

Chronicling Catastrophe and Constructing Urban Destruction:
Asai Ryōi's Musashi abumi and Kanameishi

By

Michael Alan Levine

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Written by Michael Alan Levine
has been approved for the Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations

David Atherton

R. Keller Kimbrough

Laurel Rasplica Rodd

Marcia A. Yonemoto

Date: _____

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

Levine, Michael Alan (M.A. Japanese, Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations)

Chronicling Catastrophe and Constructing Urban Destruction: Asai Ryōi's *Musashi abumi* and *Kanameishi*

Thesis directed by Professor David C. Atherton

Abstract

This thesis examines two works by Asai Ryōi (?-1691) 浅井了意 that depict urban disasters. The first is *Musashi abumi* むさしあぶみ (1661), which deals with a fire that ravaged Edo in 1657; the second is *Kanameishi* かなめいし (ca. 1662), which is about an earthquake that occurred in Kyoto in 1662. Despite being written by the same person, these works use very different strategies in their respective representations of urban catastrophe. In engaging these texts, I focus on the various contexts in which Ryōi wrote them—contexts related to place, literary tradition, and the catastrophic events themselves—to illuminate why these works are so different. In emphasizing these texts' historically-grounded diversity, I argue that we can broaden our perspective on what constitutes “disaster writing” in a way that moves away from conceptions of such writing as “speaking the unspeakable.”

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Introduction

Catastrophic events are so different from everyday experience that they seem to challenge the efficacy of representation. “The catastrophic, or the catastrophe, is an event, or an experience so overwhelmingly horrific that it typically exceeds our linguistic capacity. . . . There is a tendency when confronted with the catastrophic to . . . place it beyond all representation.”¹ Some of these difficulties are psychological.² Others are epistemological.³ Given these issues, it is notable that writers and artists have nonetheless attempted to represent catastrophe many times over. The extraordinary nature of disasters presents challenges to those who would depict it. Thus, we might expect a great diversity of texts from different writers who make the attempt. This might be particularly true for Japanese writers, because as much as any place, diversity of catastrophic experience starts with the variety of calamity itself: earthquakes, tsunami, volcanic eruptions, large fires, and famines have occurred with sobering frequency throughout Japan’s history. In this thesis, I look at the diversity produced by *one* seventeenth-century Japanese writer, Asai Ryōi 浅井了意 (? – 1691). Ryōi produced two works about two events, written within two years of

¹ Aaron Kerner, *Representing the Catastrophic: Coming to Terms with ‘Unimaginable’ Suffering and ‘Incomprehensible’ Horror in Visual Culture* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), 1.

² “Whatever the particular nature of a disaster, the survivors and witnesses—or, as time goes by, the descendants of survivors and witnesses—share a memory that has damaged, perhaps shattered, their sense of world and self: in the grip of a trauma (or inherited trauma), they are subject to psychological mechanisms of denial, displacement/figuration and repetition.” Angela Stock and Cornelia Stott, eds., *Representing the Unimaginable* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 9.

³ Kerner identifies this as a problem of epistemological realism in particular, in the sense of an outlook “premised on a verifiable link between the representation and the catastrophe.” Kerner, *Representing the Catastrophe*, 2.

each other; each represents a different historical urban disaster. *Musashi abumi*⁴ (1661) depicts the Great Meireki Fire (*Meireki no taika* 明暦の大火), which devastated Edo in 1657; *Kanameishi*⁵ (ca. 1662) is about the Kanbun Ōmi-Wakasa Earthquake (*Kanbun Ōmi-Wakasa jishin* 寛文近江・若狭地震), which struck the Kamigata region in and around Kyoto in 1662. Despite having the same author, these texts use very distinct representational strategies to represent urban space and catastrophe. I argue that three contrasts underlie these differences. The first is between the catastrophes themselves; the ways Edo and Kyoto are mapped, as well as each text's overall structure, reflect real differences between the natures of the Meireki fire and Kanbun earthquake. The second is between the orientation each text takes toward the cities and disasters; the texts' descriptive modes reflect that Ryōi was a Kamigata resident writing primarily for local readers who probably did not endure the fire or live in Edo but likely did experience the earthquake in the place they inhabited, Kyoto. The third is in the ways the two texts engage with literary tradition. Tokugawa Edo was a young city with a weak literary heritage,⁶ while imperial Kyoto's was long and deep; the ways in which each text mixes informational and literary registers reflects this difference. By investigating these different representations of urban catastrophe, we can get a clearer understanding of the intersection of fact, imagined space, literary context, and the representation of disaster,

⁴ *Musashi abumi* むさしあぶみ, in *Musashi abumi kōchū to kenkyū* むさしあぶみ校注と研究, ed. by Sakamaki Kōta 坂巻甲太 and Kuroki Takashi 黒木喬 (Tokyo: Ōfusa, 1988), 7-61.

⁵ *Kanameishi* かなめいし, in *Kanazōshi shū* 仮名草子集, ed. by Taniwaki Masachika 谷脇理史, Oka Masahiko 岡雅彦, and Inoue Kazuhito 井上和人, *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集, Vol. 64 (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1999), 12-83.

⁶ This is in contrast to old Edo village and the province of Musashi. In Chapter One, I discuss the allusions to the latter contained in the title, *Musashi abumi*.

thereby contributing to our knowledge of how Japanese writers have approached their catastrophic history while broadening our perspective on what constitutes “disaster writing.”

Although we do not know when or where Ryōi was born, current scholarship suggests that family misfortune led to a peripatetic youth that ended when he settled in Kyoto, where by the late 1650s he was writing for local publishers.⁷ During the first decades of the seventeenth century, literacy grew apace with urbanization; this growth, combined with advances in printing technology, fostered an expanding readership. By the time Ryōi published his first known work, *Kan'ninki* 堪忍記 (1659), publishers had for many years been seeking out writers to produce a greater number of works.⁸ Genre conventions were amorphous and authors responded by experimenting. They produced diverse texts on an impressive variety of topics: dialogues on religious dogma, *setsuwa*-like didactic tales, practical moral guides, essays, translations, samurai tales, love stories, and

⁷ Ryōi's father belonged to the Jōdo Shinshū Ōtani sect (*Jōdo shinshū Ōtaniha* 浄土真宗大谷派) and was once Chief Priest of Honshōji Temple 本昭寺 in Settsu Province. Ryōi's father got caught up in an affair involving Ryōi's uncle, Nishikawa Shūji 西川宗治, who was punished for running away. The judgment was extended to include Ryōi's father, who was subsequently banished from the Ōtani sect. The family lost their home. In the preface to his *Kashōki hyōban* 可笑記評判 (1660), Ryōi writes that sometime during the Kan'ei period (1624-1644), he settled in Kyoto. For more detail, see Noma Kōshin 野間光辰, “Ryōi tsuiseki” 了意追跡, in his *Kinsei sakkaden kō* 近世作家伝巧 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1985), 105-147. Noma quotes from the preface of *Kashōki hyōban* regarding Ryōi's arrival in Kyoto. See Noma, *ibid.*, 136. The most-recent book-length biography of Ryōi is Hōjō Hideo 北条秀雄, *Shinshū Asai Ryōi* 新修浅井了意 (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1974).

⁸ For an exploration of aspects of the publisher-writer dynamic, focusing on Asai Ryōi and Kawano Michikiyo 河野道清, who published several of Ryōi's works, see Sakamaki Kōta 坂卷甲太, “Kinsei shoki ni okeru sakusha, shoshi, dokusha no isō: sakusha Asai Ryōi, shoshi Kawano Michikiyo wo jiku ni” 近世初期における作者・書肆・読者の位相—作者浅井了意・書肆河野道清を軸に, *Nihon bungaku* 日本文学 43, no. 10 (October 1994): 1-9.

informational reports, among others.⁹ Ryōi was prolific in producing just such an assortment of works and was a highly innovative and influential writer of the period.¹⁰

Trying to impose some order on this variegated mass of texts, Noda Hisao has proposed a typology that separates these works, called *kanazōshi* 仮名草子, into three subcategories: works that are informative, educational (or didactic), or entertaining.¹¹ Some scholars have criticized the rigid use of these distinctions, charging that strict separation slights the hybrid nature of *kanazōshi*, some of which combine elements of all three of Noda's subcategories.¹² While it is not my intention to add to this discussion, *Musashi abumi* and *Kanameishi* are just such hybrid works; the strategies Ryōi uses to depict city and catastrophe are constructed in multiple ways, blending factual information, didactic material, and entertainment. By considering this hybridity and comparing the different ways they are manifested in each work, we are able to see how each text's overall representational strategy is constituted.

Chapter One, "Edo Between Bare Fact and Hellish Fiction," explores *Musashi abumi's* dual representation of urban space and catastrophe through three kinds of writing found in

⁹ Noda Hisao 野田壽雄, "Kanazōshi" 仮名草子, in *Nihon koten bungaku daijiten* 日本古典文学大事典, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1983), 670.

¹⁰ Here are some examples of the variety of Ryōi's writing: *Kan'ninki* was a book of moral instruction, while his best-known works include the didactic tales of *Ukiyo monogatari* 浮世物語, the ghost story collection *Otogi bōko* 御伽婢子, and the guidebook to famous places, *Tōkaidō meishoki* 東海道名所記 (the last of which I will discuss below).

¹¹ Noda Hisao, "Kanazōshi," 670. The term *kanazōshi* means "kana booklets," so called because produced for a popular audience, they were written largely in phonetic *kana* with a relatively small number of Chinese characters.

¹² See especially Laura Moretti, "Kanazōshi Revisited: The Beginnings of Japanese Popular Literature in Print," *Monumenta Nipponica* 65, no. 2 (2010): 297-356.

the text: one that presents dry information by enumerating place names; another that depicts masses of indistinct commoners in factually-based third-person anecdotes; and a third that is a first-person fictional narrative that climaxes in a scene that repurposes a literary trope called *jigoku meguri* 地獄めぐり or “tours of hell,” into a metaphor for the devastated city. I examine each in turn, explaining how the shape of Ryōi’s burning Edo is mapped out by the informational lists, populated by the faceless crowds, and constituted by the metaphor. My sharpest focus is on the text’s use of the *jigoku meguri* trope. Presented as a parody, it adds a comic element to the text; however, by representing the burning city through the eyes of a first-person narrator, it unites the depiction of the devastation of Edo and the personal trauma of the conflagration. Ultimately, I contend, the images of Edo and the Great Meireki Fire that emerge from this combination of information and fiction reflect a kind of mental and physical distance from both the city and its catastrophe.

Chapter Two, “Capital in Distress: *Kanameishi* and the Literary-Disaster Tour of Kyoto,” turns to Ryōi’s depiction of the powerful Kanbun earthquake. In this chapter, I show that the serial structure of *Kanameishi* allows Ryōi to focus closely on the experiences of individual Kyoto residents, who are portrayed with realistic detail and placed in distinct neighborhoods that have a depth absent in *Musashi abumi*’s representation of Edo. At the same time, however, these vignettes have two qualities that locate these experiences in highly imaginative spaces. First, *Kanameishi*’s sharply-drawn anecdotes are filled with numerous literary allusions and comic verse; second, these neighborhoods are also culturally-charged spaces, some of which are described using characteristics of “guidebooks to famous places,” or *meishoki* 名所記. The result, I argue, is a representation

of urban disaster that is situated simultaneously in multiple spaces that represent a “lived” Kyoto, a “literary” Kyoto, and a “tourist” Kyoto.

Disastrous events rip us out of everyday life; as noted above, their representation is notoriously difficult. In this thesis I hope that by narrowing the focus to Ryōi’s texts, we can foreground diversity in “disaster writing.” I do not intend to make any grand claims about the narrative representation of catastrophe. Starting with the banal observation that writers do attempt to make such representations, I modestly suggest that we can profit greatly by focusing on the texts themselves, particularly by focusing on their diversity. The Great Meireki Fire and the Kanbun Ōmi-Wakasa Earthquake were seventeenth-century disasters. Ryōi’s strategies for representing them are also very much of that time. These strategies place the catastrophes in highly idiosyncratic urban spaces and describe the events in a variety of ways even within the works themselves. The result are two very different texts. By historicizing these representations of urban catastrophe, I suggest that disaster writing can be highly variable. For if one writer can produce such disparate texts on (at least superficially) the same subject of “urban disaster,” then the further we get away from Ryōi and his milieu in looking at other representations of catastrophic events, the greater diversity we may find—and the more problematic it becomes to isolate specific aspects of the experience of catastrophe and its representation in trying to characterize “disaster writing.”

State of the Field

Japanese-language scholarship on *Musashi abumi* and *Kanameishi* remains relatively scarce. There are few articles that look exclusively at either text. Rather, research is more often situated within research on the larger body of Ryōi’s work or early modern Japanese

literature; frequently such scholarship offers little more than synopses of the two texts. When the focus does narrow, there is a tendency for scholars to emphasize the factual aspects of each text, identified by the word *kirokusei* 記録性, or informative nature. Mizue Renko published an article in 1972, which compares *Musashi abumi* to official accounts of the Meireki Fire; it remains the starting point for those interested in that aspect of the text.¹³ For an analysis that looks at not only *Musashi abumi*'s informative but also its literary aspects—described as *hōkoku bungaku* 報告文学, or literary reportage—the work of Sakamaki Kōta is essential. While he tends to highlight the “reportage” half of that equation, he offers perceptive comments on all aspects of the text. His chapter “Asai Ryōi to *Musashi abumi*” in *Musashi abumi: kōchū to kenkyū* is the most complete summary of the various articles he has written over the years.¹⁴ Not only does Sakamaki look at the text in exhaustive detail, but he also speculates about Ryōi's relationship to the city of Edo. Ogawa Takehiko also wrote an article on four disaster *kanazōshi*, including *Musashi abumi* and *Kanameishi*; Ogawa sets the reportorial and literary aspects of *Musashi abumi* and *Kanameishi* side-by-side, evaluating the extent to which scenes draw on factual events and to which they are invented.¹⁵

¹³ Mizue Renko 水江蓮子, “Kanazōshi no kirokusei: *Musashi abumi* to Meireki no taika” 仮名草子の記録性「むさしあぶみ」と明暦の大火, *Nihon rekishi* 日本歴史 291 (August 1972): 87-100.

¹⁴ Sakamaki Kōta 坂巻甲太, “Asai Ryōi to *Musashi abumi*” 浅井了意とむさしあぶみ, in Sakamaki and Kuroki, *Musashi abumi kōchū to kenkyū*, 109-150.

¹⁵ Ogawa Takehiko 小川武彦, “Kanazōshi yonhen ni miru tensai jihen no bungeisei to kirokusei” 仮名草子四篇に見る天災地変の文芸性と記録性, in *Kinsei bungei ronsō* 近世文芸論叢, ed. Yasutaka Teruoka 暉峻康隆 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1978), 61-76.

Sakamaki also looks at both the informational and literary aspects of *Kanameishi* in the first chapter of his book *Kanazōshi shinkō*.¹⁶ As in his writing on *Musashi abumi*, Sakamaki goes through the entire text of *Kanameishi*, giving a synopsis while also commenting on aspects both factual and literary. However, the only scholar who has written with an explicit focus on only the literary aspects of either text is Ohara Tōru, who has published a two-part examination of *Kanameishi*.¹⁷ Like Sakamaki, Ohara summarizes the entire text while analyzing certain characteristics, such as its use of Kamo no Chōmei's *Hōjōki*¹⁸ and its use of *meishoki*-like historical description. I have found it essential to my thinking about *Kanameishi*.

There is just one English-language article, by Peter Kornicki, on *Musashi abumi*.¹⁹ The article takes issue with scholarly focus on *kirokusei*, providing tantalizing yet introductory speculations about certain aspects of the text, notably the *jigoku meguri* scene. There is nothing in English on *Kanameishi*.

¹⁶ Sakamaki Kōta, “Ryōi no hōkoku bungaku: *Musashi abumi*, *Kanameishi* o megutte” 了意の報告文学：『むさしあぶみ』『かなめいし』をめぐって, in Sakamaki, *Kanazōshi shinkō* 仮名草子新攷 (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1978), 3-36.

¹⁷ Ohara Tōru 小原亨, and “*Kanameishi* no bungeisei: kyokōka no hōhō wo megutte” 『かなめいし』の文芸性—虚構化の方法をめぐって, *Ritsumeikan bungaku* 立命館文学 52 (February 2006): 520-527; and “*Kanameishi* no bungei hōhō: chū, gekan wo chūshin ni Ryōi no sōsaku ito wo saguru” 『かなめいし』の文芸方法：中、下巻を中心に了意の創作意図を探る, *Nihon bungeigaku* 日本文芸学 48 (March 2012): 29-47.

¹⁸ *Hōjōki* 方丈記, in *Hōjōki, Tsurezuregusa, Shōbō genzō zuimonki, Tannishō* 方丈記、徒然草、正法眼蔵随聞記、歎異抄, ed. by Kanda Hideo 神田秀夫, Nagazumi Yasuaki 永積安明, and Yasuraoka Kōsaku 安良岡康作, *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集, Vol. 44 (Tokyo: Shōgakusan, 1995): 11-37.

¹⁹ Peter Kornicki, “Narrative of a Catastrophe: *Musashi abumi* and the Meireki Fire,” *Japan Forum* 21, no. 3 (2009): 347-361.

Japanese-language scholarship on *kanazōshi* is well-developed, covering topics outside the scope of my thesis. Noda Hisao's typology, mentioned above, was fundamental to me in thinking about Ryōi's idiosyncratic texts. Laura Moretti's argument for "hybridism" in works of the time has helped me to conceptualize Ryōi's texts as a combination of Noda's subcategories.²⁰

Regarding the representation of geographical space, important work has been done on "mapping" the world of early modern Japan. Mary Elizabeth Berry analyzes actual maps and discusses the development of *meishoki* as a way of writing about cities.²¹ Marcia Yonemoto also looks at the imagination of place in maps as well as real and fictional travel narratives.²² Jilly Traganou focuses on the representation of place and travel on the Tōkaidō Road, including that in Ryōi's *Tōkaidō meishoki* 東海道名所記.²³ I have also relied on Jurgen Elisonas²⁴ and Nicolas Fiévé²⁵ concerning *meishoki* depictions of Kyoto and Edo, especially the former's analysis of Ryōi's *Edo meishoki* 江戸名所記 and the imaginative quality of many of its descriptions of famous places.

²⁰ See note 13 on page 4 for more information about Moretti's article.

²¹ Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Japan in Print: Information and Nation in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

²² Marcia Yonemoto, *Mapping Early Modern Japan Space: Place, and Culture in the Tokugawa Period, 1603-1868* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

²³ Jilly Traganou, *The Tōkaidō Road: Traveling and Representation in Edo and Meiji Japan* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004).

²⁴ Jurgis Elisonas, "Notorious Places: A Brief Excursion into the Narrative Topography of Early Edo," in *Edo and Paris*, ed. by James L. McClain, John Merriman, and Ugawa Kaoru (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 253-291.

²⁵ Nicolas Fiévé, "Kyoto's Famous Places: Collective Memory and 'Monuments' in the Tokugawa Period," in *Japanese Capitals in Historical Perspective: Place, Power, and Memory in Kyoto, Edo, and Tokyo*, ed. by Nicolas Fiévé and Paul Waley (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 153-171.

Scholarship on the literature of disaster would fill a lengthy bibliographic essay. Unfortunately for my purposes, it has a distinctly modern focus that is often centered on the man-made cataclysms of the twentieth century. Such scholarship, for example the Saul Friedlander-edited collection of essays on the Holocaust and John Whittier Treat's work on *hibakusha* 被爆者 writers, or Japanese "atomic bomb writers," raises important questions about the representational efficacy of historical or literary narrative in capturing the experience of these catastrophic events, as well as problematizing the aestheticization of disaster.²⁶ It is an open question whether theories that deal with modern disasters can be effectively used in analyzing early modern texts. While there is a sense in which *any* "big" catastrophe presents problems of narrative representation, regardless of context, the different worldviews and the distinct characteristics of a society in the first decades of popularly printed literature, as opposed to a modern industrial society, are so strong as to recommend an eye for historical contingency. As a result, it is not my intention to tackle directly larger theoretical issues related to the representation of disaster narrative. Rather, my focus is on how disaster is represented in this historical moment, in these particular cities, and how one writer produced two very different texts.

²⁶ Saul Friedlander, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). John Whittier Treat, *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Friedlander and Treat are two examples of many. Others include Kerner, *Representing the Catastrophic*; Stock and Stott, *Representing the Unimaginable*; and Zoë Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Chapter One

Edo Between Bare Fact and Hellish Fiction

Six decades after Tokugawa Ieyasu took control of Edo village in the 1590s, setting in motion events that would lead to it becoming the largest urban center of Japan, much of that city was ravaged by a fire of unprecedented scale. Although *Musashi abumi* was one of the first published accounts of what became known as *Meireki no taika*, or the Great Meireki Fire, Asai Ryōi's Kamigata readers had undoubtedly heard news of Edo's devastation before Ryōi wrote the work.¹ Yet for most of them the fire remained an imagined disaster, built on hearsay, one that had occurred in a city that itself was a conceptualized, and not a lived, space.² Furthermore, Tokugawa Edo had yet to be described at length in a popular narrative; while "there were poetic travel diaries that described places in Edo and introduced the city in a fragmentary way," there would be nothing that would attempt to give a more extensive treatment of Edo until Ryōi's own *Edo meishoki* was published about two years after *Musashi abumi*.³ How, then, does *Musashi abumi* approach the task of communicating a horrific catastrophe while also representing to Kamigata readers an urban space that for most of them remained largely unknown,

¹ Kamigata merchants with business connections in Edo would have had a keen interest in these events, encouraging the spread of information. News indeed traveled fast: the Confucianist and Kyotoite Akatsuka Un'an 赤塚芸庵 recorded talk of the disaster in his diary nine days after the fire had died out. See Sakamaki, "Asai Ryōi to *Musashi abumi*," 116.

² Ryōi himself was, as noted in the introduction, a Kyoto resident. Sakamaki argues that, despite the unlikelihood that Ryōi was in Edo at the time of the fire, the detail and accuracy of some of the stories Ryōi recounts in *Musashi abumi* support the hypothesis that he made a trip to Edo sometime after the fire and spoke to survivors there. Sakamaki covers this topic in detail in *ibid.*, 123-143.

³ Sakamaki Kōta, *Kanazōshi shinkō*, 37. The closest work written prior to *Musashi abumi* is the Edo section of Ryōi's *Tōkaidō meishoki*. I will have more to say below about *Tōkaidō meishoki*.

whether through lived experience or literary precedent—one that, moreover, had largely been destroyed? How do place and the facts of disaster interact in the representation of both? In this chapter, I argue that Ryōi solves this by producing a text that veers between naked fact and bold fiction, situating the conflagration in a city mapped out first by unadorned toponyms, but which ultimately yields to a fantastic metaphor. This metaphor, in turn, is a representation of city and disaster that unites both in a completely imagined “Edo” that suffers such destruction that it resembles nothing on earth.

To understand how *Musashi abumi* represents Edo and the Meireki Fire, I first give an overview of the calamity, thereby placing us on similar footing with Ryōi’s readers—as people who have somewhat detailed second-hand knowledge of the Great Meireki Fire. Following this, I turn to the text itself, beginning with a short synopsis. I then delve into how Ryōi “writes Edo.” The majority of *Musashi abumi* is split between two uses of fact. The first is a report that simply lists the names of neighborhoods and daimyo, or domain lords (the names of which stand in for their mansions), through which *Musashi abumi* maps out the sections of Edo that burn; in addition, as we shall see below, the way the text lays out each name communicates a sense of a growing fire spreading to an ever-larger area. I turn to the second use of fact in the subsequent section, which looks at how Ryōi “writes” the Meireki Fire. Here, I look at how factually-based tales are embellished with fictional details that add pathos to depictions of suffering commoners in some episodes or inject humor into others. The final section turns to the fictional tale of a man named Rakusaibō, who recounts his personal experience of the fire to a merchant acquaintance. Through the first-person narrative of Rakusaibō, the representations of city and disaster are brought together. His tale is woven in and out at strategic points in the larger text, culminating in a

parody of *jigoku meguri* 地獄めぐり, or “Tours of Hell,” a literary and artistic trope that dates back in Japan to the ninth century. Such tales depict the posthumous guided tours of various individuals to one of the Buddhist hells, the Pure Land, or the other realms of the *rokudō* 六道, or the Six Realms of Transmigration.⁴ In *Musashi abumi*’s parody, a half-drunk Rakusaibō confuses parts of burned out Edo for the Six Realms. I argue that Rakusaibō’s burlesque tour of Edo-as-hell provides comic relief that softens the depressing litany of death and destruction detailed in the text. It is, however, also a representation of the fire as so calamitous as to be easily mistaken for hell on earth. It is the text’s final depiction of Edo in a state of disaster: a place so devastated as to be unrecognizable.

My goal in this chapter is to historicize *Musashi abumi* and unpack some of the ways in which it represents the Meireki fire with reference to the specific contexts in which it was written: this particular city destroyed at this particular moment; an account of that destruction written for a contemporary audience; and the use of a familiar religious-literary trope to accomplish the representation of the fire. The “representation of disaster” that emerges is not something easily abstracted from these contexts. It is my hope that this close look at a specific text will prompt reflection on the difficulty of defining “disaster writing” by foregrounding its contingent roots.

⁴ That is, the six realms in which they may be reborn. Literally, *rokudō* might better be translated as the “Six Paths” or “Six Roads.” They are depicted as places, however, so I will use the term “realm” in describing them. The *rokudō* are: *tenjindō* 天神道, the realm of the gods; *ashuradō* 阿修羅道, the realm of endless strife; *ningendō* 人間道, the human realm; *chikushōdō* 畜生道, the animal realm; *gakidō* 餓鬼道, the land of the hungry ghosts; and *jigoku*, the various hells. As for how many hells there are, it can vary from text to text: some “claim four, six, ten, eighteen, thirty, forty-six, or sixty-four hells . . . but many agree on eight.” Caroline Hirasawa, “The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution: A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 63, no. 1 (Spring, 2008), 3.

The Great Meireki Fire of 1657

The Meireki Fire was the worst of many conflagrations that occurred in Edo during the early Tokugawa period.⁵ Edo was particularly susceptible to fire in winter and early spring, when the climate combined dry air with strong winds from the north-northwest, whipping off the Kanto plain (in winter), or from the south-southwest (in spring). Furthermore, the city was densely populated and construction in areas inhabited by commoners was done without regard to the possibility of fire. Merchants conducted business in front of houses made of wood, straw, and paper topped with roofs that jutted out into narrow streets in close proximity to facing buildings. There were fireproofed storehouses, called *dozō* 土蔵, but only warriors and the richest merchants had access to them. During the cold winter months, fire was the primary means of keeping warm, increasing the danger. To make matters even worse, Edo's firefighting system was inadequate; when a fire ignited in an area of no direct importance to the shogun or daimyō, firemen were slow to act, putting merchants in a precarious position.⁶

⁵ According to Kuroki Takashi, between 1590 (the year Tokugawa Ieyasu arrived to take control of Edo) and the Meireki Fire in 1657, 140 fires were officially recorded, of which two (in 1601 and 1641) were considered *taika*, or "great fires." However, the number of recorded deaths for these fires was in the hundreds, which, when compared to the Meireki Fire's tens of thousands of victims, renders inadequate the usefulness of the term *taika*. Kuroki, "Meireki no taika to Edo" 明暦の大火と江戸, in Sakamaki and Kuroki, *Musashi abumi kōchū to kenkyū*, 172. Matsukata Fuyuko reports 1,798 officially-recorded fires in Edo during the entirety of the Tokugawa period (1601-1867). Matsukata, "Fires and Recoveries Witnessed by the Dutch in Edo and Nagasaki: The Great Meireki Fire of 1657 and the Great Fire of Kanbun in 1663," *Itinerario* 37, no. 3 (December 2013), 172.

⁶ Regarding this and what follows on the Meireki Fire, I have relied primarily on Kuroki, "Meireki no taika to Edo." See also Sakamaki, "Asai Ryōi to *Musashi abumi*," 109-50; Matsukata, "Fires and Recoveries"; Kornicki, "Narrative of a Catastrophe"; and James L. McClain, "Edobashi: Power, Space, and Popular Culture in Edo," in *Edo and Paris: Urban Life and the State in the Early Modern Era*, ed. by James L. McClain, John M. Merriman, and Ugawa Kaoru (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 105-131.

The first month of the third year of Meireki (the end of February and beginning of March 1657) was especially bad. There had been no precipitation for weeks, leaving wells throughout the city dry. On New Year's Day, a fire broke out that burned around three city blocks. Sizable fires also occurred on the second, fourth, and ninth days of the new year, hitting several different neighborhoods. The fire on the fourth began at night and burned well into the next day, causing considerable damage and panic.⁷ Nevertheless, none of these fires prepared residents for the horror that awaited them. On the eighteenth, at "around eight in the morning, a strong wind blew out of the north, an unbroken cloud of dust dancing upward, such that one could not discern anything for ten meters ahead."⁸ The wind persisted throughout the morning. Then, early in the afternoon, a cold front seems to have come through, causing high-speed winds that were conducive to the spread of fire. Unfortunately, that is precisely what happened, as the winds fanned a blaze of unknown origin that had ignited at Honmyōji 本妙寺 Temple in the Hongō-Maruyama 本郷丸山 neighborhood.⁹ The fire promptly encircled the neighboring Yushima Shrine 湯嶋神社, from there incinerating Higashi Honganji 東本願寺 Temple and then moving south. The fire spread to yet other areas as the direction of the wind shifted in the evening, jumping the Nihonbashi River near the Edobashi area. As historian Kuroki Takashi writes,

Night arrived, but the force of the flames did not abate. It seemed like midday. Around eight at night, the fire entered the granary in Asakusa, burning the rice. The smoke suffocated people who had evacuated and gathered behind the granary.

⁷ Kuroki, "Meireki no taika to Edo," 173.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid. Kuroki is recording Takahashi Kōichirō's 高橋浩一郎 speculations about the weather. Takahashi bases his reasoning on the path of the fire, deducing from there the direction of the winds and the kind of weather system that might have caused them.

Others who had taken refuge in the Sumida River drowned. That night, the shogun, Tokugawa Ietsuna, climbed the turret of the outer citadel of Edo Castle to survey the fire. At the time, he was seventeen years old. Perhaps he spied the distant red flames continuously burning in the eastern night sky. . . . The fire died around two in the morning on the nineteenth.¹⁰

Unfortunately, the strong winds continued on the nineteenth and early that morning another fire ignited near Koishikawa 小石川 at “a carelessly tended cooking fire in a samurai residence.”¹¹ The fire again spread, this time reaching Ietsuna’s castle in the afternoon and destroying most of it. A third fire started in the late afternoon on the nineteenth. By the time the flames were extinguished, nearly three-quarters of the city was in ashes. By some accounts as many as 100,000 people had lost their lives.¹²

The Great Meireki Fire radically altered the Edo landscape and divided the city’s history into pre- and post-fire periods, a division that influenced official urban policy and the artistic depiction of Edo.¹³ It was so unforgettable that fifty-nine years later Kameoka Sōzan 亀岡宗山, who experienced it as a child, wrote a vivid memoir in which he recalled seeing “innumerable corpses of people who had died with no one to pray for them.” He writes of bodies “throughout Edo burned to death” and “many thousands of dead” that had to be removed from the streets. Kameoka, echoing *Musashi abumi*, also writes of corpses

¹⁰ Ibid., 175.

¹¹ McClain, “Edobashi,” 105.

¹² Ibid., 109. Estimates vary. According to Matsukata, Uesugi Clan documents put the number at 30,000. Matsukata, “Fires and Recoveries,” 174. McClain, citing *bakufu* documents, reports estimates of over 100,000. McClain, “Edobashi,” 106. See also Sakamaki, “Asai Ryōi to *Musashi abumi*,” 109.

¹³ William Coaldrake, “Metaphors of the Metropolis: Architectural and Artistic Representations of the Identity of Edo,” in *Japanese Capitals in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Nicholas Fiévé and Paul Waley (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 129-149. On the effect of the fire on *bakufu* urban planning policy and the ways in which merchants tested their limits, see McClain, “Edobashi.”

piled in ditches.¹⁴ Another account of the fire by the Dutch writer Arnoldus Montanus, written in 1670, accords with Kameoka's memories. Based on a journal kept by Dutch Ambassador Zacharias Wagenaer, it describes Wagenaer's mission to Edo, which unluckily coincided with the fire.

. . . on a sudden all Jedo was in confus'd hurry, everyone crying Fire. . . . Toward the North end of the City, a terrible Flame rising toward the Sky, which by strong North Winds was driven directly into the City, the Sparks flying over Jedo. [People were] heap'd, being tumbled one upon the other; they were squeez'd betwixt the Goods; yonder with a hideous Cry they throng'd their way through; some being trodden to death, some their Breath squeez'd out of their Bodies, and others crawling over all.¹⁵

Sakamaki Kōta writes that “the large scale [of the fire] was such that more than half of Edo was reduced to ashes.”¹⁶ Ryōi's task was to describe such catastrophic scale to readers who had at best a limited idea of what had happened. The calamity had an epic scope “so great as to be a manifestation of a living hell.”¹⁷ Sakamaki, the foremost scholar of *Musashi abumi*, seemingly had Ryōi in mind when he wrote those words; for as *Musashi*

¹⁴ *Nochimigusa* 後見草, in *Enseki jissu* 燕石十種, vol. 2, ed. by Mori Senzō 森銑三, Noma Kōshin 野間光辰, and Asakura Haruhiko 朝倉治彦 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 2013), EbiBookReader e-book, 103. Sakamaki, quoting this passage, is impressed by Kameoka's detailed memory. Sakamaki sees it as evidence for the horror of the disaster. However, one wonders if other narratives of the fire, oral as well as written, including perhaps Ryōi's, mediated Kameoka's recollections. Sakamaki, *Kanazōshi shinkō*, 8.

¹⁵ Arnoldus Montanus, *Atlas Japannensis*, trans. John Ogilby (London: Tho. Johnson, 1670), 409, accessed December 17, 2015, <http://0-find.galegroup.com/libraries/colorado.edu>. Montanus' description of the mission is filled with several similarly striking passages. Kornicki quotes a different section of the narrative, noting that Montanus compares the fire to “the destruction of Troy, the fire of Rome under Nero, and the Great Fire of London of 1666. . . . Whatever the reliability of Montanus' account, it is clear that he perceived the destruction wrought by the fire to be of epic dimensions.” See Kornicki, “Narrative of a Catastrophe,” 348. On Montanus' use of Wagenaer's journal, see Reiner H. Hesselink, “Memorable Embassies: The Secret History of Arnoldus Montanus' *Gedenkwaardige Gesantschappen*,” *Quarendo* 32, no. 1 (2002): 107.

¹⁶ Sakamaki, *Kanazōshi shinkō*, 5-6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

Musashi abumi: An Overview

Before turning to how *Musashi abumi* represents Edo and the fire, it will be helpful to give a quick synopsis of the work's structure. It is separated into two books. Broadly speaking, the first book deals with the first day of the fire and the second book deals with the second day. *Musashi abumi* moves between fact, fiction, and passages that mix both. There are narrative and non-narrative passages, with the narrative sections alternating between first- and third-person and the non-narrative passages made up primarily of unembellished lists of places. The entire text is in prose.

Musashi abumi opens with a description of a man called Rakusaibō, a monk who has arrived at Kitano Shrine in Kyoto. Rakusaibō has multiple functions in the text. He tells of his own experience during the fire, but his tale takes up a very small percentage of the text. However, he also functions as an unobtrusive guide, enumerating places around the city that suffered the fire as well as narrating the fact-based experiences of others. In the initial scene, at Kitano Shrine, he encounters a merchant acquaintance of his who is surprised at the monk's appearance. The merchant asks what has happened, and Rakusaibō indicates that his decision to become a monk is related to his experience during the Great Meireki Fire. The merchant encourages Rakusaibō to unburden himself. However, instead of talking about himself, Rakusaibō fades immediately into the background to assume his role as dispenser of information and narrator of incidents. Only after he has moved back and forth between these two roles does Rakusaibō again take the stage to talk about himself. Rakusaibō's story closes Book One, as well as day one of the fire. At the outset of Book Two, which opens at dawn on day two, Rakusaibō has again become an enumerator of places and narrator. As with the account of the first day, the account of the second day closes with the

reemergence of Rakusaibō, who completes his own tale with the account of Edo-as-hell mentioned in the chapter introduction. When he has finished this, Rakusaibō, at the prompting of his merchant acquaintance, gives a short lecture on historical disasters in China and Japan, followed by a discussion of harbingers of the Meireki fire, with which the text draws to a close.¹⁸

With this short summary in mind, we will now turn to how *Musashi abumi* represents the city of Edo during the conflagration of 1657.

Musashi abumi and Writing Edo

The Meireki Fire generated official shogunate reports, accounts filed by the Edo branches of daimyō houses to their home domains, and, quite possibly, a great deal of hearsay in the form of private communications.¹⁹ As noted above, many Kamigata readers had probably heard something about the fire by 1661. That same year, *Musashi abumi* was issued by two different Kyoto publishers, first by Kawano Michikiyo 河野道清 and then by Nakamura Gohee 中村五兵衛.²⁰ This was not the first work that Ryōi wrote for Kawano. Sakamaki argues that this publisher was a driving force behind Ryōi's prolific output

¹⁸ I will not analyze these last two sections in this paper.

¹⁹ For an overview of various official accounts of the fire, see Sakamaki, "Asai Ryōi to *Musashi abumi*," 109-112.

²⁰ *Musashi abumi* sold well enough that interest in the work eventually spread outside of the Kamigata region. In 1677 completely new editions were printed in Edo. The popularity of *Musashi abumi* continued well into the next century, with reprints published in the 1760s and 1770s. In his 1787 work, *Nochimigusa* 後見草, which reprints Kameoka Sōzan's memoir, the *rangaku* 蘭学 (or "Dutch learning") scholar Sugita Genpaku 杉田玄白 wrote that *Musashi abumi* had "spread widely in society." *Nochimigusa*, 95. See also Sakamaki, *Kanazōshi shinkō*, 7; and Kornicki, "Narrative of a Catastrophe," 348.

during this period.²¹ About two years before *Musashi abumi*, Kawano also published the first of Ryōi's three guidebooks to famous places, *Tōkaidō meishoki*; this earlier work takes the reader on a comic, educational, and morally instructive tour along the Tōkaidō Road, the highway that connected Edo and Kyoto.²²

Early in *Tōkaidō meishoki*, there is a section that describes parts of Edo. However, it is a strangely familiar “Edo,” as Jurgis Elisonas points out:

Ryōi's account is a sham: his Yoshiwara is just as counterfeit as his Sakai-chō is artificial. As far as the prostitute quarter, too, is concerned, practically nothing in *Tōkaidō meishoki* is specific to Edo. But if Ryōi's description of these “famous places” does not really represent any part of Edo, then what is represented here?

The underlying image is that of Kyoto. The description is modeled on *Kyō warabe* . . . by the physician and poet Nakagawa Kiun (1636?-1705), the book that established the “account of famous places” or *meishoki* as a distinct category within *kanazōshi*.²³

Elisonas proceeds to attack Ryōi for plagiarism, which is a fair enough charge, though by no means an uncommon practice among seventeenth-century writers. Nevertheless, in writing for a Kamigata audience, Ryōi felt that it did not matter what he wrote about *actual* places in Edo. The Edo of the imagination was precisely that; the characteristics of its spaces corresponded to types, not reality. Thus, in describing the entertainment districts of that city, he relied upon the description of a conceptualized space that might easily have depicted “the entertainment districts of any big city—let us say

²¹ On this subject, see Sakamaki, “Kinsei shoki ni okeru sakusha, shoshi, dokusha no isō.”

²² *Tōkaidō meishoki* 東海道名所記, in *Tōkaidō meishoki, Tōkaidō bunken ezu* 東海道名所記・東海道分間絵図, ed. by Fuji Akio 富士昭雄 (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 2002), 7-204.

²³ Jurgis Elisonas, “Notorious Places: A Brief Excursion into the Narrative Topography of Early Edo,” in *Edo and Paris*, 258.

Osaka or Kyoto.”²⁴ The description may have been pilfered from another text about Kyoto, but it apparently was sufficient to impart a ring of verisimilitude to a portrayal of Edo.

Published around two years after the Meireki Fire, *Tōkaidō meishoki*'s Edo section was Ryōi's first, limited attempt to write “Edo” into the contemporary record. *Musashi abumi* was, in a sense, his second. However, whereas the earlier work *composes* Edo with ingredients borrowed from the representation of another city, *Musashi abumi* depicts Edo in a state of *decomposition*. It is no longer a city of idealized pleasure quarters, but it is still very much a place of the imagination. Instead of lifting detailed descriptions to apply to Edo's spaces, one way that Ryōi represents the ruined city is by mapping it, as we shall see, with the bare essentials of toponyms and people's names.

However, he initially seems to mark Edo off not as a post-apocalyptic landscape, but as a poetic space. The first indication of this is in the title itself, which refers neither to the Tokugawa city of Edo nor to the Meireki Fire, but to a *waka* from *Ise monogatari* (ca. 9th-10th centuries) that evokes thwarted love in the Musashi of yesteryear.²⁵ In the first scene, the character Rakusaibō quotes the *waka*.²⁶ However, this seems to be just a brief allusion that positions the text in a literary register by evoking a traditional reference to its

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Musashi was the province in which the old village of Edo sat.

²⁶ Rakusaibō says the following: とはぬもつらし。とふもうるさきむさしあぶみ (Not asking is cruel, but asking is disagreeable, too—Musashi abumi). *Musashi abumi*, 8. The word “abumi” means “stirrups.” The original *waka* is from Episode 13 of *Ise monogatari*: 武蔵鎧さすがにかけて頼むにはとはぬもつらしとふもうるさし (Like Musashi stirrups / that hang as before / I hang on my expectations / not asking is cruel / but asking is disagreeable, too). *Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語, in *Taketori monogatari, Ise monogatari, Yamato monogatari, Heichū monogatari* 竹取物語・伊勢物語・大和物語・平中物語, ed. by Katagiri Yōichi 片桐洋一, Fukui Teisuke 福井貞助, Takahashi Shōji 高橋正治, and Kiyomizu Yoshiko 清水好子, *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集, Vol. 12 (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1994), 125.

geographic setting.²⁷ When Ryōi turns to describing present-day Edo, the *Ise* poem stands in stark contrast, highlighting that the reader has actually entered a very different, if no less imagined, space.

やうやう未のこくにおしうつる時分に。本郷の四町め西口に。本妙寺とて日蓮宗の寺より俄に火もえ出で。くろ煙天をかすめ。寺中一同に焼あがる。折ふし魔風十方にふきまはし即時に湯嶋へ焼出たり。はたごや町よりはるかにへだてし堀をとびこえ…

Finally, at around two in the afternoon, at the west entrance of the fourth block of Hongō, at the Nichiren sect temple called Honmyōji, a fire suddenly started burning and smoke blacked out the sky. The entire temple burned, whereupon an evil wind blew in all ten directions. Promptly the flames headed toward Yushima. From Hatagoyamachi the fire jumped over a distant canal. . . .²⁸

Once the fire starts in Hongō, the literary allusions that open *Musashi abumi* disappear completely from the text and it becomes it becomes characterized almost completely by the factual; that is, it becomes a list that is only occasionally embellished with adjectives. For example, picking up where the last long quotation ended:

駿河台永井しなの守。戸田うねめのかみ。内藤ひだのかみ。松平しもふさの守。津軽殿そのほか数ヶ所。佐竹よしのぶをはじめまいらせ。鷹匠町の大名小路。数百の屋形たちまちに灰燼となりたり。それより町屋かまくらかしへ焼とをりぬ。かくて酉の刻にいたりて風は西になりはげしく吹しほりければ。神田橋へハ火うつらずして。はるかに六七町へだてて。一石ばしの近所さや町へとびうつり。牧野さどのかみ。鳥井主膳正…

. . . [to] Surugadai [and the mansion of] Lord Nagai, lord of Shinano, [then the mansion of] the head of the Toda family women, [then of] Lord Naitō of Hida, [then of] Lord Matsudaira of Shimofusa, [then of] the lord of Tsugaru, and many other

²⁷ I follow Peter Kornicki in this assessment. After speculating on other possible reasons for the title (including the possibility that it was a way of being discreet about the topic), he concludes that the most likely explanation is that the quotation is “a literary reference to inform the reader that this work is in some way a narrative coming from Edo; an astute reader . . . might further suppose that the contents touch on matters that were hard to talk about.” Kornicki, “Narrative of a Catastrophe,” 349-350.

²⁸ *Musashi abumi*, 8. This passage follows another literary allusion, to Kamo no Chōmei’s *Hōjōki*, but one that marks off *disaster* space. I will discuss the *Hōjōki* allusion below.

places. [The flames visited], starting with [that mansion of] Satake Yoshinobu, the alleyways of the daimyo [who lived in] Takajōmachi. Hundreds of mansions turned suddenly to ash. From there, it burned through to the merchant homes in Kamakuragashi. In this way, it continued until the hour of the cock [around six p.m.]. The wind then turned west and blew violently in that direction, and so the fire did not move toward Kandabashi, heading in a separate direction a distant six or seven blocks away and flying toward the area near Ishibashi and Sayachō. The [mansion of the] lord of Masano village. . . .²⁹

The list continues from there. These sections have prompted scholars such as Mizue Renko to focus on *Musashi abumi's kirokusei* 記録性 or documentary-like quality, comparing *Musashi abumi* to other records of the catastrophe, including official ones.³⁰ However, Ryōi's lists have the secondary effect of mapping out the mental space of both the city and the course of the fire itself. The text continues, alternating between the names of people (which stand in for buildings), the names of places, vague numerical descriptions such as "many places" or "many hundreds," and the occasional descriptive adornment, as in "the wind blew violently." The Edo that emerges from these sections is a prose map of locations that, within the text itself, have few distinguishing characteristics and are populated mostly by unapproachable important personages.³¹ The list I have partially

²⁹ Ibid., 10. Ryōi lists only the names of people, but in the context it is clear that the names stand in for their property.

³⁰ Mizue's concern is with the accuracy of whether the places Ryōi depicts were actually damaged. Mizue Renko 水江蓮子, "Kanazōshi no kirokusei: *Musashi abumi* to Meireki no taika" 仮名草子の記録性「むさしあぶみ」と明暦の大火, *Nihon rekishi* 日本歴史 291 (August 1972), 87-100. Ogawa, "Kanazōshi yonhen," contrasts this *kirokusei* with *bungeisei* 文芸性, or literary quality, in the four *kanazōshi* he examines. Sakamaki Kōta prefers to use the term *hōkoku bungaku* 報告文学, which means something akin to "literary reportage," in discussing *Musashi abumi* and *Kanameishi*. See, for example, Chapter One of *Kanazōshi shinkō*, "Ryōi no hōkoku bungaku."

³¹ Regarding the lists of names and places, one wonders if Ryōi, or any of his readers, had access to *Bukan* 武鑑, registries of military families, or something similar. Marcia Yonemoto writes that these registries were first published during the Kan'ei period (1624-1644). It is striking that she adds, "By the late 1650s, variations on the *Bukan* began to appear . . . [and] seemed to have appealed to an audience outside the warrior class, drawing the interest in readers eager for details about the lives of the elite." While the timing is very tight, and Yonemoto adds that *Bukan*-like texts did not

quoted above is augmented by yet others, including some that provide the names of temples and shrines.

The lack of descriptive detail in these enumerative passages would be out of place in a text written by an Edo author for an Edo readership. It would seem like a sterile place, unlike the city this hypothetical reader remembered fondly. Most of Ryōi's Kamigata readers, however, would not have had such memories. They would have had no experience of Edo as a physical, lived space. Still, place names might have elicited enough of a spark of recognition to situate the events. The names of the powerful might have been enough to provoke mental calculations about the reach of the damage. Finally, these lists of fact, as they expand with name piled upon name, place upon place, also tell the story of an expanding fire.

However, *Musashi abumi* is neither a simple catalogue of damaged daimyo mansions nor simply a prose map of a featureless city that is ravaged by the fire. Ultimately, these lists give way to factually-based anecdotes that are structured in a manner that also tracks the conflagration's course while representing the *people* of Edo. These anecdotes themselves yield to complete fiction in the story of Rakusaibō, which presents the final fantastic unreality of *Musashi abumi's* burning Edo, uniting catastrophe and place in a single vision of hell on earth.

proliferate until decades later during the Genroku period (1688-1704), the kind of knowledge these texts contained could possibly have filled in some of the empty spaces Ryōi leaves with his simple list. Marcia Yonemoto, *Mapping Early Modern Japan: Space, Place, and Culture in the Tokugawa Period, 1603-1868* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 20.

Musashi abumi and Writing the Meireki Fire

Toward the beginning of *Musashi abumi*, immediately after Rakusaibō quotes the *Ise monogatari* poem, there is a brief description of the beginning of the fire. Much like the *Ise* quotation, this portrayal is composed of literary allusion. In this case, it is to Kamo no Chōmei's *Hōjōki*, a text that was widely available in print around the time Ryōi wrote and left its mark on other *kanazōshi* that dealt in some way with disaster, including *Kanameishi*, as we shall see in the next chapter.³² Of the numerous catastrophes that *Hōjōki* describes as having ravaged the city of Kyoto at the end of the twelfth century, one is a massive fire.

去安元三年四月廿八日かとよ。風烈しく吹きて、静かならざりし夜、戌の時許、都の東南より火出で来て、西北に至る。はてには、朱雀門・大極殿・大学寮・民部省などまで移りて、一夜のうちに塵灰となりき。火元は樋口富の小路とかや。

I think it was the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month of the third year of Angen, around the Hour of the Dog. The wind blew violently without calm. Around nine o'clock, a fire started in the southeast part the capital and came northwest. It ultimately reached the Suzaku Gate, the Council Hall, the Minister's Academy, and the Ministry of Popular Affairs. In one night everything was turned to dust and ash. The fire is said to have originated in a narrow road called Higuchi-Tomi.³³

³² Kornicki writes, regarding *Hōjōki*, "like other texts of the classical canon, this had been transmitted in manuscript until first printed in the early years of the seventeenth century. Through subsequent editions, particularly a woodblock-printed edition of 1647 and two annotated editions published in 1658, it had become more accessible to ordinary readers outside court circles." Kornicki, "Narrative of a Catastrophe," 354. The annotated editions were printed just three years before *Musashi abumi*. Regarding "disaster *kanazōshi*," and *Hōjōki*, see Ogawa, "Kanazōshi yonhen." In addition to *Musashi abumi* and *Kanameishi*, Ogawa discusses *Yakushi tsuya monogatari* 薬師通夜物語 and *Inu Hōjōki* 犬方丈記, both of which are famine narratives. This latter work begins with a very close parody of *Hōjōki*.

³³ *Hōjōki*, 16. Angen 3 is 1177 on the Western calendar. The Hour of the Dog is between seven and nine in the evening.

Akahane Manabu and Matsuura Kōhei argue that Ryōi's uses Kamo no Chōmei's structure, adapting the description of the earlier Kyoto fire to Edo in 1657.³⁴ This is the *Musashi abumi* passage in question (part of which I quoted on page 21 above):

扱も明暦三年丁酉。正月十八日辰刻ばかりのことなるに。乾のかたより風吹出し。しきりに大風となり。ちりほこりを中天に吹上て空にたなひきわたる有さま。…やうやう未のこくにおしうつる時分に。本郷の四町め西口に。本妙寺とて日蓮宗の寺より俄に火もえ出て…

Well now, in the third year of Meireki, the thirty-fourth year of the sixty-year cycle, *hinoto-no-tori*, on the eighteenth day of the first month, a strong wind blew in from the northwest. It was a persistent gale. Dust and dirt blew up into the middle of the air and extended horizontally in the sky. . . . Finally, at around two in the afternoon, at the west entrance of the fourth block of Hongō, at the Nichiren sect temple called Honmyōji, a fire suddenly started burning. . . .³⁵

As we can see, the passage in *Musashi abumi* is not a direct quotation of *Hōjōki*.

Nevertheless, Akahane and Matsuura argue that, as with the earlier work, Ryōi's less succinct account begins with the month, day, and year of the fire, proceeds to describe the strength of the wind, before ultimately turning to the beginning of the fire and identifying where it starts.³⁶ If we compare this with the information I presented above in the section on the historical fire,³⁷ we can argue that Ryōi is taking factual details about the direction of the wind and the time of the fire and placing them in a structure similar to that of Kamo no Chōmei's. Combined with the title of *Musashi abumi* and the quotation of the *Ise* poem,

³⁴ Akahane Manabu 赤羽学 and Matsuura Kōhei 松浦公平, *Ihon Musashi abumi to kenkyū* 異本武蔵鑑と研究 (Toyohashi: Mikan Kokubun Shiryō Kankōkai, 1977), 99. See also Kornicki, "Narrative of a Catastrophe," 355.

³⁵ *Musashi abumi*, 8. Note that this passage overlaps with the one quoted on page 21. See note 28 on the same page.

³⁶ Akahane and Matsuura, *Ihon Musashi abumi*, 99.

³⁷ See pages 13-14 above.

these first pages present both the city and the catastrophe as literary constructions. Nevertheless, just as the text quickly abandons “literary Musashi” by leaving Rakusaibō and his merchant acquaintance at Kitano Shrine and moving into list mode, so the *Hōjōki* reference stands by itself, an anomaly in the text. It will be the last literary allusion for dozens of pages. By adopting the structure from *Hōjōki*, Ryōi is not foreshadowing the further use of earlier texts in *Musashi abumi*. Instead, he is making a conventional nod to *Hōjōki* that is similar to other “disaster *kanazōshi*,” and then going in another direction.³⁸

That direction, however, is not toward an unambiguously factual register. When the text turns away from the list of names, it begins to depict the experience of the fire through *fact-based* anecdotes; that is, Ryōi takes events that were reported to have happened and embellishes them with invented flourishes. He lays these sections out, as in the preceding list of places, in a way that presents the Meireki Fire in more-or-less chronological order as it spreads from place to place. Sakamaki Kōta argues that the Meireki Fire is suitable for such treatment, because a fire is a *developing* disaster, both temporally and geographically. At any point in time, a certain location might be safe while neighboring areas burn, but a few hours later it, too, might be in ashes.³⁹ The reader thus gets the sense of following the three fires as they move through Edo over those two horrible days.

The text enhances this effect by linking the different anecdotes smoothly, with the focus of one anecdote sometimes becoming the germ of the next. For example, one astonishing story in *Musashi abumi* is that of a prison warden who releases the convicts under his charge to escape the threatening flames after extracting a promise that they will

³⁸ See note 32, page 23 above, on “disaster *kanazōshi*.”

³⁹ Sakamaki, *Kanazōshi shinkō*, 24.

rendezvous when the fire has died down. All of the prisoners keep the promise save one. (We later learn that he is captured and executed.) Immediately following this story comes the disaster of Asakusa, in which people hear a rumor that these very same prisoners have *escaped* from jail and are coming their way. To keep them away, the residents of Asakusa close the gate to the neighborhood, but in doing so they eliminate their only escape route from the blaze. Thousands die trapped when the fire arrives.⁴⁰

In this manner, the narrative sections depict the development of the fire just as much as the non-narrative lists do. However, whereas the enumerations imply the horror of the fire through the sheer bulk of proper nouns, the way Ryōi embellishes the anecdotes evokes sympathy for the fire's victims. In these anecdotes, *Musashi abumi* moves away from a simple mapping of its imagined Edo to the representation of its *people* as well. However, these people are not individuals, but suffer their fate in large groups of "thousands." The Meireki Fire of *Musashi abumi* is an all-encompassing, unrelenting catastrophe that terrorizes unknown numbers of people who populate a place that has few distinguishing characteristics beyond the fire itself. Appropriately, the text also depicts the residents of Edo as masses of indistinct people. Ryōi's conflagration drives these groups relentlessly away in fear, blotting out the faces of Edo's people even as it turns the city's other physical features to ash.

ここにおひて数万の男女けふりをのがれんと風下をさしてにげあつまる程に向ふへ行つたり。靈岩寺へかけこもる。墓所のめぐりハはなハだひろければ。よきところなりとて諸人爰にあつまりみたる処に。当寺の本堂に火かかり。それより数ヶ所の院々にもえ渡り。一同に焼あがり。

Here, tens of thousands of men and women attempted to escape the smoke. They ran away downwind and assembled. At that point, they had reached as far as they

⁴⁰ *Musashi abumi*, 20-21.

could go and stampeded into Reiganji Temple. Because the dimensions of the graveyard were very spacious, they thought it was a good place [to escape] and everyone gathered there. Just then, the main temple building caught fire and, from there, the burning flames crossed from one building to another in the temple. Everything caught fire.⁴¹

Elsewhere, “tens of thousands” (*sū man* 数万) flee Tenmachō; “tens of millions” (*sen man* 千万) head toward Asakusa; however, another mass described as being composed of “tens of millions” is already there.⁴² These numbers, in themselves, do not have any meaning beyond “a really big number,” marking off the epic scale of the calamity. However, in the context of *Musashi abumi*’s representation of disaster, they lend a sense of unfathomability to both the number of victims and the fire itself. Angela Stock and Cornelia Stott, writing about Western writers of catastrophe, note that with such numbers as this,

the scale of the incident [exceeds] the limits of the average imagination. Ancient, medieval, or early modern chroniclers would have set down that ‘10,000’ died . . . not because they had counted them but because ‘10,000’ was shorthand to signify a huge number beyond human comprehension or control.⁴³

For the most part, then, while the lists of names map out the contours of the burning city, Edo itself remains in the text a featureless place. Moreover, these numbers, signifying a scale too big to grasp, mark off this place’s anonymous population of victims as masses without any individual, distinguishing characteristics. Indeed, in the realm of the factual in *Musashi abumi*—in the informational lists and in these fact-based anecdotes—the only person who comes through with personality, the compassionate but stern prison warden,

⁴¹ Ibid., 10-11.

⁴² Ibid., 14, 14, and 19, respectively.

⁴³ Angela Stock and Cornelia Stott, *Representing the Unimaginable*, 9.

is not a victim. He represents the government in its benevolence and is the only person who exercises control, one who determines the fate of the criminals under his watch.

It makes a certain sense for a writer trying to depict a calamity that killed as many people as the 1657 fire did to approach it in this manner. Ryōi could only gather information second-hand, and so even to him the stories he must have heard or read in preparing to write *Musashi abumi* might have seemed fantastic or unfathomable. That is how the fire is represented in these sections. However, when Ryōi does bring the fire into the realm of personal experience, the effect is not to make it any more understandable in a “realistic” sense of an eyewitness testimony of an actual event. Rather, he uses metaphor. This is the story of the monk Rakusaibō, to which I now turn.

* * * *

Through Rakusaibō’s tale, Ryōi accomplishes three things: he invents an eyewitness account testifying to the unrecognizable city left in the fire’s wake and, by extension, the world-altering nature of the conflagration; he gives us an imaginative, first-person representation of the catastrophe that adds a novel perspective that is not accessible in the other sections of lists and anecdotes; and he adds some levity.

At the beginning of *Musashi abumi*, when Rakusaibō runs into his merchant acquaintance, the latter is surprised at the former’s appearance. He asks Rakusaibō what has happened, and the monk responds that he has suffered shame and lost his family during the great fire, the combination of which led him to take the tonsure.⁴⁴ The acquaintance remarks, “Everyone knows about [the fire]. At the time of the disaster a young apprentice [of mine] from Kyoto went down [to Edo]. He died there. Even now a lot

⁴⁴ It is in this exchange that Rakusaibō quotes the *Ise* poem.

of parents and children are sad and grieving. From what I've heard, there're a great many of them."⁴⁵

Ryōi thus begins his account of the fire by hinting at the fictional aspects of the tale to come while placing them within the context of the wider event. As noted above, Rakusaibō disappears and reappears from the text multiple times. His two appearances in the text parallel each other: the first comes at the end of the first day, the second at the climax of the second day as the catastrophe is drawing to a close. Both inject humor into the text relatively soon after sympathetic portrayals of the horrific fate of commoners.

Rakusaibō's story can be summarized in this way: In the early hours of the nineteenth, as the first fire is dying out, Rakusaibō and his family set out in search of his missing mother. They come upon a pile of corpses, one of which resembles her, so they take it home to conduct a funeral service. While they are doing this, the mother, alive and well, walks in. At first they think she is a ghost, but with some difficulty she convinces them that she is real. Finding it funny that they have the wrong corpse (which they surreptitiously get rid of), but thrilled that they have survived the fire (which has temporarily died down), they celebrate. Rakusaibō passes out drunk. When the fire returns the next day, his wife and child throw his insensate body in a trunk and flee with it, but ultimately they must abandon him in order to escape the flames. Rakusaibō is awakened by thieves trying to pry open the trunk. Mistaking the trunk for a coffin, he thinks he is dead and, after he bursts out of the trunk and scares the thieves away, he surveys a burning, desolate Edo and thinks he is in hell. He wanders about, believing that he is observing the Six Realms, eventually

⁴⁵ *Musashi abumi*, 7-8. The original is as follows: 男いふやうそれハかくれなきことにて。其時の災難に都方にも手代わかきものくだりあハせて。むなしくなりたる事ありて。今になげきかなしむ親子とも是おほし。聞つたへたるありさまさしもおびただし。

running into a friend and realizing he is still alive. Ashamed of his behavior and having lost his family to the fire, he shaves his head and becomes an itinerant monk. His story ends back at the beginning, at Kitano Shrine, explaining things to his acquaintance.

All told, Rakusaibō's tale takes up only eight of the fifty-three pages in the annotated edition. What is it doing there? Not only does it comprise less than twenty percent of a text that is an otherwise a largely impersonal account of the disaster, but its comic aspects seem strange given the gruesome subject matter. On this question, I think it is illuminating to refer back to his friend's words toward the beginning of the text: he says that "everyone knows about" the fire. The story begins with the monk as a bearer of unhappy news to his listener (or listeners and, by implication, the text's readers).⁴⁶ However, his acquaintance's response tells Rakusaibō that he brings old news, common knowledge that, in some cases, might evoke personal grief not only in Edo but also in Kyoto—and signals to readers that the writer Ryōi is aware of this as well. The writer's task becomes, then, to communicate the catastrophe in a way that (1) is different, but still interesting and informative to readers who presumably have a certain amount of knowledge about the event, and (2) does not significantly distort the actual facts of the fire. In regard to this second point, Sakamaki argues that, given the scope of the disaster and the huge number of people it affected, "even though it is a narrative work, in writing about these events, it would not have been acceptable to make arbitrary changes [concerning what happened]."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Kornicki notes the location of Kitano Shrine, pointing out that it was known to be a place where storytellers entertained listeners. Kornicki argues that we should thus see Rakusaibō as speaking not only to his acquaintance, but to other (imagined) listeners as well. See Kornicki, "Narrative of a Catastrophe," 355.

⁴⁷ Sakamaki, "Asai Ryōi to *Musashi abumi*," 109.

One function of Rakusaibō's story, then, is to represent the fire in a way novel enough to elicit interest from those who do not need or want to read a simple account of the catastrophe or for those seeking a representation of what the disaster "was really like"—something lists and third-person accounts cannot give.

However, I would like to suggest that the story serves another function. The largest part of Rakusaibō's personal narrative occurs toward the end of the text, immediately following a page-and-a-half section that praises the shogunate's leadership and details some of Edo's progress toward recovery in the month following the fire. This section has a somewhat perfunctory feel.⁴⁸ More important, I would argue, is the section that immediately precedes it: eight depressing pages that serve as a kind of summation of the horror of the fires over the two-day period, focusing on the effects of the fire on commoners of all ages and serving as a counterpoint to the listing of damaged daimyo properties that precedes it. For example:

あるいハ老たる祖母おうぢハ生残りて。わかくさかんなる孫子をうしなひ。あるひハにようぼう只一人残りて子どもや夫にはなれたるもあり。すべて一家のうちにハ五人三人。又ハ十人あまりもむなしくなりて。つれなく只一人二人生残りてなげきかなしむといへども。さすがに身をもすてられぬバ。血のなミだをながして泣よりほかのことなし。家々ハのこらず焼て江戸中ひろき野原となりて…

Elderly grandmothers remained alive, having lost their young grandchildren, who had been full of vitality. Or wives remained alone, separated from their children and husbands. In [any] one house everybody died—three people, five people, or over ten people. [In others,] one or two would be left coldly behind, grieving. But as one would expect, if someone had lost another, all one did was weep, letting bitter tears

⁴⁸ Sakamaki argues that, "Under a feudalistic system [i.e., like that of the Tokugawa *bakufu*], criticizing the government is not allowed. . . . Rather than being the direct voice of the common person, we can see this [praise of the government] as the posture and wise conduct of a writer in a weak position." *Kanazōshi shinkō*, 16. It is, of course, impossible to know the sincerity of Ryōi's praise of the government. He was, however, writing about a rather sensitive subject: the physical destruction of an authoritarian government's base of power. It seems reasonable to surmise that he needed to tread carefully on the topic.

flow. Without exception homes were burned down and all throughout Edo the city had become a field.⁴⁹

On the heels of pathos such as this, the ridiculous climax of Rakusaibō's story, his half-drunken "tour" of the "Six Realms," may come as a relief. It appropriates a trope that would have been familiar to many readers, that of the *jigoku meguri*, and as a parody the tale softens a horror that might otherwise be too relentlessly horrific. However, Rakusaibō's tour also pulls the reader in a different direction by uniting the depiction of Edo and the Meireki Fire into one terrifying representation. Edo is no longer an earthly city, but has become hell; at the same time, this implies that the experience of the conflagration is so terrible as to be equal to the experience of hell's tortures.

One Hell of an Embarrassment

In Japanese literature and art, there is a rich tradition of tales and paintings that depict posthumous trips to one of the Buddhist hells, the Pure Land, or the other realms of the *rokudō*, or the Six Realms of Transmigration.⁵⁰ In Japan, stories date back to the ninth century *setsuwa* 説話 collection *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記, which itself refers to earlier visual depictions of the *rokudō*.⁵¹ A *jigoku meguri*, or "Tour of Hell," typically recounts the story of a human being who dies and is lost, at which point a guide or guides (who are frequently but not always messengers from the King of the Dead, Enma 閻魔) appear. The guides take the human to visit one or more of the Buddhist hells and sometimes other of the Six Realms, where the traveller usually witnesses "scenes of Hell's fires, filth, boiling

⁴⁹ *Musashi abumi*, 46.

⁵⁰ See note 4, page 12 for an outline on the different realms of the *rokudō*.

⁵¹ Hirasawa, "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution," 5.

lakes, and demons with torture instruments,” or even experiences some of the gruesome torments that take place.⁵² Eventually, the traveller is returned to life in this world, usually with a new appreciation for the benefits of religious devotion.

Some well-known examples include: the journey of Mokuren to see his mother in *Mokuren no sōshi* 目連の草子 (*The Tale of Mokuren*); *Kitano Tenjin engi* 北野天神縁起 (*The Origin of Kitano Tenjin Shrine*), which includes the journey of Nichizō, who encounters Emperor Daigo suffering torments in hell for exiling Sugawara no Michizane (who in his deified form as Tenjin is worshipped at the Kitano Tenjin Shrine); and *Tengu no dairi* 天狗の内裏 (*The Palace of the Tengu*), in which Minamoto no Yoshitsune tours some of the *rokudō* and meets his father while being guided by the Great Tengu.⁵³ Another type of hell trip is the *jigoku yaburi* 地獄破り, in which a human invades hell and wreaks havoc there. In one example of this, *Yoshitsune jigoku yaburi* 義経地獄破り, we again see Minamoto no Yoshitsune in the non-human worlds, but this time he leads a united army of the Minamoto

⁵² Barbara Ruch, “Coping with Death: Paradigms of Heaven and Hell and the Six Realms in Early Literature and Painting,” in *Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan*, ed. James H. Sanford, William R. LaFleur, and Masatoshi Nagatomi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 118.

⁵³ *Kitano Tenjin engi* is reprinted as a chapter in *Jisha engi* 寺社縁起, ed. by Sakurai Tokutarō 桜井徳太郎, Hagiwara Tatsuo 萩原龍夫, and Miyata Noboru 宮田登, *Nihon shisō taikai* 日本思想体系 20 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1975), 141-168. For an English translation of Nichizō’s journey to hell, see Conán Dean Carey, “In Hell the One Without Sin Is Lord,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 109 (October 2000), 1-60. For *Tengu no dairi*, see R. Keller Kimbrough, trans., “The Palace of the Tengu,” in *Monsters and Other Worlds*, ed. by R. Keller Kimbrough and Haruo Shirane (forthcoming). For *Mokuren no sōshi*, see Hank Glassman, trans., “The Tale of Mokuren: A Translation of *Mokuren-no-sōshi*,” *Buddhist Literature* 1 (1999), 120-161.

and their earthly enemies, the Heike, out of the *Ashura* Realm to which they have been condemned, to liberate the tormented from the Buddhist hells.⁵⁴

By the time Ryōi wrote *Musashi abumi*, *jigoku meguri* and *jigoku yaburi* stories were familiar to many Japanese.⁵⁵ *Jigoku meguri* were sometimes disseminated in the medieval period via picture-scrolls that were used for *etoki*, a way of preaching to commoners with the help of pictures for explanation. A *jigoku yaburi* that was popular in picture scroll form in the sixteenth century, *Asaina monogatari*, was also familiar to Japanese in the seventeenth century. In it, the title character's invasion of hell is fueled by a fit of drunkenness, possibly paralleled in the role drink plays in Rakusaibō's parodic hell tour.⁵⁶ Ishikawa Tōru has speculated that Ryōi himself may have done some of the calligraphy for a *nara e-hon* version of *Yoshitsune jigoku yaburi*.⁵⁷ In this tale, an ascetic journeys into the underworld, where he encounters Minamoto no Yoshitsune and his followers, who explain that they have been condemned to the *ashura* realm. Because it is the time of the Bon Festival and the spirits of the dead have temporarily left hell unguarded, Yoshitsune is able to rally a band of warriors together to liberate hell.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Komine Kazuaki 小峰和明 and Miyakoshi Naoto 宮腰直人, *Yoshitsune jigoku yaburi* 義経地獄破り (Tokyo: Bunsei Shuppan, 2005).

⁵⁵ For example, a search of the National Diet Library online archive (<http://dl.ndl.go.jp/>) yields a printed book of *Tengu no dairi* that was published in Manji 2 (1659), about two years before *Musashi abumi*. Likewise, another tale that involves a trip to the underworld, *Fuji no hitoana sōshi* (The Tale of the Fuji Cave), was published in printed book form in 1627 and 1661.

⁵⁶ On the circulation of stories depicting hell, see Barbara Ruch, "Coping with Death," 120. See also Komine and Miyakoshi's introduction to *Yoshitsune jigoku yaburi* and Kornicki, 357.

⁵⁷ Ishikawa Tōru 石川透, *Nara ehon, emaki no seisei* 奈良絵本・絵巻の生成 (Tokyo: Miyai Shoten, 2003), 172-73.

⁵⁸ The Bon Festival occurs in the late summer and is a Japanese tradition that honors the spirits of the dead, who are said to return to their ancestral homes.

If Ishikawa is correct, then Ryōi worked on “burlesques” of hell and was thus cognizant of the potential for subverting tropes of hell for purposes of parody.⁵⁹ In the case of *Yoshitsune jigoku yaburi*, the parody lies in the inclusion of well-known medieval characters such as the demon Shuten Dōji and warriors from the *Heike monogatari*.⁶⁰ As with all parody, it works as long as viewers of the *ehon* are familiar with the references. In the case of *Musashi abumi*, the references are the other *rokudō* tours themselves.

Rakusaibō’s tour around Edo-hell is characterized primarily by what might be termed confident confusion, confident because he is certain of what he is seeing, confused because he is incorrect:

さて立あがりてみれば。あたりはくらみにてはるか東はぼうぼうともえて。人のおめきさけぶ声の聞えしをころにおもふやう。あそこハさだめて無間ぢこくなるべし。罪人どもの猛火にこがされごくそつにかしやくせらるる音やらん。あらおそろしいかにもして極楽のみちにゆかばやとおもひて…

When I stood up and looked around, in the surrounding darkness, off in the distance to the east, [the city] was burning furiously. I could hear the screaming voices of people and thought, “No doubt that’s the Mugen hell over there. That must be the sound of sinners being tortured by devils burning them.” It was frightening. No matter what I did, I thought, I had to take the road to the Pure Land.⁶¹

Rakusaibō continues his tour in this fashion. He encounters a pack of horses that have gotten loose and thinks he is in the Animal Realm; he sees a wooden statue and thinks it is the King of the Dead; he hears someone reciting the *nenbutsu* and thinks he is on the threshold of the Pure Land; a relief station, at which homeless survivors receive food,

⁵⁹ “Burlesques” is Kornicki’s description. “Narratives of Catastrophe,” 357.

⁶⁰ Komine and Miyakoshi, *Yoshitsune jigoku yaburi*, 8.

⁶¹ *Musashi abumi*, 54. The Mugen or Muken hell *Mugen jigoku* 無間地獄 (Sanskrit, *Avīci*), a hell of uninterrupted torment, is the deepest and hottest of the eight burning hells.

becomes the Realm of Hungry Ghosts; and the sight of a robber being struck down by a samurai gets transformed into the *Ashura* Realm of endless strife.

A guide accompanies the traveler to hell or other realms of the *rokudō* in a typical *jigoku meguri*, to explain things. For example, in *Fuji no hitoana sōshi* 富士の人穴草子, Nitta no Shirō, Tadatsune's guide to the underworld, the Great Asama Bodhisattva, calmly explains the purpose of the torments Tadatsune witnesses:

The demons were affixing iron shackles to the people's wrists and ankles, and in one place, they were pounding nails into each person's forty-four joints, eighty-three bones, and nine hundred million hair follicles. "What's this?" Nitta asked, to which the Bodhisattva replied, "These are the punishments for judiciary officials. They're doomed to suffer like this without relief. If there's anything that a person should avoid, it's becoming a judge."⁶²

Whereas the authoritative bodhisattva dispenses advice along with his explanations, Rakusaibō in his own Edo-*rokudō* can only fall back on his own bold, drunken credulity, declaring that, "No doubt that's the Mugen hell over there." Rakusaibō is, for better or worse, his own guide. While the effect, for a reader aware of this difference, might be one of amusement, it is important to note that Rakusaibō also becomes a guide for other people: the acquaintance to whom he recounts the tale, and by extension, the readers of *Musashi abumi*.⁶³ If we look at his tale from the reader's perspective, the monk becomes a first-person guide to a burning Edo.

In this scene, Ryōi takes a familiar literary trope and marries it to a familiar event to create a new way of looking at both, while creating for the reader an experience that brings

⁶² R. Keller Kimbrough, trans., "The Tale of the Fuji Cave." Published online as a digital supplement to *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 33, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 1-22.

⁶³ If we accept Kornicki's argument about the significance of the Kitano Shrine location, we can extend this to other, unremarked upon, listeners as well.

horror and humor together. A reader might take him to be a drunken fool and have a good laugh. Or, a reader might also see him as someone who, having come through the fire, saw “what had to be, as he saw it, hell.”⁶⁴ Perhaps a reader might intuit that the only way for someone to capture the first-hand experience of the fire is to resort to metaphors because plain language is simultaneously too grisly and not adequate to describe the emotional and physical experience of the survivor.

Therein lie the multiple functions of Rakusaibō’s tale. The reader is aware of and entertained by the congruities between that monk’s *rokudō* and one that was meant to dispense a Buddhist lesson or explain the origin of a shrine. At the same time, this imagined reader can accept that, to a certain extent, Rakusaibō’s confusion and terror are not merely the result of having had too much to drink the previous night. His behavior shows traces of the trauma he has been through, while the landscape around him bears the marks of that same trauma on the city itself, rendering it a completely imagined, unreal place.

Through its depiction of place and people in a condition of disaster, *Musashi abumi* becomes a double representation of not only the Great Meireki Fire, but of the city of Edo itself. This dual experience of disaster and city is, of course, unmoored from the experience of *Musashi abumi*’s intended Kamigata readers. This remoteness, or unreality, is reflected in the very ways that the dual representation is made: in the text’s lists of toponyms, which remain names devoid of any description that represents them as lived spaces; in the way that the disaster is depicted, in the fact-based anecdotes, not as something suffered by individual Edoites but rather by the anonymous “thousands upon thousands”; and, of course, through the complete fantasy of Rakusaibō’s tale.

⁶⁴ Sakamaki, *Kanazōshi shinkō*, 18.

Within a couple of years after the publication of *Musashi abumi*, Ryōi's *Edo meishoki* was published. Sakamaki speculates that Ryōi traveled to Edo sometime between the fire and the publication of *Tōkaidō meishoki*, in part to engage in fact-finding to gather information for his two *meishoki* and *Musashi abumi*. These three texts represent different efforts to write Edo into a new, imagined existence. Even in its plagiarized sections, *Tōkaidō meishoki* depicts just a small part of the city. *Edo meishoki* would be the first full effort to represent Edo as a city of famous places worth visiting. *Musashi abumi* sits between them, an attempt to represent the city in a state of destruction.

As such a representation of urban disaster that can be thought of as being part of a series of texts that make different attempts at urban spaces, it prompts us to consider the importance of *place* in the representation of disaster; the way writers and readers conceptualize that place will influence the depiction of the catastrophe that befalls it, complicating attempts to speak of disaster representation as if it is something that does not happen in specific locations.

In the next chapter, I will look at another text that recounts a disaster that hit another Japanese city. *Kanameishi* depicts an earthquake that struck Kyoto, a city that had been written about for centuries and already had been the subject of the first contemporary *meishoki*. Ryōi wrote this work for the same Kamigata audience, but this time he was representing a place and an event that were lived experiences for both writer and readers. The way these elements combine—the wealth of existing literary tropes associated with the topos of Kyoto, the fact that both the city and the earthquake were physically experienced by Ryōi's primary audience, and the nature of the earthquake itself—produce a text that is altogether different from *Musashi abumi*.

Chapter Two

Capital in Distress: *Kanameishi* and the Literary Disaster Tour of Kyoto

On the first day of the fifth month of the year Kanbun 2 (June 16, 1662), more than five years after the Great Meireki Fire laid waste to Edo, a powerful earthquake struck Kyoto. While the Kanbun Ōmi-Wakasa Earthquake was not as destructive as the Edo conflagration in terms of life and property, it nevertheless unleashed terrifying force.¹ At an estimated 7.4-7.6 magnitude, it affected the imperial capital and an area ranging from the Inland Sea coast south of Kyoto to the Japan Sea coast to the northwest, killing an estimated seven to nine hundred people and damaging thousands of buildings.² As historian Kitahara Itoko describes it:

The scope of the damage was far-reaching. There were large-scale landslides in mountain villages, while damned up rivers flooded. Elsewhere the ground protruded. The earthquake damaged buildings in cities like Kyoto and Ōtsu. . . . A diverse amount of damage occurred in many areas.³

A strong aftershock hit three days after the initial earthquake; dozens more occurred for months after. It was the largest earthquake to hit the imperial capital since the first year of the Keichō 慶長 period (1596), a fact that Asai Ryōi writes about in *Kanameishi*:

「生れてよりこのかた、かかるおびたたしき大なゆは、おぼえたることなし」…
「ゆり初めほどにこそなけれ、かくゆるからに、いか成る大ゆりになりてか」…

¹ Historians now think there were “twin earthquakes,” *futago jishin* 双子地震 in Kitahara Itoko’s terminology. The first struck in the morning in Wakasa and the second occurred in the afternoon in Ōmi. Kitahara Itoko 北原糸子, ed., *Nihon saigai shi* 日本災害史 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2006), 232. For convenience, I will refer to the initial event as a single earthquake.

² For property damage and casualties, see Nishiyama Akihito 西山昭仁 and Komastubara Taka 小松原琢, “Kanbun ni-nen (1662) Ōmi-Wakasa jishin ni okeru Kyoto bonchi de no higai jōkyō” 寛文二年 (1662) 近江・若狭地震における京都盆地での被害状況, *Rekishi jishin* 歴史地震 21 (2006), 165. On intensity and geographical scope, see Kitahara, *Nihon saigai shi*, 232.

³ Kitahara, *Nihon saigai shi*, 232.

いにしへ、慶長の大地震にも、大地がさけて、泥わきあがり、なをそのいにしへは、火がもえ出でて、人多く死せしといふ。このたびの大地震も、後にいか成ることかあらん」、と…

“I have no memory of such a violent earthquake, not since I was born!” . . . [Some thought,] “If that was just the beginning, what kind of earthquake is this? . . . Many years ago, during the great Keichō earthquake, the earth split open and mud boiled up from its depths. Even before that, they say that fire blazed and many died. What will happen now with this huge earthquake?”⁴

Ryōi, a resident of Kyoto, was possibly present when the Kanbun earthquake of 1662 occurred. Perhaps he is quoting conversations he had with others. Perhaps his presence there even drove the speed with which he took up the brush; he wrote *Kanameishi* within months of the earthquake. Scholars speculate that it was issued by January 1663.⁵ If they are correct, then *Kanameishi* was produced with a promptness far exceeding that of *Musashi abumi*. Such speed is evidence for the demand, from his publisher, readers, or both, for a timely account of a disaster that likely affected all of them in some way.

As with *Musashi abumi*, *Kanameishi* constitutes a dual representation of both disaster and urban space. Thus, it is significant that the Kanbun earthquake was, for Ryōi and his readers, a local event. Shifting the analysis from *Musashi abumi* to *Kanameishi*

⁴ *Kanameishi*, 33.

⁵ In Book Three of *Kanameishi*, a man called Atarashibō tells us that, “As of yesterday and today, the sixth and seventh months have passed, but the after-effects of the earthquake have not yet stopped” (昨日今日とするほどに、水無月・文月はすぐれども、なゆの名残はいまだ止まず). *Kanameishi*, 81. If this is not artifice, then Ryōi was probably writing within three months of the earthquake. Noda Hisao notes that Atarashibō’s words indicate that the work was issued “at the earliest at the end of Kanbun 2 or the next year.” Inoue Kazuhito estimates that it was printed “by the end of the same year” as the earthquake, i.e., January 1663. Noda Hisao, *Nihon kinsei shōsetsu shi kanazōshi hen* 日本近世小説史 仮名草子篇 (Tokyo: Benseisha, 1986), 430. See Inoue’s introduction to *Kanameishi* in the SNKBZ annotated edition. *Kanameishi*, 12.

involves other changes in perspectives and contexts. First, we are moving from a realm that, for many of Ryōi's Kamigata readers, was primarily conceptual (Edo/Meireki Fire), to the space of physical experience (Kyoto/Kanbun earthquake). Second, we are moving from Edo, a still-young city with relatively few literary referents, to Kyoto, a city that had accrued links between literature and urban space over the centuries. Third, and most obviously, we are moving from a fire to an earthquake. I argue that we see these shifts in *Kanameishi's* dissimilar representational strategy. First, in contrast to the Edo of *Musashi abumi*, which Ryōi constructs with bare information and metaphor, Kyoto shines through *Kanameishi's* text as a detailed, particular, and familiar city that has a measure of verisimilitude to it; moreover, unlike the faceless victims of Edo, the Kyoto of *Kanameishi* is populated with distinct individuals who suffer unique deaths, feel private grief, and, in some cases, simply marvel at their dumb luck. Second, although this Kyoto is in parts realistic, it is also a stylized space constructed out of numerous literary allusions and divided into famous places, or *meisho*, which in some chapters are depicted in ways similar to contemporary *meishoki*, or "guides to famous places." Lastly, Ryōi's relentlessly growing and merciless Great Meireki Fire is exchanged for short, serialized episodes that reflect the sudden, widely felt, but simultaneous nature of the earthquake.

In this chapter, I look in detail at the representation of urban catastrophe that emerges in *Kanameishi* from these various aspects. Unlike the various descriptive modes of *Musashi abumi*, which are easily distinguished from each other, the strategies Ryōi uses to represent catastrophic Kyoto are woven tightly together. In teasing them apart, I first concentrate on the serial structure of the text. Through temporally parallel vignettes, Ryōi particularizes the experience of the Kanbun earthquake, representing it as variegated and

lived through by different characters at various points in the city. Then, I will look at two aspects of the literary representation of city and catastrophe. I begin a discussion of how, contrary to *Musashi abumi*, which delimits Edo within the confines of the fire, *Kanameishi* delimits the earthquake within the confines of specifically chosen neighborhoods. The areas that get mapped are culturally-loaded Kyoto neighborhoods such as Kiyomizu or Gion. I then look at chapters that adapt some of the aspects of the aforementioned *meishoki*; for example, Ryōi recounts historical anecdotes to explain in part why certain places are famous. The effect is that, in Chapters Five through Eight of Book One, guidebook-like passages introduce sites that get damaged or destroyed. Finally, I will explore the use of comic verses that interact with the prose sections to both reinforce the literary register used in the text, but not to the detriment of its realism; in fact, some of the poems adopt similar detail to enhance the text's sense of verisimilitude.

Ultimately, *Kanameishi* comes across, on the whole, as a much more experimental work than *Musashi abumi*, mixing many different representational strategies and thereby indicating how one writer portraying superficially similar events—"urban disaster"—can produce great variety. This variety, however, is as contextually grounded as the representational strategies Ryōi uses in *Musashi abumi*. The poetry he uses draws upon a long tradition familiar to most educated readers. The descriptions of famous neighborhoods in Kyoto adapt contemporary prose works that Ryōi himself was helping to develop. *Kanameishi* is very much a work of its time.

A Summary of *Kanameishi*

Kanameishi tells the story of the Kanbun Earthquake and its aftermath over three books. The first book deals with the initial earthquake and its effects in Kyoto. The second

deals with the situation on subsequent days at various places in the surrounding region, particularly three days after the first tremor when a large aftershock occurred. Book Three is a potpourri: it contains a history of earthquakes; a critical look at folk religion in the guise of a comic account of a timorous shrine oracle; the tale of a man called Atarashibō, which acts as a frame story for the first two books; and a short chapter on folk theories of earthquakes, including an explanation of the title of the work.

Because my concern is with the depiction of urban disaster in Kyoto, in this chapter I will limit my focus to Book One. To give the reader context for what follows, it is helpful to give a slightly more detailed synopsis of this first book. It is divided into eleven sections: a preface and ten chapters. We can subdivide these into four smaller groups: the preface, Chapters One and Two, Chapters Three through Eight, and Chapters Nine and Ten. I will now look at each of these subgroups in turn.

The preface is only one paragraph long and describes a highly artificial scene that takes place at a rice field. Replete with allusions to poetry, *nō* drama, and classic prose, it sets a strongly literary tone for the first book. The preface also places the reader in a peaceful midsummer setting that mimics the calm before the violence unleashed by the earthquake.

That tone quickly changes once we enter the main body of Book One. More than any other chapters in *Kanameishi*, Chapters One and Two work together, with the second acting as a continuation of the first. Each looks at Kyoto in general, describing the ominous period before the earthquake, the moment the earth loosens its force, and the subsequent panicked chaos throughout the capital. The difference is in each chapter's focus, with the

first chapter dealing primarily with the reactions of people and the second with the destruction of buildings.

Kanameishi shifts from the general to specific in Chapters Three through Eight. The story or stories in each chapter are set in different places or neighborhoods: Shimogoryō Shrine is the setting of the first chapter, after which the reader is taken to, respectively, the area near Nijō and Muromachi Avenues, the Great Buddha at Hōkōji Temple, Mimizuka (the “Mound of Ears”), Ishibashi Bridge on Gojō Avenue, Kiyomizu, Gion, and finally Yasaka Shrine. Not only are these chapters set in these various places, but unlike Chapter One, which in some ways echoes *Musashi abumi* with its depiction of masses of people suffering anonymously, Chapters Three through Eight are made up of vignettes about recognizable people: two young boys in Chapter Three, followed by a pregnant woman and her attendants in Chapter Four, then a group of day laborers, a man who survives the collapse of Ishibashi Bridge, an old gaffer at a *irojaya* 色茶屋 (a teahouse where customers would rendezvous with prostitutes), and finally a handful of sightseers. Each chapter traces these people’s stories at the moment of the earthquake’s impact and immediately after.

Chapters Nine and Ten return to a general portrayal of the city. Chapter Nine is by far the longest of Book One, and can itself be separated into two sections: the first is a very sympathetic treatment of the chaos following the earthquake, as refugees huddle miserably at shrines and temples, tormented by repeated aftershocks. The second part of the chapter critically but nevertheless sympathetically discusses the ineffectual use of poems as talismans posted outside of homes. Chapter Ten moves the reader into the next couple of days, continuing the previous chapters’ descriptions of the general situation around the

city before recounting the sighting of shooting stars on the third of the month and how people take them to be portents of yet greater disaster.

In the next section, I explore the way this serial structure enables a “god’s-eye” account of an event that is sudden, short, and occurs simultaneously over a wide area. Moreover, in these chapters, *Kanameishi* represents the Kanbun earthquake more “realistically” than *Musashi abumi* does the Great Meireki Fire. That is, we read about the particular circumstances of distinct people, described with detail that depicts the earthquake as a private experience that is suffered in private ways. Enhancing this sense of verisimilitude is the distinct flavor of rumor that runs through the text; several of these stories read like gossip told by one Kyoto resident to others.

The Serial Simultaneous

The main physical effects of an earthquake occur, if not simultaneously, then over a relatively short period. A god’s-eye account of an earthquake is well served by its representation in parallel stories. There is nothing to “follow,” as in the case of the fire. Thus, to get a grasp of an earthquake’s wider effects, a textual structure that hops from place to place can impose a measure of narrative order. This is precisely what Book One of *Kanameishi* does, particularly in Chapters Three through Eight. The focus in these middle chapters is the fate of various people, of all ages and both genders, in different neighborhoods. In each chapter, *Kanameishi* resets the clock to the moment of catastrophe, affecting a clear separation between each tale. The episodes are not connected as are the penitentiary and Asakusa sections of *Musashi abumi* discussed in Chapter One; that is, there is no sense of cause and effect from one chapter to the next. The overarching link between

each story is, of course, the experience of the earthquake; however, the effect is a collage of unrelated incidents.

To get a better idea of the dynamic at work from chapter to chapter, I will look at Chapters Three and Four. After the first two chapters describe the ominous period before the earthquake, the moment the earth unleashes its force, the subsequent panicked chaos throughout the capital, and the widespread destruction of buildings, Chapter Three zooms in on Shimogoryō Shrine. There, a shrine priest is preparing to perform a cleansing ritual during which he sprinkles hot water on the worshippers. However, precisely at the moment he is about to do so, the earth unleashes its fury.

その時しも、地震おべたたくしくゆり出でしかば、諸人、肝をけし、拝殿にのぼり居たるは、くづれ落ち、地下なる者は、走り出でんとす。混みあひ、もみあふて、泣きさけび、呼ばひどよむ。その中に、年のころ七八歳にもやなるべきと見ゆる、おのこ子二人逃げ出づべき方角をうしなひ…

At that moment, the earth began to shake greatly, causing many to be hysterical with fright. Those inside the shrine were knocked over, while those outside tried to run. A crowd of people pushed and shoved, screaming and yelling. In the middle of this chaos, two boys who looked about seven or eight years old could not find their way out.⁶

The tale proceeds to depict the fate of the boys, taking an extremely dark and grotesque turn as they are dismembered by a collapsing stone lantern, the base of which they clutch in pathetic fear. Ryōi then draws out the grisly horror and pathos by introducing the parents, who cannot recognize the children due to the state of their corpses. Nevertheless, “the clothes, although thoroughly stained with blood, were unmistakable,

⁶ *Kanameishi*, 18-19.

causing the mother to go to pieces and the father to raise his voice [in grief].”⁷ The story continues:

ちぎれたる屍をとりあつめ、涙とともに俵にいれ、人して持たせて、家路に立ち帰る。ふたりの親の心の内、おもひはかるべし。その身、さきの世の報ひとはいひながら、病にふして死にもせば、せめてはおもひもうすかるべきにや。

They gathered the children’s severed bodies and placed them in a straw bag, along with their tears. They had others carry the bag for them as they headed on the road home, hearts heavy with emotion. They said that it was retribution for a past life. If the children had taken ill and died, prostrate in bed, the grief would have been easier to bear. But this?⁸

The chapter closes with three features: first, it reinforces the location in which this event happens, explaining that the boys had lived nearby; second, it draws a moral lesson, recounting a rumor that the children had eaten unclean food at the home of someone who had just died and then gone to the shrine, incurring the enshrined deity’s wrath; and, third, the entire episode is tied together with a grimly comic verse.⁹

I will discuss some of these aspects below. First, however, I would like to point out that Chapter Three is a shocking snapshot that fits the “rhythm” of the earthquake: the sudden violence, its immediate consequences, and the (in this case) horrible aftermath. Nobody is looking over their shoulders at advancing flames or looking to escape; the text does not rush along to a depiction of the destruction of the next place. Instead, it lingers on the story long enough to draw out details that mark it off from the vignettes that follow it. *Kanameishi* then guides the reader to the next snapshot and begins anew. There, in Chapter

⁷ Ibid., 20. The original is as follows: 血に染めがへりし着る物は、まがふ所なくそなりければ、母も気をうしなひ、父も声をあげて…

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See page 60, note 35 below.

Four, we immediately find a quick, sharp description of one woman and what happens as the earthquake hits, killing her and three others.

二条室町に、百足屋のなにがしとかや聞えし人の女房は、今年わづかに十七歳、むかへ取りていくほどもなく、ただならぬ身にて侍べりしが、朔日の地震、さしもおべたたしかりければ、家のうちにもたまりえず、おちの人・かひぞへ・小女四人つれて、うらなる空地にいでんとす。そのあひだに土蔵のありけるが、俄にくづれかかり、瓦にて頭をくだき、落ちかさなる壁にひしげ埋まれ、四人一所に死にけるこそ…

The wife of a certain Mukadeya, a well-known merchant who lived near Nijō and Muromachi Roads, had just turned seventeen this year and only recently gotten married. On the first of the month, the earthquake was so violent that she was unable to stay in her house, despite the fact that she was quite pregnant. The young wife, a wet nurse, an attendant, and a maid, four in all, tried to run outside toward vacant land behind the house. However, along the way, an earthen storehouse suddenly collapsed, its roof tiles crashing down upon their heads and its crumbling walls piling on top of their bodies, crushing and burying the women. The four of them died together in one spot.¹⁰

The family arrives and attempts frantically to dig the women out, only to discover that they are dead. Much like the previous tale of the two boys, this one adds gruesome details about the women's deaths and the fate of the unborn fetus, ending it all with a comic verse that plays on a poem from the tenth century imperial collection *Gosen wakashū* 後撰和歌集.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., 21.

¹¹ The *waka* in *Kanameishi* is: 大なえにくづれておつる棟がはら土ぞつもりて墳(つか)となりける (the ridge tiles / tumbling down / when the great quake struck / the earth accumulated / and became a burial mound). *Kanameishi*, 22. The original *waka*: 筑波嶺の峰より落つるみな川の恋ぞつもりて淵となりける (the entire river / tumbling down / from the peak of Tsukuba / my love accumulated / and became a deep pool). See headnote 2 in *ibid.*, 21. The wordplay turns on the following: (1) both use the verb *otsu* 落つ or おつ in its noun-modifying form *otsuru* おつる/落つる, which here I have translated as “tumbling down”; in *Kanameishi*, *otsuru* modifies the word *muna-gawara* 棟がはら, or ridge tile, whereas in the *Gosen wakashū* poem it modifies *mina no kawa* みなのカ, which I have translated as “the entire river”; (2) both poems use the continuative form of “to accumulate,” *tsumorite* つもりて; (3) and, lastly, they both end with the same word for “become,” *naru* なる, here in the past tense form *narikeri* なりける.

The parallel-tale structure then repeats itself several more times, with variations in content. Not everything is as grisly as these first two tales. Humor begins to take a bigger role within the narratives themselves (as opposed to being confined to the closing *kyōka*). *Kanameishi*'s variety mirrors that of experience. The way this diversity is laid out, in stories that come one right after another, allows the reader that god's-eye perspective that zooms in and out around the city.

* * * * *

These vignettes are structured not only to allow the reader to take in a mosaic of simultaneous experiences, but in their multiplicity they are also filled with details that give them a sense of verisimilitude: the pitiful children huddled at the foot of the tottering lantern and the four women buried beneath rubble suffer particularized deaths. These details extend even to scenes that have a comic element. In Chapter Eight, for example, we encounter people taking in some sights in a tower when the earthquake hits, but they do not realize what actually is happening; instead, when they spy some youngsters at the base of the tower, they conclude that they are the victims of a prank. The sightseers are obviously the butt of humor; nevertheless, the confusion caused by an earthquake makes their behavior not entirely unbelievable.

只わかき者ども下にありて、上なる者をおびやかさんとて塔をゆすると心得て、上なる者ども声をそろへて、「いかにかく悪きことなせそ。さなきだに、あやうくおぼゆるに、これいか成る事ぞ。只をけやけや」と…

There were only young people down below. Those up in the tower thought that [the youngsters] were shaking it in order to scare them. Their voices rose in unison, "Hey, why are you doing such an awful thing? Stop that! It's dangerous at any time [much less now, with people up here]! Stop! Stop!"¹²

¹² Ibid., 31.

In these tales, the reader can focus on the fate of the characters. One might wince at or sympathize with victims who suffer grisly dooms. Perhaps a reader might marvel at some characters who have spectacular luck or laugh at ridiculous antics of others. If the structure of the text lays out the vignettes serially, within each one there is room for Ryōi to draw out humor and pathos. In contrast to the masses of people suffering anonymous deaths in *Musashi abumi* and the disfigured metaphorical Edo-*rokudō*, *Kanameishi* is filled with recognizable people in familiar places. As Ohara Tōru points out, “accessorizing characters with [the names of] merchant houses like ‘Kotoya’, ‘Mariya’, and . . . ‘Mukadeya’”¹³ gives the reader a sense of verisimilitude.

Adding to this familiarity is the feeling that these vignettes are gossip being relayed from one Kyotoite (Ryōi) to another (the reader). We find marks of this in all three of the tales quoted above. For example, the writer finds out “later, when I asked,” where the boys from Chapter Three lived.¹⁴ Likewise, the pregnant woman from Chapter Four is married to “a certain Mukadeya who lived near Nijō and Muromachi Roads.” Once the sightseers of Chapter Eight are safely on the ground, the text provides news about them that sounds like gossip: “Even now, there are those who still suffer anguish, their daily lives troubled with anxiety.”¹⁵

Some of these gossip-like passages even have a bit of comic relish, as in the tale from Chapter Seven. After describing the collapse of a pagoda in Kiyomizu and a *torii* gate in

¹³ Ohara Tōru, “*Kanameishi no bungeisei*,” 523. “Kotoya” and “Mariya” are identified in Chapter Three as the homes of the two boys who die at Shimogoryō Shrine.

¹⁴ Ibid, 20. The original Japanese is 後に聞ければ.

¹⁵ Ibid., 32. The original is as follows: 今に心地わづらひて、おきふしなやむ者もあり.

Gion, the chapter closes with a portrayal of a group of customers at a Yasaka *irojaya* 色茶屋, or a teahouse used for assignations with prostitutes. The scene opens with a description of slapstick-like chaos, before zeroing in on an unlikely customer:

茶屋にあそび居るわかき者どもは、あはてふためき、あみ笠を手にもち、草履・席駄かたがたしはき、脇差をとりわすれ、みだれ足になりてかけ出づるもあり。その中に、井筒屋のながしとかや、年のころ八十四五なるおとこ、ほうほう逃ぐる…

The young men having fun at a teahouse were in a panicked uproar. They held their sedge hats in hand, but everyone's *zōri* and *geta* sandals were mixed up. Some forgot to take their *wakizashi* swords, stumbling off on unsteady legs. In the middle of all this, a certain Izutsuya, an eighty-four- or five-year-old man, barely escaped.¹⁶

However, the reader suddenly encounters someone labeled “a certain person” (*aru hito* ある人). We immediately find out that this person is watching what is going on, the implication being that *Kanameishi* is transmitting an eyewitness account. Moreover, this certain person is not merely someone who sees something; despite everything that is happening—a powerful earthquake, a nearby *torii* crashing to the ground, terrified people running about—the witness is *amused*, so much so as to be moved to poetry. “A certain person, seeing [the old man escape from the teahouse], recited with a laugh”:

としたけて	with the years piling up
まだ生くべしと	I wouldn't have thought
おもひきや	such an old man could still be alive
いのちなりけり	but such is life,
茶屋のながにげ	a lengthy escape from the teahouse ¹⁷

The poem takes the tale that immediately precedes it and gives it a literary, if comic, spin by playing on a *waka* by Saigyō. Here is the original:

¹⁶ *Kanameishi*, 29.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

年たけて	with my years mounting
また越ゆべしと	I'd not thought to pass this way
思ひきや	again but such is
命なりけり	the life I've been allotted
さやの中山	Middle Mountain of the Night ¹⁸

The poem derives its humor first by playing with Saigyō's language—the first, third, and fourth lines are direct quotations, while the second and fifth contain similarly sounding words (Saigyō's *mata* and *saya* becoming Ryōi's *mada* and *chaya*, for example)—and, second, by turning Saigyō's melancholic, personal poem into a mildly racy observation on an old man's sexual vitality in the teahouse (“I wouldn't have thought / such an old man could still be alive”). Like the poems I will discuss below, it serves as both climax and commentary on the preceding incident, while offering a jarring contrast to the violence and pathos seen elsewhere in Book One.

Taking this scene as a whole, we see that Ryōi ends the chapter by uniting several elements that are common throughout *Kanameishi*. First, as I have noted in this section, the scene is filled with small, realistic details: the panicked patrons fumbling through a mass of sandals and an older man individualized through his name and approximate age. Moreover, the scene has the flavor of gossip, portraying the chaos at the teahouse as something observed. However, by taking these details and placing them in a comic verse that plays on an older poem written by one of Japan's most revered poets, we get a hint of yet another element. In *Kanameishi*, catastrophic Kyoto is represented not merely as a real, familiar place, but also as a stylized literary space.

¹⁸ The translation is from Laurel Rasplica Rodd, trans., *Shinkokinshū: New Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 405. This is *waka* 987 in the *Shinkokinshū*.

The Stylized Catastrophe

The descriptive detail one finds in *Kanameishi* is not the only difference between it and *Musashi abumi*. While the latter text is obviously not devoid of poetic allusion, it is notable how little there is. Except for the use of the *Ise* poem and the short allusion to Kamo no Chōmei's *Hōjōki*—both of which are flourishes that quickly get buried in an avalanche of information—the major trope is as much religious as literary: the *jigoku meguri* parody. Moreover, the “hell tour” section stands in stark contrast to those that precede and follow it. The various ways of representing the Meireki fire in *Musashi abumi*—the non-narrative lists, fact-based anecdotes (which are in the third person), and Rakusaibō's personal tale (which is in the first person)—are easy to distinguish from each other, despite the absence of anything in the text that explicitly marks them off, such as section or chapter divisions.¹⁹ In contrast to this, *Kanameishi* is replete with allusions to poetry and prose; nearly every chapter contains a comic verse similar to the parody of Saigyō quoted above. Moreover, despite divisions between them, within the separate chapters these poetic aspects are often tightly woven together with the realistic details of *Kanameishi*, either as poetic summations of vignettes (again as with the Saigyō parody) or in the prose itself. The Kyoto of *Kanameishi* is not merely described as a familiar place. The city is built with poetic scaffolding.

In this section, I will look at other examples of how Ryōi integrates literary allusion into the text. In particular, I will examine how he foregrounds not the factual basis of the text, but rather how the preface places the reader in a stylized literary space. I will then

¹⁹ *Musashi abumi* is broken up into two books in accordance with chronology, namely the first and second days of the fire.

take a closer look at how he embellishes allusion with realistic details to create a kind of literary verisimilitude, as it were. Finally, I will look at a few more examples of verse, to get a better grasp of how these poetic parodies act as literary summaries that draw on the details that precede them. Poetry is the most obvious difference between *Kanameishi* and *Musashi abumi*, so it is important to examine some of the ways in which it is used.

* * * * *

Kanameishi's preface is one short paragraph. Nothing in it explicitly announces what *Kanameishi* is about. It is not an authorial statement from Ryōi, explaining why he wrote the work. It is, rather, a pastoral scene with people and animals in a good mood. That is merely surface, however. The preface accomplishes four things: it clearly announces the literary nature of the text; it uses a poetic place name to set the action in the Kyoto area; it hints at the larger topic of the text through a visual pun; and it depicts the quotidian before the chaotic. In much the same way people pleasantly going about their business have their worlds upturned by an earthquake, the peaceful preface is quickly shoved aside by the violence depicted in Chapter One. In doing all of this, the preface places its readers in an imaginative space that mimics the real space of those who experienced the earthquake.

Because it is so brief, it is useful to quote the preface in full:

春すぎ夏も来て、やうやうなかばに成り行けば、藤・山吹に咲きつづく、垣根の卯の花・やまとなでしこ、庭もさながら錦をしけるごとくなるに、千葉・万葉・梨月・名月などいへる五月さつきつつじも、しなじなほころび出て、山ほととぎすは、声をばかりに鳴きわたり、田子の早苗は、時過ぐるとてさし急ぐ、早乙女の田うたの声々、井手の蛙も、おもしろがりて飛びあがるも、心ありげ也。

Spring has passed and summer has come; it is slowly moving toward midsummer. The wisteria and kerria roses are blooming. The deutzia hedges and Yamato pinks, as well as the gardens in people's homes, spread like brocade, while varieties of satsuki azalea—sen'yō, ban'yō, rigetsu, and meigetsu—start to open. The mountain

cuckoo sings, its voice extending fully. Young girls sing a planting song, their voices urging the rice farmer's seedlings to hurry, for time is passing, while the frogs on the Ide River charmingly jump along to the song. It is as if they have refined taste.²⁰

This is a highly allusive paragraph. The very first clause is a quotation of a line from a *nō* play, *Kakitsubata*.²¹ From there, the allusions pile one on top of another: the mention of flowers and brocade mix together lines from *Tsurezuregusa* and the *Sarashina nikki*.²² The mountain cuckoo alludes to yet another *nō* drama, *Asukagawa*.²³ The singing fieldworkers are a reference to a *waka* from the imperial collection *Goshūi wakashū* 後拾遺和歌集,²⁴ as well as incorporating a second allusion to *Asukagawa*, which quotes from the same poem. Moreover, the dancing frogs of the preface are found along the Ide River, which runs to the south of central Kyoto and is a poetic place name with a long history of usage in poems that stretches back to the eighth century *Man'yōshū*. By setting the scene on the Ide River, the preface puts the reader's imagination in what might be described as literary Kyoto.

²⁰ *Kanameishi*, 14.

²¹ The original line from *Kakitsubata* is: 春過ぎ夏もきて、草木心なしとは申せども、時をわすれぬ花の色 (Spring has passed and summer has come. They say that plants do not have souls, but the color of a flower does not forget the time). See headnote 1 in *Kanameishi*, 14.

²² Ryōi is using language from Essay 139 in *Tsurezuregusa*: 草は、山吹・藤・杜若・撫子 (Regarding plants: kerria roses, wisteria, irises, and pinks). He also alludes to the following from *Sarashina nikki*: 夏はやまと撫子の濃くうすく錦をひけるやうになむ咲きたる (In the summer, the colors of the blooming Yamato pinks spread like deep and pale brocade). See headnotes 2 and 3, *Kanameishi*, 14.

²³ See headnote 9, *ibid.*

²⁴ The *waka* is: みたやもりけふは五月になりけりいそげやさなへおいもこそすれ (You who guard the shrine's rice fields / today was the first of the fifth month / hurry and plant the seeds). See headnote 12, *ibid.*

The preface is also connected to the earthquake itself in two ways. The first is textual, in the form of the word *satsuki*, a variety of azalea that also means the Fifth Month (written with the Chinese characters for “five” and “moon,” 五月). Like the flowers described here, the Fifth Month is about “to open” in a rather spectacular way when the Kanbun earthquake strikes on the first. The second connection is less direct: the mood of the preface lulls the reader into a false sense of tranquility through its description of a pleasant summer scene. The events of Chapter One wreak havoc with everyday actions such as seed planting and summer singing. Like the girls and the frogs, the unsuspecting reader does not know what lies in store.²⁵

One might argue that the preface is a block of text that more elaborately accomplishes the same effect that *Musashi abumi* does with its title, the *Ise* quotation, and the adaptation of *Hōjōki*. After all, they also set a literary mood, allude to the work’s geographical setting, and represent disaster in a highly stylized manner. Unlike what we see in *Musashi abumi*, however, the literary allusions in *Kanameishi*’s preface are not textual anomalies that give way to factual information. Rather, *Kanameishi* includes literary allusion time and again. In the first chapter, for example, the way in which Ryōi uses *Hōjōki* is similar to what he does with Kamo no Chōmei’s text in *Musashi abumi*. However, the surrounding context in *Kanameishi* is completely different. Here is the passage in question:

²⁵ As briefly noted above (page 44), the title itself is a reference to earthquakes that some readers presumably would have recognized. According to a folk theory of why earthquakes happen, the Kashima deity protected the land from earthquakes by holding a keystone (要石 *kanameishi*) in place. Unfortunately, the deity is apt to get distracted. Ryōi writes about to this folk theory in the final chapter of Book Three. *Ibid.*, 83.

五月朔日巳の刻がかりに、空かきくもり、塵灰の立ちおほひたるやうに見えて、雨気の空にもあらず、夕立のけしきもあらず。「いかさま聞きをよぶ竜のあがるといふものか、それかあらぬか、雲か煙か」とあやしむところに…

At around the hour of the snake in the late morning of the first day of the fifth month, the sky darkened and everything was engulfed in billowing clouds that seemed like dust and ash. The sky did not portend immediate rain or suggest that the afternoon might bring a sudden shower, so people wondered, “Might this be the legendary dragon rising above us? Are these clouds? Are they smoke?”²⁶

This echoes Kamo no Chōmei’s description of an earthquake that struck the capital in the year 1185, adopting language in which Chōmei laments that the people of the city could not escape the cracking earth: “Because they had no wings, people could not fly in the sky. Had they been dragons, could they not have ridden the clouds?”²⁷ As in *Musashi abumi*, Ryōi uses the allusion to describe the portentous moments immediately before catastrophe strikes. However, whereas Ryōi quickly switches to enumerating places in *Musashi abumi*, in *Kanameishi* he follows this *Hōjōki* allusion with a scene of chaos: throughout the capital, as the earth begins to shake, an anonymous group of “many people” (*shonin* 諸人) empty from their shaking homes into the streets, chanting *yonaoshi* (世なをし, “world reformation” or “world renewal”), an incantation thought to provide protection during an earthquake.²⁸ The text then narrows its focus to a smaller group of court ladies (*nyōbōtachi* 女房達) who are “so refined that they have never seen the light of day” and who run

²⁶ Ibid., 15.

²⁷ *Hōjōki*, 25. 羽なければ、空をも飛ぶべからず。竜ならばや雲にも乗らむ。

²⁸ See headnotes 22 and 29, *Kanameishi*, 15-16.

“shamelessly into the streets barefoot with their sashes untied and hair disheveled, screaming in fear.”²⁹

The chapter then ends with a poem, one that strongly illustrates the literary and comic aspects of *Kanameishi*'s representation of the Kanbun earthquake, while still remaining grounded in concrete detail about the kinds of things that happen during such a disaster. Following the description of the barefoot women, the text focuses in on an individual, here labeled as “a certain person” (*aru hito* ある人), who recites the following poem (I have included in the last line of the translation a second meaning that results from a pun, discussed below):

わが庵の	if when the earth shakes
竹のたる木も	the bamboo rafters of my hermitage
ふるなゆに	are twisted
ゆがまばやがて	then eventually:
世なをしなをし	world reformation / joint repair ³⁰

The first eight syllables are a direct quotation of a poem that speaks of another hermitage's frozen bamboo pipe, but here it is adapted to multiple effects.³¹ First, by turning the bamboo pipe into roof supports that are damaged during the earthquake, Ryōi again shows attention to detail, portraying an individual occurrence of an incident (the damaging of a home) that likely happened to many others during such a large earthquake. At the same time, however, because the bamboo poles support the roof of a hermitage (*iho*),

²⁹ Ibid, 15. The original is as follows: 日のめも見ぬほどのやごとなき女房達も、帯ときひろげ、さばき髪、はだし、つるもぎにて、恥をわすれてかけ出で逃げ出て、おめきさけぶ事…

³⁰ Ibid., 15.

³¹ The base poem is from the contemporary *Waka dairin gushō* 和歌題林愚抄 and is as follows: 我がいほの竹のかけひの夜の程に氷りそめてや音信もせぬ (when at night / the bamboo pipe / of my hermitage / begins to freeze / no one visits). See headnote 26 in *ibid.*, 16.

the poem doubles the earlier *Hōjōki* allusion by describing the poet's abode as being similar to Kamo no Chōmei's retreat. Finally, the closing line, which repeats the *yonaoshi* incantation and thus links it to an earlier point in the chapter, doubles as a pun: the word *yo* can mean world (世) or a joint in a bamboo support (節), and thus *yonaoshi* can also be taken to mean "joint fixing," which the poet will now have to do to make his hermitage livable again.

Throughout *Kanameishi*, Ryōi mixes allusion, poetry, and realistic detail in the manner just seen. In the examples just examined, the references and the particulars come both in the prose and in the poem. Another example, again using *Hōjōki*, comes in Chapter Three, which as the reader might recall tells the tale of the two boys who die at Shimogoryō Shrine. The episode begins by identifying the boys' ages and then describes the moment of their deaths: "They clung in terror to a stone lantern, which began to shake violently. The lantern tottered and then came crashing down on the two boys. From their heads to their feet, everything was broken."³² Following this their parents come running to witness their crushed children.³³ This anecdote is another allusion to the earthquake section of *Hōjōki*:

其中に、或武者、ひとり子の六七ばかりに侍りしが、ついぢのおほひの下にこ家をつくりてはかなげなるあとなし事をしてあそび侍しが、俄にくづれうめられて、あとかたなくひらにうちひさがれて、二の目など一寸ばかりづづうちいだされたるを、父母かかへて、こゑをおしまずかなしみあひて侍しこそ、哀にかなしく見侍りしか。

In this the only child of a samurai, about five or six, was playing innocently in a house he had made under the eave of a mud wall. Suddenly, the wall collapsed and

³² "*Kanameishi*, 19. The original is as follows: 恐れもだえ石灯籠にいだきつきし所に、やがてかの石灯籠ゆりかたぶきて、打ち倒れしかば、二人の子どもは、これに打ちひしがれ、頭より手足にいたるまで、つづく所なく、きれぎれになりて死にける。

³³ See page 47 above.

buried the child. It crushed the body and flattened it; two eyes stuck out a little more than an inch. I felt great pity seeing the parents as they held the child, their voices wailing in grief.³⁴

Some of the descriptive detail in Chapter Three of *Kanameishi* is simply a twist on this passage from *Hōjōki*, most obviously the violent crushing of the children and the parent's grief. However, we should not take this as a simple allusion. Firstly, the episode in *Kanameishi* is not based on *Hōjōki*, but on an actual event reported to have taken place during the Kanbun earthquake, in which a young child was killed beneath the stone lantern at Shimogoryō Shrine.³⁵ Using this as a starting point, Ryōi makes explicit the connection to the similar anecdote in Kamo no Chōmei's work. However, Ryōi adds the additional description of the bloody clothes, the broken bodies of the children being carried home, the speculation about karma and this particularly unlucky fate, and the gossip about what the boys had been doing before coming to the shrine.³⁶ The vignette is based in fact, given literary depth through allusion, and then further embellished to refashion it into something new.

Chapter Three, like Chapter One, ends with a verse. In Chapter One, the punning poem serves as a counterpoint to the portrayed chaos and trauma that precedes it. This might strike the modern reader as a curious way to write about a destructive catastrophe—a frivolous poem that follows a seemingly serious depiction of the moment of disaster. However, the incongruity is even stronger in Chapter Three, with its graphic and

³⁴ “Kamo no Chōmei Hōjōki (Kaneyoshi-bon)” 鴨長明方丈記(兼良本) in *Hōjōki, Tsurezuregusa* 方丈記・徒然草, ed. by Satake Akihiro 佐竹昭広 and Kobota Jun 久保田淳, Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikai 新日本古典文学大系, Vol. 39 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1989), 47.

³⁵ See the final explanatory headnote at the end of Chapter Four. *Kanameishi*, 20

³⁶ See page 48 above.

heart-rending portrayal of the two children's deaths. In this instance, Ryōi ends the chapter with a verse that suggests that the very lantern that crushed the boys into pieces be looked upon as a memorial tower.³⁷ The effect is jarring and leads a modern reader, at least, to wonder if the poem enhances the representation of the earthquake or if the representation of the earthquake is simply a preface to the verse itself. We see this pattern repeated elsewhere. In the next chapter, the storehouse that kills the pregnant woman is turned into a burial mound in a parody of a *waka* from the tenth century *Gosen wakashū* 後撰和歌集.³⁸ One of the tourists stuck in the pagoda at Yasaka (the group that mistakenly thinks youngsters are shaking the tower), after the earthquake is over, rubs prayer beads while reciting another punning verse. In Chapter Five, we encounter a group of day laborers working on the Great Buddha of Hōkōji Temple when the earthquake strikes. Because they have been hammering on the statue, they mistake the shaking for the punishment of an angry Buddha. When one worker is safely on the ground, he grumbles in annoyance about mistaking the earthquake for divine punishment, in an allusion to a love poem by Ono no Komachi:

ゆるからに	because of the shaking
ほとけの罰と	I thought:
おもひきや	Buddha's punishment
なゆとしりせば	had I'd known it was just an earthquake
おりざらましを	I wouldn't have climbed down ³⁹

³⁷ *Kanameishi*, 20-21: とてもはやうちひしがれて死するから石灯籠を五輪ともみよ (they've already been crushed / and have died / so look upon this lantern / as their five-tiered memorial).

³⁸ See above p. 49, note 11.

³⁹ *Kanameishi*, 24. This is based on *Kokinshū* poem number 552. The allusion is in lines four and five: 思ひつつ寝ればや人の見えつらむ夢と知りせばさめざらましを (in love-tormented / sleep I saw him beside me— / had I known my love's / visit was but a dream I / should never have awakened). This translation is from Laurel Rasplica Rodd with Mary Catherine Henkenius,

Here again we see some of the same characteristics of the other poems: it recaps an essential feature of the preceding story (the confusion of the earthquake with Buddha's anger) and plays with words (in this case, as with the Saigyō poem, those of a famous poet.)

Poetry is the feature that most distinguishes *Kanameishi* from *Musashi abumi* in the way it represents both disaster and the city. As to the question of how the poems work within the larger body of the text, I would argue that, while the prose sections clearly preface the poems, the verses—even those that seem to reach for a cheap joke through what Ohara Tōru labels “bad puns” (*dajare* 駄洒落)⁴⁰—reinforce the representation of the disaster and its victims. The poems are also evidence of a writer who is experimenting with different strategies of representation: vignettes based in fact are mixed with invented details that together set up poetic word-play, which all together produce a text that has elements of the realism explored in the previous section. For a modern reader, perhaps the “bad puns” sit uncomfortably next to graphic descriptions of crushed children, a buried pregnant woman, and panicked (if lucky) old men; nevertheless, we are not Ryōi's audience. The representational cocktail that Ryōi mixes in *Kanameishi* points to a writer trying things out; one of those things happens to be the depiction of disaster, which itself is something that is fluid, moving, and changing according to different factors, foremost here being the calamity and the location of the disaster, which are, in the case of both *Kanameishi* and *Musashi abumi*, also urban spaces.

Kokinshū: A Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 208.

⁴⁰ Ohara, “*Kanameishi no bungeisei*,” 525.

In the next section, I will turn to the representation of urban disaster space in *Kanameishi*. As with the depiction of the disaster itself, *Kanameishi* is quite different than *Musashi abumi*. Part of this is because of the different nature of the disaster: whereas the fire affected an area smaller than the city of Edo, the earthquake encompassed an entire region. As a result, Ryōi could “map” the entire space of the Great Meireki Fire, but in *Kanameishi* he had to limit his focus. The result is that he chose locations that allowed him to experiment in another way, by adapting some of the features of *meishoki*, which were contemporary guidebooks to “famous places,” to situate the experience of the earthquake.

The Literary Disaster Tour of Kyoto

In *Musashi abumi*, the fire delineates the “Edo” of the text. Like the disaster, the mapping of the city begins small and grows by noting the fire’s starting point and then naming new places in the fire’s path. Those areas that were not affected do not appear in the work. In contrast, the area of an earthquake is, at the moment it occurs, considerably larger than any one place. Thus, from the point of view of city inhabitants, there is a sense in which the “starting point” is everywhere at once. In focusing on the earthquake experience, there is no spatial logic in the event itself that suggests that any particular location or any particular person’s story should get depicted. Perhaps a text might begin with a place that suffers the greatest amount of damage. Other interpretive schemes suggest foregrounding buildings that mysteriously come through unscathed. An author thus has a certain freedom in choosing what places to depict.⁴¹

⁴¹ Sakamaki makes a similar observation. *Kanazōshi shinkō*, 24.

In this section, I will explore the places Ryōi chooses in *Kanameishi* and how he depicts them. Specifically, I will look at the representation of space in two ways. First, in contrast to *Musashi abumi*, the locations in *Kanameishi* are not mere toponyms; rather, like the people who populate them, the neighborhoods of Book One are representations that are alive with the details of real places. Second, they are not merely neighborhoods in which people live, but are *famous*. Particularly in Chapters Six through Eight, Ryōi writes about them as not merely being struck with disaster, but also as locations with notable cultural histories. Once again experimenting, in these chapters Ryōi places a guidebook-like city next to one that is thrown into chaos.

* * * * *

As we have seen with *Kanameishi*, the text begins with two chapters that attempt to take in the city as a whole before turning to specific neighborhoods. In subsequent chapters, Ryōi particularizes Kyoto by tapping into readers' mental pictures as residents of the city, making close links between the characters and specific locations. The imagined people get plotted onto mental maps of the capital. I noted above that, at the end of Chapter Three, the two boys who die at Shimogoryō Shrine are described as having lived in the neighborhood nearby. Likewise, the pregnant woman in the following chapter is not merely married to a merchant named Mukadeya, but one who operates near Nijō and Muromachi Avenues. In Chapter Six, Ryōi writes of a lucky man—fortunate because he falls along with the bridge but sustains only a knee injury—as being “from Hanayamachi near West Shijō Road.”⁴² Such connections engaged contemporary Kyoto readers at the level of collective spatial

⁴² *Kanameishi*, 27.

knowledge or collective memory; as Nicolas Fiévé points out, “few urban spaces are left untouched by some collective memory that links them to a social class, cultural community, or professional activity. Very often, the toponym is an easily identifiable repository of collective memory.”⁴³ Fiévé goes on:

Avenues in Kyoto such as Ichijō, Nijō, and Sanjō are reminders of the old imperial government and the city of the palaces of court families. The meaning of these names—First Avenue, Second Avenue, Third Avenue—recalls their disposition in relation to the imperial palace in the old Heian capital. Some names recall ancient professions: Ōgi-chō (the fan district) is . . . named after the fan makers who first settled there in the thirteenth century . . . Zaimoku-chō (the timber district) in Shimogyō-ku, [is] where traders and stockists of wood and timber for construction lived. . . .⁴⁴

In *Kanameishi*, the mere mention of a place name had for Kyoto readers a latent depth that it did not in *Musashi abumi*.⁴⁵ The use of place names as part of the characterization of people in *Kanameishi* could thus potentially activate readers’ imaginations in a way that the lists of *Musashi abumi* likely were not able to. Even still, the settings of *Kanameishi* are not *merely* mentioned. They are linked to people who do things like visit the homes of acquaintances (as the boys are described to have done before their deaths). The places of *Kanameishi* are alive with activity. Just as the people of *Kanameishi* are distinct in ways that they are not in *Musashi abumi*, Kyoto is on the whole depicted as a more “real” place than the Edo of the earlier work.

⁴³ Fiévé, “Kyoto’s Famous Places,” 154.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ We need to remember that, as mentioned above, some of these readers might have had extensive experience of Edo as well. When I speak of *Musashi abumi* as not being a “lived” space for Ryōi’s readers, I am assuming that many (perhaps most) of his readers lived in Kamigata and, for the most part, had neither the ability nor occasion to travel to Edo. Even if they did, those readers who lived in Kyoto would have had a more intimate relationship with the old capital than with the shogun’s base.

The representation of space in *Kanameishi*, however, is yet more complicated.

Before we meet the two boys at the shrine, for example, Ryōi describes the general practice of sprinkling water on shrine worshippers.

五月朔日は、祈禱の日なりとて、諸社に御神楽・御湯などまいらす事、いにしへよりこのかた、これあり。下御霊にも、御湯まいらせ、貴賤老若つどひあつまりて、おがみ奉る。

The first day of the fifth month is a day of prayer. At many shrines, rituals are performed, such as *kagura* dancing or sprinkling worshippers with hot water from soaked bamboo grass. Such practices have existed from antiquity. They take place at Shimogoryō Shrine as well, where worshippers of all ages and ranks had assembled.⁴⁶

In this way, Ryōi adds a bit of historical and cultural flavor to the event. However, while he situates the ritual at Shimogoryō Shrine, thus tying place and practice together, the information remains vague; the rituals have been around “from antiquity,” and have occurred “at many shrines.” In this chapter, the description of people (particularly the two boys) and their experiences of the earthquake are paramount; the place or the practices associated with it are part of their stories, not separate. Nevertheless, this short mention of the water ritual foreshadows a shift in focus that becomes prominent in the middle chapters of Book One. In Chapter Five, Ryōi gives a similarly short historical introduction, one that again is only tangentially related to the setting of the chapter. This time, before recounting the experiences of the group of workers on the Great Buddha of Hōkōji Temple, Ryōi describes an event from the ninth century:

むかし、文徳天皇の御宇、斉衡二年五月五日の大地震に、南都東大寺大仏の頭をゆり落とせしと、記録にしるせり。

⁴⁶ *Kanameishi*, 18.

It has been recorded that a long time ago, in the year Saikō 2, during Emperor Mondoku's reign, when a big earthquake hit on the fifth day of the fifth month, the head of the Great Buddha of Tōdaiji Temple in Nara tumbled off the statue.⁴⁷

While this sentence does not describe the Hōkōji Temple, it is more specific than the earlier mention of shrine rituals. It would be a stretch to call it an “anecdote”; nevertheless, it identifies a date, place, and event, the last two of which echo some of the details of Chapter Five, i.e., an incident that occurs during a powerful earthquake at a large statue of a buddha on temple grounds. Here, Ryōi is gradually introducing a style of description that one might find in contemporary guidebooks to famous places, or *meishoki*. These guidebooks had their own distinctive variety of representation, “based on an evocative—but not necessarily exact—depiction of famous places’ origins and history, anecdotes connected to locations, local specialties, and the like.”⁴⁸ If, strictly speaking, the sentence quoted above from Chapter Five is a little different than this description (it is not an anecdote nor is it about the actual setting of the chapter, Hōkōji Temple in Kyoto), in Chapter Six, Ryōi’s adoption of the *meishoki*-style mode is unmistakable. Before I explore how he does this, however, it will be helpful first to look closer at *meisho*, or famous places, and the guidebooks about them.

The concept of the *meisho*, or famous place, in Japanese art and literature goes back centuries prior to Ryōi’s time. As Robert Goree writes,

Meisho had held cultural currency in Japan since long before the early modern period as a category of codified place names associated with specific references in traditional poetry. A place was known as a *meisho* by virtue of its appearance in a work of poetry or some other literary work, such as *Genji monogatari*, or as a site of historical importance, and poets frequently deployed set poetic tropes called

⁴⁷ Ibid., 22-23. The second year of Saikō was the year 855 C.E. Mondoku reigned from 850-856 C.E.

⁴⁸ Nicolas Fiévé, “Kyoto’s Famous Places,” 157.

utamakura 歌枕 (lit., "poem pillows") in conjunction with *meisho* as a way to create allusive resonance in a poem.⁴⁹

Meisho were also depicted in the visual arts. *Meisho-e* 名所絵, or screen paintings of *meisho*, gained in popularity among aristocrats as early as the Heian period.⁵⁰ During the Muromachi period, "*meisho-e* contributed to the development of elaborate screen paintings of *meisho* located in and around Kyoto called *Rakuchū rakugai zu* 洛中洛外図, which depict places of cultural renown among the everyday contexts of Kyoto."⁵¹ By the early modern period, the representation of famous places no longer was confined to poetry, diaries, poetic travel journals, or the visual arts, but could be found in commercially-published guidebooks with a literary flair. There was likely a crossover between visual and verbal representations: screens depicting scenes around the capital were quite common and likely influenced the writing of Nakagawa Kiun's *Kyō warabe*,⁵² the first *meishoki*, which depicts "roughly the same set of *meisho* featured in the . . . *Rakuchū rakugai zu*."⁵³

⁴⁹ Robert Dale Goree Jr., "Fantasies of the Real: *Meisho zue* in Early Modern Japan" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2010), 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Kyō warabe* 京童, in *Kanazōshi shūsei* 仮名草子集成, Vol. 22, ed. by Asakura Haruhiko 朝倉治彦, Fukusawa Akio 深沢秋男, and Yanagisawa Masaki 柳沢昌紀 (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1998), 89-191. *Kyō warabe* was published in 1658, a year or two before Ryōi's *Tōkaidō meishoki* and nearly four years before *Kanameishi*. For a synopsis of *Kyō warabe* and details about its publishing history, see Noda, *Nihon kinsei shōsetsu shi*, 330.

⁵³ Goree, "Fantasies of the Real," 8. On the "proliferation" of Kyoto screens, see Matthew Philip McKelway, *Capitalscapes: Folding Screens and Political Imagination in Late Medieval Kyoto* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 201. On the expansion of *meisho* representation into the commercial press, see Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Japan in Print*, 150-159; McKelway, *Capitalscapes*, Chapter Seven; and Jilly Traganou, *The Tōkaidō Road*, esp. 68-72.

Meishoki can be seen as building upon the collective memory of representational space as contained in toponyms and the artistic representations of space in poetic and visual representations of *meisho*. We can get a better idea of how Ryōi uses the *meishoki*-style of description in Chapters Six through Eight by looking at an example from *Kyō warabe*:

八坂の寺ハ、ほうくはんじと号す。…天曆のころ、雲居寺の浄蔵、此寺にきたり。塔の、王城のかたへ、かたぶくを、ミテ。

それ、塔のかたぶくは、其方に悪事ある、ずいさうなりとて。その夜、いのらるるに。西北より風吹きて出。塔婆をゆるかし。宝鐸こゑをなして。あしたに、ミレバ、塔婆まろくに、なれり。きめうふしぎ、みな人、ずいきのなミだ。たもとを、ひたす。

The temple at Yasaka is called Hōkanji. . . . During the Tenryaku period, Jōzō from Unkoji Temple came here. He looked toward the pagoda and saw that it was leaning.

He said, “It is evil for the tower to lean in that direction.” That night he prayed and a wind blew out of the northwest. It shook the pagoda and rang the wind chimes. The next day, when everyone looked, the pagoda had straightened out. It was a mystery. Everyone cried tears of gratitude that soaked the base of the tower.⁵⁴

This entry does not tell of the origin of the temple. However, it gives a historical anecdote that a tourist visiting the place might find interesting. It dates the story, identifies the person central to it,⁵⁵ and then gives a fair amount of detail to flesh out the incident. After this, Kiun adds yet another story about Jōzō at the temple, before moving on to the next location. The story of Jōzō’s mystical ability to right the tower through prayer is, to use Fiévé’s word (quoted above), rather “evocative,” but one might be excused for skepticism about the incident’s factuality.

⁵⁴ *Kyō warabe*, 110.

⁵⁵ In this case, the monk Jōzō Kiso, who was the great grandson of Emperor Saga (785-842), was renowned for the powers described by Kiun and is the subject of multiple *setsuwa*.

Meishoki became popular, with numerous guidebooks of famous places in Kyoto and Edo published in the decades after *Kyō warabe* was written. Ryōi's own *Tōkaidō meishoki* is arguably the most famous example of the form. As noted in Chapter One, *Tōkaidō meishoki* contains lifted passages from *Kyō warabe* to describe parts of Edo. *Tōkaidō meishoki* also contains descriptions of famous places in Kyoto, on the other end of the Tōkaidō Road.

Kanameishi, written between *Tōkaidō meishoki* and Ryōi's second guidebook, *Edo meishoki*, "boldly introduces aspects of *meishoki*" in Chapter Six.⁵⁶ This chapter actually describes two separate incidents of the day of the earthquake. The first is at Mimizuka, the "Mound of Ears," while the second takes place at Ishibashi, the stone bridge of Gojō Road. Ryōi fully embraces the *meishoki*-style of description in the section on Mimizuka. The chapter begins in true guidebook fashion, guiding the reader away from the location of the previous chapter to a different one. It then launches into a discussion of the new location:

大仏殿の門前南のかたに、耳塚とてこれあり。むかし、太閤秀吉公朝鮮征伐の時、異国の軍兵ども多く日本の手に打ちとり、その首を日本にわたして、太閤の実検にそなへんとするに、首数おびたたしかりければ、只耳ばかりを切りて、樽につめてわたしたり。太閤、実検し給ひてのち、「これ無縁のものにして、亡郷の鬼となりぬらん。敵ながらもふびんなり」とて、塚につきこめ、その上に五輪を立て、永代のしるしとし給ふ。

The Mimizuka mound is south of the gate of the hall of the Great Buddha. Many years ago, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi sent an army to conquer Korea, Japanese warriors killed many enemy soldiers over there. The warriors were going to bring the severed heads of their victims back to Japan for Hideyoshi's inspection, but there were too many, so they sliced off their ears and packed them in a barrel.

After looking them over, Hideyoshi said, "These men have died with no one to pray for them. Surely their ghosts yearn for home. Even though they are our enemies, this is pitiable." At his command, the ears were buried in a mound, on top of which stood a five-story pagoda to mark it for posterity.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ohara, "*Kanameishi no bungeisei*," 524.

⁵⁷ *Kanameishi*, 24-25.

In writing about Mimizuka, we see that Ryōi includes some of the same aspects as Kiun's entry on the Yasaka temple. First, he tells an anecdote, which in this case explains the provenance of the mound; second, the person central to the story is clearly identified and is again quite well-known—in this case, Toyotomi Hideyoshi; third, the anecdote is fairly detailed, giving background information such as that about Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea; and, finally, it is an evocative retelling, putting words in Hideyoshi's mouth that purport to explain the great general's thinking, which makes him out to be a somewhat sympathetic figure.

Not only this, the Mimizuka section is the only one between Chapter Three and Eight—the chapters that deal with specific incidents in particular locations around the city—that does not tell the story of an individual's experience of the earthquake. Rather, in this section Ryōi tells the story of a *place*, in the mode of the guidebook. Moreover, this place is not depicted in any way as one where anyone lives. It is simply a famous location at which an earthquake happens to occur, giving the reader a peek at what happens when one of the city's monuments suffers catastrophe. Immediately following the passage quoted above, Ryōi explains that the mound suffered no damage during the Keichō earthquake toward the end of the sixteenth century. He then adds that “at the time of the recent big earthquake, it swayed and ultimately fell to the ground, the pagoda collapsing and the mound itself crumbling apart.”⁵⁸ Ryōi finishes the section with two pun-laden verses.

The absence of any particular person's experience in this section is unusual for Book One. However, it does have the effect of highlighting the shift in emphasis that occurs in the first half of Chapter Six. From this point on, the people of Kyoto share the stage with the

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

city itself; moreover, the city is reduced to a few famous places. As already noted, Chapter Six finishes with a depiction of the collapse of the Ishibashi Bridge, followed in Chapter Seven by the fate of a *torii* gate in Gion and, in Chapter Eight, what happens to the pagoda in Yasaka. This last vignette opens with the exact same story about the monk Jōzō that Nakagawa Kiun tells in *Kyō warabe*.

Ryōi's use of such *meishoki*-like descriptions is limited to just a couple of chapters, but I would like to highlight the effects they have when he uses them. First, even after the section about Mimizuka is finished and Ryōi returns to depicting the experiences of people during the earthquake, these *meishoki*-like chapters do not recount the tales of those who die. In the earlier chapters, even had they included these detailed anecdotes about the places, the shocking deaths of the central characters would have overwhelmed any such historical decoration. Second, these embellishments are placed toward the front of the chapters, enhancing the guidebook effect; once we have learned whatever quaint piece of information the text has to offer, the narrative proceeds to describe the effects of the earthquake which, even if they do not kill anyone in these episodes, are quite violent.⁵⁹

Third, in *meishoki*-like fashion, the *areas* of Kyoto that Ryōi writes about—regardless, actually, of whether they are given *meishoki*-like descriptions—seem chosen for their cultural potency: the Great Buddha of Hōkōji Temple, Kiyomizu, Gion, and, of course, Yasaka Shrine. As noted at the beginning of this section, because of the magnitude of the earthquake, everything within an area much larger than Kyoto was affected at virtually the same moment. This allows the writer freedom to pick and choose those areas he wants to

⁵⁹ For example, after Ryōi gives some historical detail about the *torii* in Gion, it immediately cracks and crashes to the ground. People nearby scream: 「さればこそ、地の底がぬけて、泥の海になるぞや」 (“Look! The base of the earth has come loose and become a sea of mud!”). Ibid., 28.

depict. The areas that Ryōi depicts are precisely those kinds of areas that are described in travel guidebooks. For example, *Kyō warabe* contains entries not only on Yasaka, but also Shimogoryō Shrine, Gion, Kiyomizu, and the Great Buddha of Hōkōji Temple.⁶⁰ Ryōi takes the reader to these famous places, sometimes provides historical tidbits about them, and then describes what happens when they get flattened.

Fires develop and spread with whatever celestial whim guides them. Urban space is represented in *Musashi abumi* through the geographical unfolding of the disaster: the description of fire and city begin together in Hongō and expand together. In *Kanameishi*, precisely the opposite is the case. While the ubiquity of the earthquake means that, strictly speaking, the disaster is not and cannot be delimited by any particular space in Kyoto, the authorial freedom to choose places in which to describe the disaster's effects leads to a strong emplacement of the disaster within the confines of the text. That is, there is a sense in which the Kanbun earthquake is not a "Kyoto" disaster in *Kanameishi*. It is, rather, a disaster that strikes Shimogoryō Shrine, Mimizuka, Gion, and each of the other places depicted in Book One. It is, as we have seen, a catastrophe visited upon famous places. Whereas in *Musashi abumi* urban space is represented through the disaster—as I put it at the beginning of this section, those areas of Edo that did not burn, are not depicted—in *Kanameishi*, the disaster is represented through urban space: those areas that are not depicted do not shake in the world of the text.

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⁶⁰ *Kyō warabe*, 93-94, 104-105, 110-111, 115-116, and 118-119.

Kanameishi is, in many ways, a much more complicated work than *Musashi abumi*. The earlier text, while displaying inventive verve in its use of the *jigoku meguri* trope, is relatively straightforward. The lists of names are just that and the fact-based anecdotes do not contain any special intellectual treats for those schooled in the history of Japanese literature. One might also argue that it does not take much of a creative leap to depict a burning city as a flaming hell-hole, given the availability of the images used in literary and visual depictions of the Six Realms. *Kanameishi*, however, is entirely different. Written just one year after *Musashi abumi*, it employs a more complex mixture of strategies to represent the Kanbun earthquake. Like *Musashi abumi*, it contains fact-based anecdotes, but these vignettes are drawn with a greater attention to detail and framed by a much stronger use of literary allusion and a display of a deeper knowledge of the city. Ultimately, I would argue these differences result from the attempt to represent a disaster and a city to a readership that lived through the former and in the latter. It represents, in a highly stylized way, things intimately known.

Conclusion

Let One Thousand Flowers of Edo Bloom

At the beginning of the introduction to this thesis, I alluded to some of the problems related to the representation of disaster. The experience of a catastrophe is so extraordinary that it threatens to confound one's ability to communicate about it. Such difficulty can be explored on multiple levels. For example, we might look at it on a personal or psychological level. Angela Stock and Cornelia Stott characterize the issue as "the inherent resistance of excessive experience to symbolic signification."¹ We find a similar idea to this "excessive experience" in Cathy Caruth's notion (following Freud) that the experience of trauma is something "that is not fully assimilated as it occurs."² In this conception, the catastrophic or traumatic overwhelms the psychological or cognitive capabilities of the survivor. Other levels on which to think about the resistance of disaster to representation are epistemological and linguistic. To refer back to Stock and Stott's statement, for example, we see that it also refers to catastrophe's resistance to "symbolic signification." Aaron Kerner, in his 2007 work *Representing the Catastrophic*, touches upon the topic in a different way, writing that the "magnitude of the catastrophe constitutes a crisis in representation, because to give a catastrophe form means to attribute form to 'unimaginable' suffering, 'unspeakable' horror, [and] 'incomprehensible' violence."³ Kerner identifies the problem as one of the inadequacies of epistemological realism:

¹ Stock and Stott, *Representing the Unimaginable*, 10.

² Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 5.

³ Kerner, *Representing the Catastrophic*, 2.

The Holocaust and Hiroshima [Kerner's shorthand for the catastrophic] throw the discourse of realism into question. Realism—or more colloquially, realistic representation—is largely premised on a verifiable link between the representation and the catastrophe (e.g., eyewitness testimony). The paradox however is that the catastrophe is characterized as beyond representational form.⁴

These issues of psychology and epistemology, which obviously I do not have space to examine thoroughly, suggest that in speaking, writing, or creating a work of visual art about the experience of catastrophe, the person producing it is attempting to imagine the unimaginable or to give voice to the unspeakable.⁵ This is the case if the writer or artist is an actual survivor. The problem is further complicated for someone who did not experience the event and must then rely either on information gathered from survivors or on an imagination developed in ordinary, not extraordinary, circumstances.

These difficulties color contemporary scholarship on disaster representation. The Stock and Stott-edited volume is titled *Representing the Unimaginable: Narratives of Disaster*. Other works, such as the Saul Friedlander-edited volume on the Holocaust, entitled *Probing the Limits of Representation*, discuss problems in historical writing as well as artistic representation.⁶ Without denying the very important issues with which such

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Márcio Seligmann-Silva suggests that discussions of catastrophe and the problem of representation turn, in the twentieth century, on the idea that the catastrophic characterizes the quotidian itself, and not merely the unusual, overwhelming, event. Thus, “the viewpoint that it is impossible to represent a catastrophe as soon as it has invaded reality led thinkers to condemn representation as a whole. Every representation consists of an immediate moment (intuition) and it refers to a mediate moment (its conceptual articulation) which carries in itself the universal side of representation. With the new definition of reality as catastrophe, representation, in its traditional form, is increasingly treated as impossible.” Márcio Seligman-Silva, “Catastrophe and Representation: History as Trauma” *Semiotica* 143, no. 1 (2003): 144.

⁶ Saul Friedlander, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). These discussions about the efficacy of representing disaster are not limited only to “the Holocaust and Hiroshima,” i.e., “man-made” catastrophes. For example, Stock and Stott begin their essay with a discussion of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

scholarship deals and the fruitful analyses they produce, I would like to suggest that they have limited applicability to texts written in early Edo Japan or other texts produced in early modern or non-Western contexts. For one, the psychological worlds these works represent are utterly different from, for example, those upon which post-Freudian trauma theory was developed. For another, their representational modes are often quite different, as we have seen with Ryōi's use of Buddhist tropes or comic verse that parody *waka* written centuries earlier. Thus, my concern in this thesis has been in a sense to step away from these discussions of our psychological ability to comprehend "excessive experience" or our representational (in)efficacy in representing the same. Rather than attempt to define the catastrophic as something that cannot successfully be represented, my attention is focused on the *way* Ryōi does depict these two disasters. In *Musashi abumi* and *Kanameishi*, we find one author producing, within two of years of each other in the middle of seventeenth-century Japan, two very different representations of urban catastrophe. To understand what these texts are doing, however, we must attend to the contexts in which they were written, otherwise many aspects of them will be bewildering. Instead, I have sought to historicize Ryōi's writing of disaster and thereby forefront diversity in the representation of catastrophe.

There are many differences between the two texts. To review, they arise from multiple factors. One is perspective. One text is written for people who did not experience the catastrophe and do not live where it occurred. The other text is for readers who did and do. The differences also arise from the ways in which Ryōi utilizes literary tradition. *Musashi abumi* is about a city that has no established literary tradition; to fashion its climactic representation, it reaches for a metaphor from Buddhism. *Kanameishi* is about a

city that has a deep literary tradition and a developing contemporary publishing industry; its representations utilize numerous references to the literary past and new literary modes of representing space (*meishoki*). The differences arise from the contemporary context. Writers such as Ryōi experimented with new ways of writing popular texts; sometimes the resulting variety got packed into the same work, producing hybrids that behaved in divergent ways. This is particularly the case with *Kanameishi*, where one finds such hybridity mixed together over the course of a few lines of text. Finally, the differences arise from the catastrophes themselves. In these texts, this is reflected in, for example, the different structures of each text. It is my hope that, by exploring these differences I have illuminated how the dual representations of both disaster and place interact with each other in each work.

If we find such variety in just these two texts, then attempts to represent disaster in different places and different eras will likely show even more variation. The variety itself is a hint of the difficulty in representing the experience of catastrophe, of the groping for strategies that might capture, if only in a partial way, extraordinary experiences. However, insofar as variation arises from these discrete contexts, it also throws into question attempts to define “disaster writing.” Moving forward, future analyses of the representation of disaster should keep asking these context-based questions: Which place is being depicted? What is the literary moment in which the representation is written? Have modes of writing become hardened or are writers looking for new ways to write about things? By doing so, we are able to recognize and appreciate the full variety of artistic and literary attempts to represent catastrophe.

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