

In the past authors did not get any fees for their works, the so-called *sakuryō* or *senchin*, as they do now, but Kyōden got them from the start. He handed his manuscripts to his publishers and, in the case of those that had the good fortune to be successful and to make money for the publishers, he would apparently be given rolls of silk or crêpe by way of thanks even though he had not asked for it. Later they fixed what they called a *sakuryō* and gave it to the authors. Once there were people making a living as writers of *gesaku* then they began to receive high fees. When a work was a success then the writer got "success treatment" and the publisher either took the author and illustrator out to the theatre or on a boat trip. ... This is what Sanba said.<sup>13</sup>

It is clear that the original version of *Gesaku rokkasen* was Bokusentei Setsuma's *Haishitsū*. The original author, Setsuma, was a writer who knew Kyōden, Bakin and Sanba. He records that he himself switched from being an *ukiyo-e* artist to a writer. He was, therefore, not in a position to be greatly mistaken. He says that Kyōden's receipt of fees was an exception. Nakamura cites the case of Tomikawa Ginsetsu but he, too,

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<sup>7</sup> Nakamura Yukihiro, 'Hachimonjiyaban hangi no yukue', *Kokugo kokubun* vol. 10, no. 2 [1943].

<sup>8</sup> This appears in *Edo shosekishōshi*, and is more or less the same as the version that appears in *Haishitsū* [a work written in 1813 and included in Ishizuka Hōkaishi's *Gesakusha senshū* of the 1840s. PK].

<sup>9</sup> The currency system of Edo-period Japan is too complex to explain fully here but one *ryō* was the nominal cost of one *koku* of rice, which was notionally sufficient for one person to live on for a year; thus it was a very substantial sum of money. PK.

<sup>10</sup> Fujii Otoo, *Edo bungaku kenkyū*, p. 558.

<sup>11</sup> *Edo shosekishōshi*.

<sup>12</sup> Edited by Iwamoto Kattōshi in 1856. PK.

<sup>13</sup> The novelist Shikitei Sanba (1776-1822). PK.

may have been an exception.<sup>14</sup> Illustrators are said to have received 100 *mon* per page but it seems that those who wrote the text on the illustrations received only about 10 *mon* per page.<sup>15</sup> This probably refers to [genres like] *kurohon* and *kibyōshi*. These can indeed be called writing fees but Ginsetsu's fee was for illustrating *kurohon*. With the emergence of *kibyōshi* some writers specialised in writing the text onto the illustrated pages, but at a rate of 10 *mon* per page, making 50 *mon* per volume, it was insufficient to be one's main employment. At this time writers of *sharebon*, *kokkeibon* and early *yomihon* were not yet producing new works year after year.<sup>16</sup>

The fact that authors could not rely on fees for their livelihoods inevitably means that novels were written by people who were comfortably off. Any reward was meagre and an invitation was all there was. One can say that authors were less constrained by their publishers. From the time of Kyōden a fee of one gold *bu* or thereabouts became fixed. Kyōden's main employment was as a haberdasher and it is not the case that he could entirely rely on his earnings as a writer for his livelihood. Living as a writer only became possible in the time of Bakin and Ikku. For the first time writers, who had hitherto just enriched their publishers, began to receive fees for their work: this was their natural right and when writers claimed that right by their own efforts, they had in fact completely surrendered to the capital might of their publishers. In the preface to his *Atariyashita jihon-doiya*, Ikku wrote:

Our business is writing books but there are as many plots as there are grains of sand on the beach. We put in all the jokes and wit that come to mind. The wood gets carved and out of that wood money is born, the profits coming from the carver's knife and the author's skill.

This work came out in the same year as the first part of Ikku's *Hizakurige*, 1802.<sup>17</sup> It is clear that Ikku succeeded Kyōden as a writer of profitable works, and probably at around this time Bakin, too, was receiving fees and seeking to live off them. The details of the fees Bakin received later in life have been gathered from Bakin's diary for the year 1831 by Dr Asoo Isoji in his work *Takizawa Bakin*. In that year Bakin was receiving two *ryō* for each volume of a *yomihon* and one *ryō* for each volume of a *gōkan*.<sup>18</sup> That was sufficient to live on for a writer.

Given that books supported Bakin's life as a writer it is important to establish what kinds of books were selling and how many copies of them were sold. Writers wrote in order to earn money and publishers demanded of writers works that would sell. It is not difficult to demonstrate what kinds of work were most popular with the masses. But how many copies were printed and what was the normal number of copies printed, leaving special cases aside? Probably the popularity of *kusazōshi*<sup>19</sup> and that of *yomihon* were quite different. We need to understand contemporary publishing conditions for works of fiction.

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<sup>14</sup> Tomikawa Ginsetsu was an ukiyoe artist and writer of light fiction who flourished in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century; his dates are unknown. PK.

<sup>15</sup> *Kairoku*, vol. 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Kokkeibon* were humorous works of fiction, while *yomihon*, which are much discussed in this article, were longer novels with claims to be taken seriously as literature. PK.

<sup>17</sup> I have corrected an obvious typo; the text reads Kyōhō 2 (=1717) instead of Kyōwa 2 (=1802). PK.

<sup>18</sup> **Gōkan** were longer works of light fiction that were popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. PK.

<sup>19</sup> A term that includes all the lighter forms of fiction such as *kurohon*, *gōkan* and so on. PK.

### The print-runs of *kusazōshi*

A letter from [Santō] Kyōsan<sup>20</sup> cited in *Edo shosekishōshi* states that the *kusazōshi* of Bakin and Ryūtei [Tanehiko]<sup>21</sup> usually sold between five and seven thousand copies. It also states that *Shingaku hayasomegusa* sold seven thousand copies. According to a letter Bakin wrote to [Tonomura] Jōsai<sup>22</sup> on the first day of the intercalary first month of 1808, *Moroshigure onna aigasa* went on sale in the tenth month and by the twelfth had sold 8,000, while *Myōto-ori Tamagawa sarashi* had sold 5,000.<sup>23</sup> According to *Kairoku*, [Ryūtei Tanehiko's] *Inaka Genji* sold more than 10,000. These huge figures greatly exceed our expectations. For more detailed investigation we can make use of Bakin's letters. He mentions all the workings of the publishers, as a manuscript handed over to them it went through the hands of the head of the firm and his assistants and then to the block-carvers and the printers before being put on sale.

There are some points that need to be understood beforehand when it comes to *kusazōshi*. First of all, almost all of them were put on sale at the beginning of the year. Some were put on sale at the end of the previous year (called *kureuri*) but there is little practical difference. It was at this time that the greater part of the sales were made. They printed 200 copies at a time and then rested the blocks for a while, so by printing continuously from autumn onwards they stockpiled several thousand copies and then put them on sale in the period from the end of the year to the beginning of the new year. *Kusazōshi* were not reprinted except in cases where the title of an old work was changed and it was deceitfully presented as a new work. There were some exceptions. The first three parts of *Keisei Suikoden* were reprinted in 1829. "There is no reprinting of *gōkan* - the publisher says this is such good fortune and unprecedented" (Bakin letter of 1829.2.12). The blocks could be used to print more copies until they were worn out but once seven or eight thousand copies had been printed then the blocks became worn down and of no further use.

	Title	Time	No. of copies	Source <sup>24</sup>
a	<i>Moroshigure momiji no aigasa</i>	From 10 <sup>th</sup> to end of 12 <sup>th</sup> month	8000	1822.intercal.1.1 <sup>25</sup>
b	<i>Myōto-ori Tamagawa sarashi</i>	As above?	5000	As above
c	<i>Keisei Suikoden</i> (part 10)	Half a month	4000-5000	1830.1.28
d	<i>Shinpen Kinpeibai</i> (part 1)	End of year to the	6000; 7000	1831.1.11

<sup>20</sup> Santō Kyōsan (1769-1858) was a writer and the younger brother of Santō Kyōden. PK.

<sup>21</sup> Ryūtei Tanehiko (1783-1842) was an immensely popular writer whose long serialised work, *Nise murasaki inaka Genji*, is referred to below. PK.

<sup>22</sup> Tonomura Jōsai (1779-1847) was a scholar in the Nativist school of thought and was a friend of Bakin's. PK.

<sup>23</sup> Both these works were in fact published later so the date of the letter appears to be a typo or an error in the source. All dates are given in the lunar calendar in use at the time. PK.

<sup>24</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the source is a letter from Bakin and the dates of the letters are given in this column. PK.

<sup>25</sup> "Intercal." stands for an intercalary month, that is to say an extra month, which occasionally had to be inserted in the lunar calendar used in Japan so as to prevent the calendar from becoming too detached from the solar calendar. PK.

		new year	expected in year	
e	<i>Shinpen Kinpeibai</i> (part 1)	Mid 11 <sup>th</sup> month - 8 <sup>th</sup> day of 1 <sup>st</sup> month	7000	1831.2.21
f	<i>Chochora chomonjū</i> (part 1)	(just printing of covers)	1000	1831.1.11
g	<i>Keisei suikoden</i> (part 11b)	Within 5 or 6 days of going on sale on 12.29	1500 prepared, 3000 sold	As above
h	<i>Shinpen Kinpeibai</i> (part 3)	In six days	1400	1835.1.11
i	<i>Shinpen Kinpeibai</i> (part 8a)	Within half a month of going on sale on 12.27	3000	1841.1.28
j	<i>Shinpen Kinpeibai</i> (part 8b)	As above	3000	As above
k	<i>Shingaku hayasomegusa</i>	In all	7000	letter from [Santō] Kyōsan cited in <i>Edo shosekishōshi</i>
l	<i>Inaka Genji</i>		10000	<i>Kairoku</i>
m	The <i>gōkan</i> of Bakin and Ryūtei [Tanehiko]		5000-7000	letter from [Santō] Kyōsan cited in <i>Edo shosekishōshi</i>

The data contained in the table above relates only to what Kyōsan refers to as the *gōkan* of Bakin that sold 7000-8000 copies and from this it is clear that they tended to sell around the same quantity. There are no inconsistencies in the data. Books went on sale at the end of the year or at the beginning of the new year. In the first five or six days after going on sale 1400-1500 copies were sold (h). In the case of (g) the meaning of the data is that 1500 copies had been prepared but they were insufficient and 3000 promised sales eventuated. In the case of (f), since it was a new work it was natural for 1000 copies to be prepared for sale. That would last five or six days. That was the time when most copies were sold and over the following two weeks the overwhelming majority of copies would be sold. In the cases of (i) and (j) sales reached 3000 over half a month, and in the case of (c) sales reached 4000-5000 in the space of half a month. Comparing the cases of (h), (g), (c), (i) and (j), both over five days and over half a month *Keisei Suikoden*'s sales exceeded those of *Shinpen Kinpeibai* by 1500-2000, and from this we can draw the interesting conclusion that overall the former sold 2000 more copies than the latter. When we consider the longer period stretching from the end of one year to spring in the following year, in a case like that of (d) sales reached 6000. The sales of (a) reached 8000 in three months; the time taken in the case of (b) is unclear but probably the same as (a). However, the case of (a) with copies going on sale in the 10<sup>th</sup> month was unusual and there may be some exaggeration. Ordinarily, as in the case of (d) sales reached 6000 over a period stretching from the end of the year up to the new year. In the case of *Keisei Suikoden* the total probably came close to 8000. But after the end of the first month it no longer sold so well: over the rest of the year no more than 1000 copies were sold. "By early spring 6000 copies had been sold, according to the publisher, who came to tell me this on the 8<sup>th</sup>. By around the time of the Ebisukō it will reach 7000." This refers to the Ebisukō which was the time of year when the year's trading was considered to have ended.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ebisukō normally refers to a Shinto festival that took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> months in the lunar calendar but there was considerable regional variation. Here the probable reference is to the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month. PK.

What needs to be fully appreciated is the fact that the large numbers of copies sold well exceeds our expectations. They come to 5000-7000, even 8000, and in cases like *Inaka Genji* as much as 10000. Those are all the total number sold in one year. (This probably applies to retail sales as well). There must also have been many authors selling 3000-4000 copies as well. If that is so, then the *gōkan* which in around 1830 were being published in excess of 40 titles per year, to judge by the titles appearing in current catalogues, would have amounted to nearly 100,000. Possibly even more *kusazōshi* were in circulation and reached many times that number of readers. On the other hand, we need to pay attention to the commodification of literature, in other words to literary capitalism, as well as taking into consideration the existence of an extensive readership that sustaining authors.

### The print-runs of *yomihon*

Bakin's fame rests on *Hakkenden*. *Hakkenden* was also made into ukiyoe prints and its fame reached Sado Island, where people are said to have read it.<sup>27</sup> What then were the print runs of Bakin's *yomihon*, including his main work, *Hakkenden*? The evidence available says "500 copies a year". It can be conjectured that the number was a little higher. The first thing that has to be pointed out is that numbers were remarkably low by comparison with *gōkan*, which it has already been shown sold larger quantities.

	Title and part number	Period of time	No. of copies	Source <sup>28</sup>
a	[ <i>Asaina</i> ] <i>Shimameguri no ki 5</i>	Half a day <sup>29</sup>	400	1822. intercal.1.1
b	<i>Bishōnenroku 1</i>	At the outset	250	1829.2.9
c	[ <i>Matsura Sayohime</i> ] <i>Sekkonroku 2a</i>	After 4-5 months	200	1829.5.21
d	[ <i>Matsura Sayohime</i> ] <i>Sekkonroku 2b</i>	Over 2-3 years	400 in all	As above
e	[ <i>Matsura Sayohime</i> ] <i>Sekkonroku</i>	In Kamigata	200	As above
f	<i>Hakkenden 7</i>	On the day	250	1830.1.28
g	<i>Hakkenden</i> reprint	In 6 months	160	1831.6.11
h	<i>Kyōkakuden 2</i>	Edo printing	400	1831.10.26
i	<i>Bishōnenroku 3</i>	One month	300	1831.11.25
j	<i>Hakkenden 8.i</i>	On the day	300 printed, 260 sold	1832.5.21
k	<i>Hakkenden</i>		300 sold, not much profit	As above
l	<i>Hakkenden 8.i</i>	From 5 <sup>th</sup> to intercalary 11 <sup>th</sup> months	500	1832.11.26
m	<i>Hakkenden 8.ii</i>	In 20 days	400	As above
n	<i>Kyōkakuden 2</i>	Osaka	400	1832.12.11
o	<i>Hakkenden 9.i</i>	In 2 days	350	1835.3.28
p	<i>Kyōkakuden 4</i>	Prepared on 15 <sup>th</sup> day of 5 <sup>th</sup> month	300	1835.5.16
q	<i>Kyōkakuden 4</i>	On the day	86	1835.7.12
r	<i>Kyōkakuden 4</i>	By the end of the 5 <sup>th</sup> month (half a month)	250	As above

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Suzuki Bokushi.

<sup>28</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the source is a letter from Bakin and the dates of the letters are given in this column. PK.

<sup>29</sup> Probably a typo for "half a month". PK.

s	<i>Hakkenden</i> 9.iii.a	In 2-3 days	200 printed, then 100	1837.1.6, 1837.2.3
t	<i>Hakkenden</i> 9.iii.a	On sale on 2 <sup>nd</sup> , by 28 <sup>th</sup>	400	1837.2.3
u	<i>Hakkenden</i> 9.iii.b	Osaka	100	1838.2.6
v	<i>Hakkenden</i> 9.iii.c.2	Printed, <i>chōka</i> part	400	1838.10.22
w	<i>Hakkenden</i> 9.iii.c.2.ii	In 21 days up to 8 <sup>th</sup> month	300	1840.10.21
x	<i>Hakkenden</i> 9.iii.c.2.ii	Copies printed for Kamigata	250	As above
y	<i>Hakkenden</i> conclusion	In 9 days	300	1842.1.12
z	<i>Bonseki sarayama no ki</i>		900	<i>Edo sakusha burui</i>
A	<i>Kukurizukin chirimen kamiko</i>		As above	As above
B	<i>Kyōden's yomihon</i>		50	As above
C	<i>Yomihon</i> in the past		300	<i>Kairoku</i>
D	<i>Yomihon</i> currently		1000-2000	As above
E	<i>Geppyō kien</i>	Immediately	1500	<i>Edo sakusha burui</i>
F	<i>Nanka no yume</i>	On the day	250	As above
G	<i>Nanka no yume</i>	On sale at end of 3 <sup>rd</sup> month; by early autumn	1200	As above
H	<i>Takao senjimon</i>	Edo	100	As above
J	<i>Takao senjimon</i>	Kyoto and Osaka	50	As above
K	<i>Ehon taikōki</i>	Left unsold	16 out of 156	<i>Ōsaka shomotsuya nakama kiroku</i> <sup>30</sup>
L	<i>Ehon shinchōki</i>	Left unsold	(1-3 ) 8 returned, (4-7) 11 returned	As above

The material shown in the Table shows unprecedented sales for *Hakkenden* and *Bishōnenroku* in particular. Even in the case of such works as these the number of copies prepared for sale on the first day was from 250 upwards and did not exceed 300. (The case of (a) may be exaggeration rather than an exception). The case of (o) which sold 350 in two days reveals the fastest sales of all. In the case of (y), it sold 300 in nine days. Sales of 250 on the day of sale, 300 in the first month or 400-500 in a year seem to have been the pattern in the cases of (l), (m), (v) and (w). Sales in Kamigata seem from the cases of (d) and (e) to have been half those in Edo: *Hakkenden* in case (x) sold 250, in case (u) 100; so taking these figures into account, the total sales of *Hakkenden* were 700-750. The cases of (g) and (q) confirm the low quantities; that of (q) shows that *Kyōkakuden* missed its opportunity and sold only 86 copies on the day it went on sale, finally reaching 250 after half a month. The case of (g) is a reprinting which only sold 160 copies and that gives a general idea of the levels. The notion that when reprinting (in other words, using the same blocks to print more copies) thousands of copies were printed is mere speculation. Just how difficult it was to reprint is clear from the letter of 1831.6.11. Only one printing was done over a period of a number of years. Even if there was a shortage of copies, “Getting the blocks out and printing from them again is no easy task so it is unclear when further copies might be printed.” Some of the blocks for *Hakkenden* were even pawned making it difficult to retrieve them. So it might seem better to have print more at one

<sup>30</sup> As cited in *Nihon shuppan bunkashi*.

time but instead merely 160 copies were printed. These took a year to sell, it seems, but the publisher considered that that was the amount that could be sold and no more. Apart from *Hakkenden* the numbers of copies of *yomihon* sold were low. In the case of *Bishōnenroku*, 250 copies were prepared (b), and in one month 300 were sold (i). *Kyōkakuden* sold 250 in half a year (r), in the case of *Sekkonroku* only 200 were sold in five months (c), partly because it was more expensive. The prospects of selling more later were not good. Thus in the case of (d) sales reached 400 copies in 2-3 years, in other words 100-150 a year. Sales in Kamigata were 400 (n), 200 (e), and 100 (u); the case of (n) is rather special as [the publisher] Kawachiya Mohei of Osaka provided the capital for printing. It is unlikely that any shortfall would be met by further shipments of books [from Edo to Osaka], so this was probably the limit that could be sold.

*Bishōnenroku* Part 3 will be traded when *Kyōkakuden* Part 3 is published but until then apparently no copies will be sent to Kamigata. So it will be delayed for two or three years. For the moment the only copy is the one you have (given by Bakin to Jōsai).

Just how strict procedures were is clear from this. If they had gone on printing constantly year after year there would have been no sense in sending books to Kamigata three years later for the first time. Therefore not even one copy was sent there until then. After all in Edo only 300-400 copies had been produced.

It is only the sales at the time of going on sale that are discussed [by Bakin], and he has little to say about sales half a year or a year later. But this is of little importance, for sales were concentrated in the first month of the year, as is shown by the case of (q). Had *Kyōkakuden* gone on sale in the first month sales of 200 would have been assured on the day it went on sale and shortly thereafter sales of 300 could have been expected but since *Kyōkakuden* went on sale in the fifth month customers were short of money and only 86 copies were sold on the day it went on sale. So it seems that success or otherwise in terms of sales was decided in the first month. It is not going too far to say that sales on the first day were decisive. So there is little room for doubting that, as in the case of (l), sales of 500 over eight months were the best that could be hoped for. Similarly, in the case of (c) sales of 200 for *Sekkonroku* over five months was the limit, and in the case of authors other than Bakin sales of 300 over a year, or at most 400, must have been the limit. The cases of (B), (C), (F), (H), (J), (K) and (L) agree with this finding. The cases of (z), (A) and (G) combine Kamigata and Edo and as record sales are not impossible. The case of (h) is dubious, and in that of (D) the evidence is not convincing.

Several problems arise. Firstly, why should there be such a difference in numbers of copies of *yomihon* sold compared with *kusazōshi*? *Yomihon* sales were one tenth of those of *kusazōshi*. Secondly, how could *yomihon* have achieved such overwhelming popularity on the basis of such low sales? Thirdly, why were the bulk of copies sold on the day of going on sale or in the first few days and why did they not sell throughout the year? In the case of the first question, there is the issue of the difference in prices [between *yomihon* and *kusazōshi*], and in the case of the third question the wholesale practices of the publishers are relevant, but the key to solving these three questions together probably lies with the single word *kashihon'ya* (circulating libraries). So it is no surprise that in the preface to his *Sōchōki*, Kyōden wrote:

The publishers are the parents, those who are kind enough to read the books are the son-in-law and the *kashihon'ya* are the go-betweens. ... The son-in-law who reads the books tends not to like them but the *kashihon'ya* use their go-between

language to say “I have got just the girl for you”, making the best out of a bad job and persuading him, and so it is that an unpromising girl meets with a suitable son-in-law. This is entirely due to the persuasion of the go-between *kashihon'ya* whom we rely upon.

In his *Okame hachimoku* Bakin criticised Kyōden's servile tone. But even he could not have had his *Hakkenden* circulate without the *kashihon'ya*. It was indeed a servile tone. But this tells us that between the authors and the readers the *kashihon'ya* fulfilled the essential role of intermediaries. There is no sense in Kyōden's preface of a direct relationship between authors and their readers. Readers read fiction on the recommendation of their *kashihon'ya*. And *kashihon'ya* travelled even to the islands of Awaji or Sado.

### The real role of *kashihon'ya*

According to Yamada Keiō's *Hōryaku genraishū* (1831), newly-published *kusazōshi* up to the Tenmei era (1781-89) cost 8 *mon* per volume consisting of five sheets sewn together but now *gōkan* cost 1 *momme* or even 1 *momme 5 bu*.<sup>31</sup> Bakin's *Keisei Suikoden* cost as much as 1 *momme 8 bu*. But the prices for *yomihon* were of quite a different order. According to a letter of his dated 1837.1.26, the trade price of the first section of the third part of the ninth volume of *Hakkenden* was 19 *momme 8 bu* and the retail price was 21 *momme 5 bu*. It is clear from many other letters that the wholesale price of [different parts of] *Hakkenden* ranged from 16 to 18 *momme*, and that other *yomihon* in the 1830s cost around 15 *momme*. Since at the time one *koku* of rice [around 278 litres] was worth around one gold *ryō*, the price of one part of a *yomihon* amounted to somewhere between a third and a quarter of that.<sup>32</sup> *Kusazōshi* cost less than a tenth of the price of a *yomihon*, around the equivalent of 23 *masu* of rice. *Kusazōshi* cannot be said to have been cheap. But it must have been impossible for ordinary people to purchase *yomihon* themselves, for they cost ten times as much. *Kusazōshi* nevertheless continued to sell each year in quantities amounting to nearly 100,000: ordinary people bought them directly at retail shops paying the cash themselves. It was much rarer for people to buy *yomihon* in the same way, apart from the exceptionally wealthy.

This is where *kashihon'ya* come in. They sat between the publishers and the masses and it was they – thought to number over a thousand all over Japan – that distributed *Hakkenden*. *Yomihon* were initially sold within the trade and that seems to have included the three publishing guilds (*kuminakama*), the local book guild (*jihondoiya nakama*) and the circulating libraries (*kashihon'ya*). The numbers in Edo are unclear but in Osaka from 1803 to the late 1820s there were more or less 300 *kashihon'ya* establishments in the trade.<sup>33</sup> In Edo there may have been 500 or 600. The quantities must have had a close relationship to the number of copies of *yomihon* sold. When *Hakkenden* was published [the publisher] Chōjiya sold copies only within the trade: in one month he could sell 300-400 copies. This is understandable if one supposes that

<sup>31</sup> See *Hōryaku genraishū* in *Kinsei fūzoku kenbunshū* (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1912-13), vol. 3, p. 54.

<sup>32</sup> Notionally one *koku* of rice was supposed to be sufficient for one person for a year, so even a quarter of that was a very considerable amount when converted into currency. PK.

<sup>33</sup> Introduction to *Keichō irai Ōsaka shuppan shoseki mokuroku*.

most were bought by *kashihon'ya*. As explained earlier, 400-500 copies [of *yomihon*] were sold in Edo, 200-250 in Osaka, in all around 700, and if 900 were sold it was a record. In cases when they sold 900 publishers announced that they had sold a thousand, and the author of *Kairoku* believed them. That figure is appropriate, for readers [of *yomihon*] who did not go through *kashihon'ya* cannot have been more than 200. This was, however, true only in the case of *Hakkenden*, where the *kashihon'ya* competed to buy 80-90% of copies. Ordinarily publishers thought of selling 300 and if they did not sell that number then they might suffer the cruel fate of selling just 50 or 60.<sup>34</sup>

The reason why [the third part of *Bishōnenroku*] is, like *Hakkenden*, being sold for cash is apparently that the *kashihon'ya* are in some financial difficulty and cannot be relied upon; since they are all holding back and waiting, not a lot of copies of *Bishōnenroku* are going to be sold in a hurry, but they are at least selling some for cash. (Letter of 1831.10.26).

The hurry is because we are keen to put it on sale before the *kashihon'ya* run out of money after the festival in the fifth month. (Letter of 1832.5.21)

Since it is now the summer sales seem unfortunately likely to be poor but since the readers cannot wait the *kashihon'ya* are eager. ... The weather has been clear from early evening so even *kashihon'ya* from distant parts will probably be coming [to buy] tomorrow. (Letter of 1835.5.16)

The middle of the fifth month is a time when the *kashihon'ya* do not have any money but from about the time we went on sale rain spoiled things for them so on the day we were fortunate that business was so bad for them. (Letter of 1835.7.12)

If we put these six volumes (the second part of the ninth volume of *Hakkenden*) on sale together the price will be 26-27 *momme* and this will cause the *kashihon'ya* difficulties such that not many of them will be able to buy so we will sell it in two parts separately. (Letter of 1835.9.16)

Since quite a few *kashihon'ya* are currently in desperate straits [the publisher] Chōjiya Heibei does not think we will be able to sell as many as usual. (Letter of 1837.1.6)

Since *kashihon'ya* having been having a difficult time since last year, the publisher considers that if we sell the new bit of *Hakkenden* (first section of part three of the ninth volume) for cash then not many will be bought so he is preparing only 200 copies. (Letter of 1837.3.2)

From these letters the following tentative conclusions can be drawn. The sales of *yomihon* were completely determined by the *kashihon'ya*. When the *kashihon'ya* had no capital then the books would not sell and so they would not reach people's eyes. Furthermore, *kashihon'ya* did not have substantial capital resources. When they had little capital even the *kashihon'ya* could not buy a copy of [the latest part of] *Hakkenden*. In the summer their capital dried up, and this is why books had to go on sale at the beginning of the year. Bakin says that part of the ninth volume of *Hakkenden* was to be split and sold separately because the *kashihon'ya* did not have the financial strength to buy it all at once. A sum of 26-27 *momme* was too great for them to be able to afford, even for the benefit of their trade. Their trade was renting out books so books that they had to buy on publication needed to be bought quickly. It all happened in five or six days. Thus when we pay attention to the *kashihon'ya* it is surely clear that directly or indirectly they had an impact on fiction in the Edo period.

<sup>34</sup> See the section on Kyōden in *Edo sakusha burui*.

“*Kashihon*’ya buy new books and lend them out: women and children and all sorts of others compete with each other to borrow them so the *kashihon*’ya derive their profit from this.”<sup>35</sup>

*Kashihon*’ya did not only distribute books to the masses but they also had a positive role in the publication of fiction. “*Amako kyūgyū ichimōden* came out: a self-styled writer called Somahito II, who later changed his name to Shunsui, made some additions to it and it was printed by Chōjiya Heibei and by the *kashihon*’ya together, so my own *Kyūgyū den* had to yield to the work of Gakutei and Shunsui, as the publisher said to me last winter.” (Letter of 1830.1.28).<sup>36</sup> This is a case of *kashihon*’ya placing an order with an author and participating jointly with Chōjiya Heibei to get it carved and printed. It is also one of the cases in which the involvement of *kashihon*’ya in placing orders with authors is most clearly to be seen. The *kashihon*’ya Sumiyoshiya Seigorō was encouraged by the great success of *Bonseki sarayama no ki* and *Kukurizukin chirimen kamiko*<sup>37</sup> and asked Kyōden to write some *yomihon* but he made a big loss and went bankrupt.<sup>38</sup> *Kashihon*’ya, publishers, wholesalers and retailers were all part of the trade and probably could be very clearly distinguished from each other. But what is interesting in this connection is the fact that Chōjiya Heibei himself stated that he was a supplier of books to *kashihon*’ya. “Chōjiya is a publisher but takes on these books and sells them as a supplier of books to *kashihon*’ya, he says.” (Letter of 1829.5.21) It is not that all publishers were suppliers of books to *kashihon*’ya but that Chōjiya just happened to combine the two lines of business: and Chōjiya was the publisher whom Bakin trusted the most.

The main kinds of books that *kashihon*’ya purveyed were *yomihon* and manuscript versions of martial tales. They did not much handle *kusazōshi*. It is mostly in connection with *yomihon* that *kashihon*’ya are discussed in Bakin’s letters. There is little first-hand evidence on the actual operations of *kashihon*’ya so details have to be gathered from here and there, but an examination of the *yomihon*, *kusazōshi* and *ninjōbon* in the Faculty of Letters in Kyoto University shows that hardly any of the *yomihon* show no sign of having passed through the hands of *kashihon*’ya. This applies to books published in the Tenmei, An’ei and Hōreki eras.<sup>39</sup> The *kashihon*’ya cover the whole of Japan, including Kyoto, Osaka, Edo, Sakai, Takamatsu, Hiroshima, and Kanazawa and the provinces of Izu, Yamato, Kazusa and Dewa. What is particularly noticeable is that some books seem to have passed through the hands of three or four *kashihon*’ya, and sometimes five or six.<sup>40</sup> The copy of *Yūjimo denki* (1811) in the Faculty of Letters in Kyoto University passed from a *kashihon*’ya in Osaka called Hime-Ya to one called Ima-Ei and then to one called Nagai Mataichirō in Yamato Uda. *Ōshū shūjaku monogatari* passed into the hands of Shimizuya in Yonezawa and he was the fifth person to own it: the intervening owners were all *kashihon*’ya. I referred above to one thousand *kashihon*’ya but was being very

<sup>35</sup> Saitō Gesshin, *Hyakuge jutsuryaku*, in *Shin Enseki jissu*, vol. 3, p. 68.

<sup>36</sup> I have not been able to trace the two works cited in this letter, *Amako kyūgyū ichimōden* and *Kyūgyū den*: either they have not survived or the real titles were somewhat different. PK.

<sup>37</sup> Both of these two works were written by Bakin. PK.

<sup>38</sup> See the section on Kyōden in *Mono no hon Edo sakusha burui*.

<sup>39</sup> This covers the period from 1751 to 1789. PK.

<sup>40</sup> Hamada is referring to the evidence provided by *kashihon*’ya seals which were customarily impressed in books to indicate their ownership. PK.

conservative. Print-runs were limited to a few hundred but the books made their way from one *kashihon'ya* to another: at first central *kashihon'ya* handled them, then they went from Osaka to Sakai, from Sakai to Wakayama and then to the mountains of Kii, being sold by one *kashihon'ya* to the next. Old and rare books, having made their way out then returned to the hands of more powerful *kashihon'ya* in the major centres: *Enma daiō nikkichō* (1772) circulated in the hands of Kinu-U, Tomi-Shin, Iwai and Chō-Hon before finally ending up in the hands of Ike-Kiyo in Ushigome [in Edo]. In this way a book printed in 600 copies was used as much as if it had been printed in 2000 or 3000 copies.

There are some indications of how many days each reader had to read the book they had borrowed in. A *kashihon'ya* called Yasui stuck pieces of paper in the tools of his trade: “Notice: when renting books ten days is to be the period in which the books are to be read”. Again – but this an example from the Meiji period – Hosokawa Jōji stuck notices in his books indicating a limit of ten days. *Kashihon'ya* went around their customers with a box on their backs so they presumably went around once every ten days. A *yomihon* published in 500-600 copies would pass through the hands of more than ten thousand readers thanks to the mediation of *kashihon'ya*. And over several decades books would continue to be read, going down several generations of *kashihon'ya*. This was an age when *Bishōnenroku* could be read on Osaka only three years after it had been put on sale in Edo. The speed with which books circulated and became popular was quite different from today: three or five years was quite normal. Thus over a period of decades *yomihon* reached the hands of their enthusiastic readers everywhere, even in the remotest parts. *Kashihon'ya* mediated between the books and their readers and their contribution to the dissemination of fiction was very considerable. When we take *kashihon'ya* into account we become conscious not only of Edo readers hungering after new fashions year after year but also of readers throughout Japan whose access was delayed by years or decades.

### Cheap literature and expensive literature

It was not the case that *kashihon'ya* did not handle *kusazōshi* at all. However, they seem to have done so only to an extent that hardly merits discussion. Of the 60 or so *kusazōshi* in the Faculty of Letters [in Kyoto University] only five seem to have passed through the hands of *kashihon'ya*. Expensive *yomihon* were the sort of books that if found in ordinary households would be expected to be preserved there for many years, and most of those copies that have survived passed through the hands of *kashihon'ya*; *kusazōshi* tended not to survive in private households, to say nothing of *kashihon'ya*. Most of the *kusazōshi* that have survived do not seem to have passed through the hands of *kashihon'ya*.

In order to publish a *yomihon* consisting of five volumes each of 25 folios a capital of 80 *ryō* was needed, as calculated from letters by Kyōsan cited in *Edo shosekishō shi*.<sup>41</sup> This matches what Bakin says in a letter of 1832.5.21, where it is stated that 76-77 *ryō* in gold were needed. If sold at 15 *momme*, 320 copies were needed to break even, and if sold at 20 *momme* then 240 copies; thus roughly 300 copies was the

<sup>41</sup> “For carving the illustrations, 3 *bu* per sheet; for producing the fair copy, 2 *shu* per sheet; for the illustrations 10 *momme*; brushes for the producer of the fair copy, 1 *momme* 5 *bu* per sheet; labour 3 *ryō*; woodblocks 4 *momme* each; on top of that the cost of the paper and the cost of printing.”

break-even point. According to the letter just cited, “if 300 copies are sold at a price of 18 *momme* each then there is not likely to be much profit” and this fits the calculation above (a profit of 20 *ryō*). A profit of 100 *ryō* would be difficult even if 600 were sold. So it seems reasonable to suggest, as mentioned above, that 300 copies was the break-even point. In the case of *gōkan* the cost of the paper and the woodblocks was just one tenth that of *yomihon*, and the costs of having the fair copy made and the printing done must have been a small proportion of the costs for *yomihon*. Even with the selling price at one tenth that of a *yomihon* more than ten times the number of customers bought copies: what is certain is that *gōkan* sold in quantity and the publishers’ profits must have been enormous.

Publishers began to be wary of *yomihon* which required substantial capital and offered no certainty and they forced Bakin to write *kusazōshi*. For Bakin *kusazōshi* had little literary worth and he preferred to devote all his energies to writing *yomihon* and *zuihitsu*<sup>42</sup>, but once an author had surrendered to a publisher he could not resist the demands of the publisher. That is why in his life as a writer he was at the mercy of the tension between his *gōkan* and his *yomihon*.

After *Gendō hōgen*, *zuihitsu* have not been selling well so my publisher has requested that I write *gōkan* alone. (Letter of 1825.1.26).

Recently I have been so much pressed to write *gōkan* which bring the publishers profit that I have no leisure time and cannot write any *zuihitsu*; everything is dominated by the word “livelihood” and I am just writing the kind of things I detest: please imagine how it is. (Letter of 1829.2.12).

*Gōkan* are really detestable; this year it is the sequel to *Chochora chomonjū* and no matter how much I want a rest I cannot take one. (Letter of 1832.2.19).

I really dislike writing *gōkan* and I want to reduce the number I write. (Letter of 1832.9.21).

However, on the other hand:

*Yomihon* do not sell well; *gōkan* give me no rest but it does not affect my longevity and the profits are quite considerable so I think I will give up writing *yomihon* and just write *gōkan*. The sixth volume of [*Asaina*] *Shimameguri no ki* is more or less done and I am waiting for the right moment for *Hakkenden* so I have stopped writing [*yomihon*]. ... In less than 160 days I have written four *gōkan*, 150 pages in all; it takes less than half the effort and the fees they bring in are much better than for a five-volume *yomihon*; writing *yomihon* for profit seems to be a waste of time, as the expression has it. (Letter of 1823.1.9)

In the Bunsei era [1818-30] Bakin was constantly torn between concentrating on the more vulgar *kusazōshi*, which took little effort and were profitable, and devoting himself to higher-quality literature, which he regarded as his calling but which was not much appreciated by his publishers. As can be seen from the letters cited above, although he was generally inclined to stop writing *gōkan* sometimes, out of dissatisfaction with insincere and unsympathetic publishers he also thought of abandoning *yomihon* and turning to *gōkan* in a self-mocking or self-destructive way. “Chōjiya is a publisher but he takes on these books and sells them as a supplier of books to *kashihon’ya* so if he is not going to make 50-60% in profit he won’t take them on,” [Bakin wrote] but the details are unclear. It was the very existence of suppliers of books to *kashihon’ya* that made prices rise. The existence of *kashihon’ya* stood in the way of efforts to appeal to the book-purchasing power of the public. The suppliers of books to *kashihon’ya* had the publishers over a barrel and they could not

<sup>42</sup> *Zuihitsu* refers to essays and other kinds of non-fictional writings. PK.

sell to the public. For the publishers this was an unpleasant situation and it restricted the fees paid to the authors. It seems, then, that the *kashihon'ya* also exerted quite a negative influence on publishing.

When Bakin was writing *yomihon* he usually wrote three folios [three double-side pages] a day. According to his diary for 1832 in Waseda University, he began writing the second part of *Kyōkakuden* on 1832.8.19 and finished it on 1832.11.11. After this period of approximately 80 days he spent some days writing the preface and the table of contents and checking through his draft, and this work was still not finished by the end of the year. He began writing *Chochora chomonjū* on 1832.10.20 while he was still working on *Kyōkakuden* and he finished it on 10.26: just seven days. His income was 10 *ryō* for *Kyōkakuden* and 5 *ryō* for *Chochora chomonjū*. Similarly, he began writing the third part of volume of 8 of *Hakkenden* on 2.25 and finished it on 5.28: there was a break of more than ten days in the middle and in all it took 80 days. In Bakin's diary for 1831, in the period between 1831.8.26 and 11.6 he completed volume 12 of *Keisei Suikoden*, volume 5 of *Sesshōseki gonichi kaidan* and volume 2 of *Shinpen Kinpeibai*. The difference between *yomihon*, which required much effort, damaged his health and what is more were poorly remunerated and *gōkan* which were the opposite in all respects is crystal clear.

The publisher of *Hakkenden* won't give up: now that *Hakkenden* is finished he is asking me to write *Kyūgyūden*. ... The publisher of *Konpirabune rishō no tomozuna* came last [the publisher] Nishimuraya Yohachi asked me to write a women's version of *The romance of the three kingdoms* but I talked him out of it and wrote *Kanso magaimitate gundan*. (All three quotes from a letter of 1830.1.28).<sup>43</sup>

If I force works that won't sell many copies on publishers who can't tell the difference between beans and barley then in the long run it won't do my reputation any good. (Letter of 1831.4.26).

I am very busy at home (sickness in the family) and my writing is not making much progress. ... If things go on like this I will be letting the publisher down and my economic difficulties will be worse than ever. (Letter of 1831.6.11).

Since my fee has been paid in advance I must get twenty folios written this month. (Letter of 1832.9.21).

I refuse all the presents and won't accept them but it is not good if the publisher gets into difficulties. (Letter of 1835.1.15).

The fee for the first five volumes I received in the first month from the publisher but I refused it as this would make me less free. (Letter of 1842.9.23).

However, when he received from the publisher Chōjiya a request for the cancellation of the contract he was distraught: "these five volumes will be a complete loss for me." Out of a feeling of obligation to his publisher he had turned down a request from [Kimura] Mokurō.

As the above letters show, the publishers used advance payments to keep a hold on their authors. The duty of the authors was not to let their publishers down. Even Bakin was obsessed by his sense of obligation to his publishers. That sense of obligation was not merely a matter of having to produce works in return for their fees, for those works had to bring the publishers a profit. As a result authors were working

<sup>43</sup> The references to "women's versions" are not to versions written for women readers but to retellings of familiar stories with female characters substituted for men, so a "women's version of *Chūshingura*" would replace the forty-seven samurai of the famous story with forty-seven women. PK.

obsessively in order to bring profit to their publishers. So it was the publishers who interfered in the layout of works and who decided the size and number of volumes of each work. Publishers even had the ability to influence the content of those works. Authors were one step behind, afraid of their publisher's displeasure not only with regard to their works but also with regard to their whole relationship. When it came to an author like Bakin he could take his fees with a swagger but they were not so high as to be able to provide for his old age. On the contrary, it was because he was dependent for his livelihood on his writings that the publishers' fetters seemed so burdensome. It is essential to keep in mind the fact that this was the publishing environment in which Bakin's *yomihon* were written. This it was that created such a gulf between his attitude towards writing *yomihon* and his attitude towards writing *gōkan*. *Gōkan* were written to please the audience. He himself said that he was different from Tanehiko and run-of-the-mill writers and took extraordinary care [with his *gōkan*], but it came down to mentioning a sacred flask instead of a container of lapis lazuli, a sacred Ise fan instead of a banana-leaf-shaped fan and a sacred rope instead of a golden rope and to some skilful plotting: no matter how much effort Bakin made he was not standing on a different plane from Tanehiko, Shunsui and the like. When it came to *yomihon* he attempted to appeal to large numbers of readers but he made little attempt to descend to the level of his readers so the readers got left behind. He was proud of the fact that he was the first person to appreciate the hidden merits of *Shui hu zhuan* hundreds of years after Shi Nai-an's time, and in the same way there were some features of his *yomihon* which awaited the understanding of later generations.<sup>44</sup> To put it more accurately, he was not thinking of thousands of readers but discriminatingly of two or three critics who would understand him.

#### Authors, readers and critics

The gap between low-level literature which appealed to the masses and was put together for profit with the tips of one's fingers alone and high-level literature which was aimed at connoisseurs, made light of much greater sacrifices and expounded one's own ideals turns out to have been much bigger than expected. For us when we compare these works it is easy to point to the novelistic conception which permeates them all. *Kanzen-chōaku* [the ethic of encouraging virtue and reproving vice] dominated in *kusazōshi* just as in *yomihon*. And yet writing *kusazōshi* involved a struggle with one's artistic conscience. There was something fundamental in Bakin's *yomihon* which was lacking in his *kusazōshi*, something that made them into works of art. That something was *bun* [literariness].<sup>45</sup>

*Bun* functioned in two ways. Firstly it was the artistic spirit which led him to depict human emotions and get closer to reality. In *gōkan* there was no *bun*, just a plot. Just how much importance Bakin placed on *bun* is apparent from his responses to Jōsai's

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<sup>44</sup> *Shui hu zhuan*, or *The Water Margin*, is one of the classic Chinese vernacular novels, which was first published in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and which was enormously popular in Japan. It is widely attributed to Shi Nai-an but the names of others have also been put forward as the author. PK.

<sup>45</sup> Hamada is referring to the literary style and language found in *yomihon* but also to the fact that, whereas *yomihon* consisted primarily of text with separate illustrations, *kusazōshi* consisted primarily of illustrations and the much reduced text was squeezed into the blank parts of the illustrations. PK.

critiques, in which he notes that other critics praise his plots but none of them praise the style that he set so much store by. It was in the case of *yomihon* that such things could be said for the first time. He considered that the depiction of human emotions was an indispensable part of fictional writing. His long-held belief was that, although *Shui hu zhuan* and the *Tale of Genji* were wanting from the point of view of encouraging virtue and reproofing vice, their depiction of human emotions made them masterpieces. The pseudonymous individual<sup>46</sup> who attacked Sanba's *Akogi monogatari* placed most weight on whether or not it conformed to human emotions. Depicting human emotions well, however, was not something that *kusazōshi* could do: it required the literariness to be found in *yomihon*. Bakin considered the encouragement of virtue and the reproofing of vice to be the mission of literature, and so none of his works, whether *yomihon* or *gōkan*, were without this feature. But his pride as a writer could only be satisfied if added to that was fine literary style and accurate depiction of human emotions.

Secondly, literary writing rendered a further subtle literary quality possible. In terms of encouraging virtue and reproofing vice *yomihon* were far harder to understand than *gōkan*. The moral reckoning was extremely complicated. In a work like *Hakkenden* there were 400 characters with overlapping virtues and vices and it is reasonable to suppose that in Bakin's eyes the weighing up of these constituted one of his skills. Furthermore, *Hakkenden* contains philosophical ideas that could not be included in *gōkan* as well as his ideals which were on a grand scale. He was well aware that it was literature he was writing and not an argument. He refrained from direct or crude arguments and his ideals were embodied more subtly. As embodiments of these ideals his *yomihon* stood on an incomparably higher level than his *gōkan*.

In the case of *yomihon*, too, authors considered how to gain the popularity of their readers. Bakin, however, neglected most readers. It could be said that he wrote *gōkan* for his readers but *yomihon* for himself. Jōsai was unable to understand a poem that came in chapter 96 of *Hakkenden*.<sup>47</sup> Bakin wrote, "Although this poem is not good I wrote it myself and it is not without a deep meaning", and over many lines proceeded to explain it.<sup>48</sup> ...<sup>49</sup> Bakin did not only respond to the critics, pointing out where their criticisms were right or wrong, he also discussed the inadequacies of the criticisms themselves. The subtle points that he refers to were of course not aimed at ordinary readers: only a couple of critics were capable of understanding them, and in some cases they were difficult even for them to understand.

The critics who surrounded Bakin need now to be discussed. As is already well known, Jōsai, Keisō, Mokurō, Jōsui, Kingyo and Bokushi exchanged their views of Bakin's novel with the author, but their views also had an impact on the author. Their critical outlook was very different from that of today and they focussed on trying to understand the author's intentions, but they sought the author's recognition of the appropriateness of their criticisms and his acknowledgement of their connoisseurship.

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<sup>46</sup> Hamada gives the bizarre pseudonym used by the critic: I have replaced this with "pseudonymous individual". PK.

<sup>47</sup> Hamada cites the poem in Chinese and Japanese, but I shall refrain from attempting to render it into English. PK.

<sup>48</sup> Response to Jōsai's critique of *Hakkenden*, volume 9, part 1.

<sup>49</sup> Here there follow several quotations from Bakin's detailed responses to critiques from his more erudite readers, which I have omitted; Hamada cites these to show how carefully Bakin responded and to show the high expectations he had of his readers. PK.

Bakin critiqued their critiques and they recognised his right to do so, submitting without a word of complaint. Since their critiques were not directly based on their subjective impressions but rather sought the author's agreement, they were inevitably rather timid. But from the author's point of view these critiques were what he had been hoping for. Their critiques unveiled the author's subtleties and appreciated the efforts hidden behind his words. Thus receiving these critiques was a kind of repayment for the author's efforts and the author was waiting for the critics' words of praise of some part or other of his novel. If the critics failed to get the point this was their fault so they hunted for the subtle places and sought to be proud of being clever readers. These critiques, then, were not outside the author's expectations: they were already deep inside him. They were actually a part of his creation. When he received critiques that were outside his expectations he reserved the right to reprove the critic, telling him that he was not reading it properly. Such critiques were bad critiques and the critic was humbled. This kind of thing probably only happened with Bakin. Bakin told his critics how to write their critiques, or rather encouraged them to write in such a way. When Bakin suddenly produced a theory of literature and published "Seven rules for writing fiction" he said in it that the utterances of his group of critics were all the wrong way around and upside down, to the author's dismay. Jōsai, Mokurō, Keisō, Jōsui and the others had all been nurtured as critics by Bakin himself; they were pale shadows of himself, they understood the familiar features of his novels and they could collaborate on his unfinished novels. But it was only this kind of critic that he regarded as equipped with good sense, and in fact he was right. The masses who used *kashihon'ya* understood nothing, laughing and weeping along with the hero or heroine. Only the critics gazed at the author behind his work, and the author exerted his highest creative skills with such critics in mind.

There were, however, other critics, separate from the group mentioned already and not known to Bakin. They were people who were not producing favourable comments in the hope of gaining recognition from the author. They fall into two groups, of which the first is other writers whose critical remarks have survived, people like Tanehiko and Shikatsube no Magao. They do nothing more than to praise his technical skills.<sup>50</sup> The second group consists of amateurs, the fans, and they are worth more attention, but the only critique extant is one written by Yodo-Shin. It took the form of a letter sent by a reader in Kyoto: "On 2.25 a townsman in Kyoto sent a letter to Chōjiya and Chōjiya sent it on to me on 3.10; on the envelope all it said was 'Mr Kyokutei Bakin, Moto-Iida-chō, Edo – from Kyoto'" (Letter of 1836.3.28). Bakin noted appreciatively that "even some country bumkins are clever people." Although it does not survive there was also a letter sent by a writing teacher in the Kiba district of Fukagawa who was an acquaintance of Rokujen Meshimori: "at first he praised me very much but this was just to criticise me heavily later; there were lots of hilarious things in it and some quite reasonable things as well, but he is basically a sightseer with not much knowledge of the mind-set of authors" (Letter of 1827.11.23). Also it seems from Bakin's letters that Suzuki Yūnen, a retainer of Tōeizan Hōshinnō who also worked as an illustrator, sent critiques from time to time (Letter of 1830.1.28). Enthusiastic readers sometimes entrusted letters to couriers or handed letters in at his front door if they couldn't stop themselves from doing something by way of reaction. Fan mail of this sort was not uncommon. "In the Bunsei era [1818-1830] people who had written critiques of my *Hakkenden*, *Keisei Suikoden* or *Konpirabune rishō no tomozuna* came to buy medicines and would hand their critiques to the receptionist

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<sup>50</sup> See Bakin's letter of 1830.3.26.

asking them to be passed on to me and then leaving, while others would pretend to have some news of somebody or other, hand their critique in at the entrance in the evening and then flee, but all of these critiques were of poor quality and none of them were worth looking at” (Letter of 1830.1.28).

In the case of Yodo-Shin’s critique, the copy of it that Bakin made is kept in Waseda University. I cannot deal with it here in detail owing to lack of space but from his review we can get some sort of glimpse of how the masses were reading. His critique, however, was the best produced by people of that kind (from the author’s point of view), as Bakin reported to Jōsai, but it differed in language and perspective from the critiques of Jōsai and the others.

It felt good when Fujishiro is twice silenced by Akinobu. ... The shrine maiden stringing the bow is fantastic. ... The bit with weeping at Sokokura is the funniest thing ever. ... It is superb when Mokushirō gobbles the rice cakes. What is striking are the phrases that seem subjective and characteristic of ordinary readers, and phrases that suggest the reader has become one of the characters. They are quite different from the critiques written by Jōsai and the others:

Using *Jitsugokyō* and *Lao zi* for Nuhinosuke’s writing practice is fresher than the Naniwazu ballad Asakayama. ... The section on the Jizō of Noi is exactly as it is in *Shui hu zhuan* but having the stone turn into a well is really original. ... The Yonagosatsu plot is just right for the characters and really original. ... It is brilliant that readers don’t notice the evil scheme behind the plans and are only made to notice when the snoring comes.

What pleased Bakin the most was that Jōsai realised who Yaku and Koma were and that he recognised the critical allusion to infanticide. It is only too clear from Bakin’s responses to Jōsai’s critiques how much this shrewd reader delighted Bakin. When it comes to the infanticide, Yodo-Shin had a similar reaction to that of Jōsai: his critique is well out of the common run but is still not that of a critic of Jōsai’s calibre. There was a class of fan like Yodo-Shin who were shrewd readers.

Writing critiques and sending them reveals the nature of the reader sending them. The sort of people who deliberately sent in critiques which were clumsily written with content likely to be considered laughable by the author and were embarrassing were not aiming at a good critique of the kind that the critics were proud to write. They were just irrepressible fans. What is peculiar is that the welcome extended to Bakin’s works by his fans did not simply consist of praise but rather took the form of a critique. The critique of the section on the “evil scheme behind the plans” quoted above continues as follows: “This section the author has taken great pains over and there are secrets here which he does not let people know.” This critique takes pride in being a shrewd reader irrespective of being a member of the group of critics or just an amateur, reads the text carefully, seeks to let the author know that the meaning behind the text has been grasped and seeks to learn if it has been rightly understood. Perhaps it is a discreet form of praise for the author’s efforts. The existence of a meaning behind the text is what is expected. What was expected from novels was plot novelty down to the smallest detail. It was not sufficient to take a new plot and take the novel in a new direction, for the readers were hawk-eyed and tried to identify what was new. A new plot was not a special effect for the readers or the work but was what the readers were consciously on the lookout for. The readers looked for the novelty of the plot, the parts where the author had gone to great efforts, the meaning behind the text in all senses and the author’s secrets. The shrewd readers who came to the fore were well aware of the presence of the author behind the text and it can be said that they were trying to drag the hidden author out from behind his text.

Bakin laughed at most of the critiques. The amateur critics focussed entirely on new plots: it was the way they looked at *kusazōshi* and they had no idea where the author's creativity lay. Even the amateur critics tried to find the meaning behind the text but they got no further than the level of the plot. Even the real critics did not strike any blows or issue any warnings, though there were exceptions: when Mokurō criticised the appearance of two different characters with the same names in one work Bakin amended it.<sup>51</sup> When some unnamed critic noted that Bakin had forgotten that when Shinbei had been in trouble in the *Yoshikuniya Shino* had promised to rescue him even at the cost of her life, Bakin hurriedly added a scene in which Shinbei was rescued (excusing himself by explaining that this had been his intention all along).<sup>52</sup> Even Bakin had no choice but to give in to such well-founded criticism, for he prided himself on the fact that he always ensured there were no such inconsistencies. That apart, the critiques were little more than discoveries of what Bakin himself had hidden in his text. If they were right the author was delighted, but he laughed them off if they were wrong.

Bakin did not think of his mass audience of readers as counterparts in the understanding of fiction. He gave them sweets to lick and exercised his talents far away from the eyes of the masses. The shrewd readers were convinced that there were things hidden in his novels and read with that in mind: sometimes they found it sometimes they didn't. Bakin trained a group of people to search for these things whether they liked it or not. What he had in his mind, what he was aiming at, was his group of puppets. This is not to be understood as a negative evaluation, for I approve of the author's outlook. It was because he looked down on ordinary readers from a lofty point and did not compromise that he was able to bring to literary works a strict and uncompromising ethic of encouraging virtue and reproofing vice and to create lofty literature embodying ideals of enlightened government and a contented populace. He discovered how to make his efforts successful, with exquisite diction in every line and unveiling innermost human emotions. His faultlessly consistent plots have a mathematical beauty to them. His works are serious tragedies which combine exploration of human emotions with the logic of inhumanity. The commercial context in which Bakin's characteristically highly-polished writing was published was quite different from that of *kusazōshi* and that difference was apparent in the distinctly different genre of *yomihon*.

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<sup>51</sup> Comment found in part 3 of volume 9 of *Hakkenden*.

<sup>52</sup> *Hakkenden*, chapters 164 and 169.