HISTORICIZING THE HINMIN: SOCIAL DISCOURSE AND FICTION IN TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY JAPAN

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INTRODUCTION

Toward the end of 19th century, the term hinmin (貧民)—which generally refers to “the poor” or “the needy,” and which was almost interchangeably used with saimin (細民)—became prevalent in public discourse addressing “social problems,” such as poverty, the slums, and prostitution. In a Yomiuri newspaper article published in April 4, 1890, titled “Ease and Privation” (Rakukyō to kukyō 楽境と苦境), the term hinmin appears in conjunction with another term shakai (society 社会) as hinmin shakai (貧民社会). In the article, hinmin shakai is juxtaposed against Tokyō’s hyōmen (surface 表面), which at that time enjoyed the huge success of the third national industrial exhibition. Beneath the “surface” of Tokyō’s prosperity, the author claims, there are those who suffer incredible privations and hardships due to exorbitant interest rates and an increase in rice prices. Therefore, the author adds, the leaders of shakai must not be intoxicated with prosperity and overlook the suffering of hinmin. This particular period of time, as Carol Gluck observes, was characterized by the discovery of shakai mondai (social problems 社会問題) by Meiji ideologues. As shakai became specified as the locus of numerous dislocations resulting from Meiji modernity, the term hinmin came into use to represent the “victims” of the new social structure of Japan.

The terms hinmin and saimin derive from the Chinese words pín mín and xì mín which hold the same general meaning. The two characters that make up the word hinmin are hin (貧),

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1 “Rakukyō to kukyō,” Yomiuri shinbun, April 4, 1890.
2 The third national industrial exhibition (第三回内国勧業博覧会) was held from April 1 to July 31 in 1890. It received over a million visitors in three months. For information about the exhibition, see “Expositions: Where the Modern Technology of the Times Was Exhibited,” National Diet Library, accessed June 1, 2014, http://www.ndl.go.jp/exposition/e/s1/naikoku3.html.
3 Ibid.
literally “poor” or “deficient,” and min (民), “people” or “subjects.” Sai (細) means “meager” or “thin.” The terms hinmin or saimin are thus generally used to refer to either individuals or people who are deemed to suffer dire social disadvantages as a result of privation or a lack of material possessions.

The impoverishment of hinmin was, to a large degree, affected by Japanese industrial capitalism, whose development owed to two successful wars during this period—the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. As Gluck has observed, these wars expanded the heavy industry sector through government investment, and the early zaibatsu, or industrial and financial business conglomerates, began to exert huge influence over the concentration of capital in their hands. The crash in commodity prices in the 1880s caused by the so-called “Matsukata deflation” was devastating for many small farmers in the countryside. The farmers who lost their assets flowed into big cities to desperately seek work, resulting in urban population growth. The concentration of capital and the urbanization of the labor population aggravated the modern economic life of workers. The emerging industrial working class often conducted strikes for higher wages during the post-Sino-Japanese War recession that started in 1897-1898, and the number of strikes reached a peak in 1907 during the recession after the Russo-Japanese War. Such economic crises and rapid rural to urban migration were instrumental in the formation and growth of the slums. The slums were often called hinminkutsu (貧民窟), literally “the cave of the poor,” and the poor living conditions of hinmin became a public concern.

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5 Ibid., 31.
6 “Matsukata deflation” refers to the sharp drop in prices and economic contraction that took place in the 1880s. “Matsukata” is taken from the name of the finance minister Matsukata Masayoshi (1835-1924). For Matsukata’s economic policies and “Matsukata deflation,” see Marius B Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 372-376.
7 Gluck, Japan’s Modern Myths, 32.
Just as the poor can only be defined in relative terms, however, what exact social group was called the *hinmin* in the late-Meiji period is a question that cannot be fully answered. Nishida Taketoshi researched the term *hinmin* in newspapers and journals from the late 1880s through 1900s to see what social positions were actually referred to as *hinmin*. According to Nishida, *hinmin* is a quite ambiguous term denoting a wide range of social and occupational positions from vagrant and beggar to construction, factory, and low-ranking manual work, day labor, and small business ownership. As Nishida notes, this ambiguity of the term mirrors the social class structure of the late-Meiji period, which was yet in a formative stage. The wide-ranging, and thus unstable, designation of the term *hinmin*, therefore, must be a reflection of these social, economical, and historical contexts.

Yamada Yūsaku argues that it was around the time of the Sino-Japanese War that writers started to produce a number of literary works addressing *hinmin*. In his essay, Yamada emphasizes the role of intellectuals in the advent of what he calls “The Literature of the Poor” (*saimin no bungaku* 細民の文学) during this period. For Yamada, the *hinmin*—as the socially and economically marginalized—mark the contradictions of the Meiji notions of “equality for all” (*shimin byōdō* 四民平等) and “free competition” (*jiyū kyōsō* 自由競争) as reflected in the ideology of “self-advancement” (*risshin shusse* 立身出世). *Hinmin* were, after all, deprived of their chance at success in society, and the social structure functioned to reproduce the cycle of poverty. It was Meiji intellectuals, according to Yamada, who first recognized such social contradictions, and, in this sense, *hinmin* were “discovered” by writers who sympathized with

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9 Ibid., 359.
10 Yamada Yūsaku, “‘Saimin’ no bungaku,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 33.7 (June 1988): 92-97.
11 Ibid., 93.
their dire social condition. Then, provided many writers of this period a new means to criticize the social structure as well as Meiji society as a whole.

This thesis will examine how literary discourse and social ideology were mobilized to define the social group of “hinmin” as well as how Meiji fiction participated in the creation of hinmin as an ideological category in the 1890s. If the term hinmin is an elusive concept because of its combination of empirical complexity and rhetorical representation, our attempt is not to propose a comprehensive definition for the term itself, but rather to expose the ideological grounding of those who participated in the act of definition. The underlying notion of this project is that the term “hinmin” has served as a powerful sign in literary texts not only for the issue of poverty per se, but also for the radical social transformations brought by modernity.

Chapter One examines literary discourse in the 1890s to see how the concept of hinmin marks the emerging class-consciousness represented in literary texts. The literary dispute on shakai shōsetsu (social fiction 社会小説) foregrounds the issue of hinmin; these discussions betray competing ideological positions among critics including Takayama Chogyū (高山樗牛 1871-1902) and Taoka Reiun (田岡嶺雲 1871-1912). Especially in Taoka’s literary discourse, hinmin emerges as rhetorical symbolism to mark the defects of social structure and to criticize the moral decline in contemporary society.

Chapter Two addresses Izumi Kyōka’s (泉鏡花 1873-1939) Hinmin kurabu (The poor club 貧民倶楽部, 1895). My analysis focuses on portrayals of hinmin on the thematic level— involving representations of class antagonism between the aristocratic class and the socially marginalized group—and on the level of narrative, especially the monstrous and grotesque elements used to portray hinmin. Drawing upon Mikhail Bakthin’s theories of carnival and the

Ibid., 93-94.
grotesque body, I demonstrate how the literary trope of hinmin transforms the text into a blatant form of social criticism.

Chapter Three analyzes the intertextual connections between Hinmin kurabu and Matsubara Iwagorō’s (松原岩五郎 1866-1935) Saiankoku no Tokyo (In Darkest Tokyo 最暗黒之東京, 1893). As we will see, the monstrous depictions of hinmin in Kyōka’s text clearly mirror those that appeared in Saiankoku no Tokyo. By studying Kyōka’s incorporation of the contemporary literary trope of hinmin, I uncover how Hinmin kurabu reinforces the image of hinmin as monsters in the literary imagination.
CHAPTER 1
LITERARY DISCOURSE ON HINMIN

(1.1) Shakai mondai and the Ideological Category of Hinmin

In the 1890s, according to Carol Gluck, there was a “discovery of social problems” among Meiji intellectuals.13 When the earlier social changes promoted by the Meiji state started to breed a sense of crisis consciousness, Meiji intellectuals expressed their concern with social issues. Gluck observes:

In the late 1890s and early 1900s bureaucrats, politicians, local officials, journalists, novelists, and storytellers spewed forth a vocabulary of social cataclysm that to Western ears sounds almost biblical. Compared to the earlier language of national unity, which had looked, if sometimes apprehensively, to the future, the rhetoric of social problems confronted the present and found it everywhere plagued by confusion.14

If the crisis consciousness among Meiji intellectuals permeated every facet of contemporary ideological discourse, as Gluck notes, our concern is to examine how such crisis consciousness is represented through discussions of the issues of poverty and the underclass at the turn of the last century. What should be recognized, however, is that this discursive space was actually instrumental in creating hinmin as an ideological category as well. We must, then, also pay attention to the discursive processes through which the discourse of hinmin came into being. Our focus will be on the dialogue of competing ideological positions among intellectuals representing various ideological institutions.

13 Gluck, Japan’s Modern Myths, 28.
14 Ibid.
In the 1890’s, the Japanese literary world witnessed the explosion of various literary genres and concepts, which resisted the dominance of any single literary category. Writers and critics were obsessed with creating and announcing new types of fiction, a phenomenon that testifies to their aspiration to respond to the “crisis consciousness” brought by Meiji modernity. During this time, hinmin as an ideological category emerged in literary discourse. There were many writers who addressed the lives of the underclass, and writers and critics held heated discussions about the social efficacy of shōsetsu and the treatment of hinmin in their literary imaginations.

The arrival of shakai shōsetsu in the late 1890s was emblematic of this era. As the word shakai indicates, this literary category is clearly tied to the contemporary perception of society as the locus of social dislocations. Writers and critics were actually more preoccupied with the discussion of this genre and its concept rather than actually producing works that achieved their aspirations. Nevertheless, the disputes regarding shakai shōsetsu produced a rich line of thinking about hinmin as a social issue. When the Kokumin no tomo magazine (The People’s Friend 国民の友) carried an advertisement in 1896 under the title “An Announcement of Forthcoming Social Fiction” (Shakai shōsetsu shuppan yokoku 社会小説出版予告), it demonstrated the expectations and ambitions calling forth new types of fiction addressing social issues.16

Yet, it is important to point out the ambiguity of the definition of shakai shōsetsu. In the announcement, there are phrases printed in large typefaces describing shakai shōsetsu, which include “with the reality of society as the primary concern” (nentō wo jitsuzai no shakai ni oki), “focusing on society, humans, ways of life, and the trends of the times” (shakai, ningen, seikatsu, 15

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15 Ibid., 21-35.
“jisei to ieru daimoku ni chakugan”), and “innovation of the literary world” (bundan no kakushin). Although these descriptions surely demonstrate the aspiration to produce new kinds of fiction, their language betrays the vagueness in the concept of shakai shōsetsu as well. Ōkubo Toshiaki has also pointed out the ambiguity of the concept of shakai shōsetsu, but I argue that this very ambiguity creates a textual space amenable to the needs of its interpreters, and therefore, invited heated discussions among contemporary writers and critics.

The commercial aspect of the announcement of shakai shōsetsu needs to be recognized, especially because it obviously takes the form of an “advertisement.” That is, the category shakai shōsetsu was the product of a commercial enterprise planned by the Kokumin no tomo magazine. The announcement deserves textual analysis at some length here. At the beginning, the letter 看 (kan in sino-Japanese reading, meaning “look”) with an exclamation mark is repeated three times: 看！看！看! (Attention! Attention! Attention!). The term shakai shōsetsu (社会小説) repeatedly appears in the text in large type with Japanese double quotation marks. All these techniques are employed to condition the reader’s reception of and response to the ad copy, drawing attention to the announcement itself as well as effectively conveying what is special about the following issues of the magazine. What is more, the announcement is followed by the names of writers with the anticipated dates of publication on a monthly basis. There are the names of six writers: Saitō Ryokuu (斉藤緑雨 1868-1904), Hirotsu Ryūrō (広津柳浪 1861-1928), Kōda Rohan (幸田露伴 1867-1947), Gotō Chūgai (後藤宙外 1867-1938), Saganoya

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17 Ibid., 57.
19 The following discussion on the commercial strategy employed in Kokumin no tomo’s announcement is indebted to Ōkubo Toshiaki.
20 “Shakai shōsetsu shuppan yokoku,” 57.
Shujin (嵯峨のや主人 also known as Saganoya Omuro 嵯峨の屋おむろ 1863-1947), and Ozaki Kōyō (尾崎紅葉 1868-1903). These were well-known writers of the period, and therefore, the presence of their names surely had commercial impact. While the concept of *shakai shōsetsu* doubtlessly responded to the needs of the literary world of the era, *Kokumin no tomo*’s announcement betrays its commercial motives as well, allowing us to interpret the announcement of *shakai shōsetsu* as a commercial strategy as well as the proposition of a new literary movement.

After the announcement by *Kokumin no tomo* came out in October 1896, the literary journal *Teikoku bungaku* printed a column arguing against the concept of *shakai shōsetsu*. It is important to note that the author (anonymous) posits the genre as the representation of class-consciousness. According to the author, the fundamental problem of *shakai shōsetsu* lies in its one-sided criticism of the rich (*fusha* 富者) on behalf of the poor (*hinja* 貧者). Speaking for a particular class (*ikkaikyū* 一階級) reinforces the conflicts against another class. Such assumptions underlying *shakai shōsetsu* are incompatible with the real purpose of the novel as art form. The author concludes, “Political, religious, and social novels—no matter how serious their themes—are incapable of reaching the level of the highest and most beautiful of novels.”

Even at the beginning of the discussion, the concept of *shakai shōsetsu* was received as a genre addressing the issue of class, and the term “the poor” (*hinja*) emerged against “the rich” (*fusha*).

In February 1897, *Waseda bungaku* carried an essay on *shakai shōsetsu*, participating in the discussion on the validity of this literary category. The author argues that there is confusion regarding the term *shakai shōsetsu*. He classifies the definition of *shakai shōsetsu* into five

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21 “Shakai shōsetsu shuppan yokoku,” 57-58.
23 Ibid.
categories according to the interpretations of the term collected from past critiques.\textsuperscript{25} It is important to note that two of the definitions of \textit{shakai shōsetsu} presented by the author specifically state that it addresses the underside of the society or the conditions of \textit{hinmin}. That is, the author indicates the connection between the concepts of \textit{shakai shōsetsu} and \textit{hinmin}. This direction of the argument is worth noting because subsequent discussions of \textit{shakai shōsetsu} assume the thematization of class structure.

Takayama Chogyū (1871-1902), in “An Essay on the So-called Social Novel,” (Iwayuru shakai shōsetsu wo ronzu 所謂社会小説を論ず, 1897) provides his clear stance toward \textit{hinmin} based on his nationalistic doctrine of \textit{kokka shugi} (國家主義).

\textit{Kokka shugi} holds that the primacy of one’s life is grounded in the nation, and therefore the highest duty of the people is to contribute to the nation’s advancement and development. This mode of thought does not disregard the individual. Instead, \textit{Kokka shugi} is founded on the conviction that one’s happiness is attained solely through national wealth and power. Based on this belief, \textit{kokka shugi} recognizes the value and significance of affairs and things according to their capacity to contribute to the welfare of the nation. The nation possesses life and purpose for life, and thus it hopes to attain strength to achieve what it seeks.\textsuperscript{26}

\textellipsis

We do not find any reason to protect social inferiors as a national project. Since they are the inevitable result of social evolution and incapable of contributing to advancing the strength our national enterprise, we believe that providing what they do not deserve is nothing but futile and injurious to the welfare and happiness for the whole nation. What calls forth our emotions does not necessarily attest to our virtue. […] The time has already gone when simple instinct achieves moral actions.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25} The five definitions of \textit{shakai shōsetsu} are as follows: 1) \textit{Shakai shōsetsu} is a type of “tendency novel” (ketkō shōsetsu), which is written specifically on behalf of the condition of \textit{hinmin} or laborers; 2) \textit{Shakai shōsetsu} thematizes the underside of society, which has been overlooked by writers although it is not necessarily written to plead for the condition of \textit{hinmin} or laborers; 3) \textit{Shakai shōsetsu} takes its materials widely from anything that is socially related including politics or religion; 4) \textit{Shakai shōsetsu} places its weight on the depiction of society, the external circumstances of a person rather than focusing on psychological depiction of an individual; 5) \textit{Shakai shōsetsu} must guide a tendency or trend of the time and serve a mission as a prophet for society. “Iwayuru shakai shōsetsu,” 66-67.


\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 434-435.
Chogyū’s nationalistic statements above betray the presence of one of the most dominant ideologies in the Meiji period: Social Darwinism. Although Chōgyū regards hinmin as the “inevitable result” of social evolution (shakai shinka no hitsuzen naru kekka), his nationalist doctrine abandons the weak instead of protecting them. His valorization of reason, rationality, and thoughts over emotion—based upon this doctrine—is evident when Chogyū denies the moral qualities stemming from the sympathetic feeling towards inferiors. This contrasts with other contemporary critics trying to ameliorate the conditions of the poor. For instance, Taoka Reiun, who will be discussed later, repeatedly uses the term dōjō (sympathy) to exhort writers to address the issue of the poor or socially marginalized.

Chogyū’s views on hinmin as inferiors resonate with contemporary political discourse on poor relief. In December 28, 1880, in his essay entitled “An Essay on the Poor Relief” (Kyūjyūtsu ron 救恤論), the politician Hara Takashi (原敬 later the 19th Prime Minister of Japan from 1919-1921) demonstrated his firm stance on the poor relief issue.” I do not find any obligation to relieve the destitution of shōmin,” Hara says, “As a matter of fact, if their indolence invites neglect of their work, losing their jobs, and naturally suffering from poverty, this is what shōmin deserve by their own actions.” The term shōmin (小民) here refers to “commoners,” and Hara’s essay exhibits the idea of becoming a member of the hinmin or the needy as the natural course for indolent commoners. In Meiji social discourse, there are differing opinions about hinmin. For some, hinmin mark the social dislocations brought by modernity; hinmin are the victims in the new social structure manufactured by the state. For others like Hara, hinmin are

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28 Social Darwinism is the application of the laws of evolution to society and is commonly construed as involving the “survival of the fittest.” For the introduction of Social Darwinism to Japan, see Kawazoe Kunimoto, “Hochū” in Kindai hyōron shū 1, vol. 57 of Nihon kindai bungaku taikei (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1991), 459, notes 115.


30 Ibid., 405.
a cancer undermining national wealth and military power (*fukoku kyōhei* 富国強兵); being a *hinmin* is conceived as the natural result of a person’s own industriousness, or lack thereof.

The Meiji government issued The Poor Relief Policy (*Jyukkyū kisoku* 慰救規則) in 1872 and it was not until 1931 that the law was replaced with The Poor Relief Act (*Kyūgo hō* 救護法).\(^{31}\) The Poor Relief Policy, which rigidly specifies the recipient’s qualifications, reveals the Meiji state’s consistent position on public relief efforts. It consists of a brief main body followed by five articles, stipulating the condition of the needy as: extremely poor (*gokuhin* 極貧), unmarried, and either invalid or elderly (70 years old or above unless incapable of labor due to disease or disabilities).\(^{32}\) The recipient must meet all the conditions to receive a provision of rice. The main body says “To sympathize with and give relief to the poor must be conducted by the people (*jinmin* 人民) through their compassion.”\(^{33}\) In other words, the state basically regards poor relief as a private duty rather than a public obligation.

In Chogyū’s nationalistic discourse, *hinmin* emerge as inferiors in the modern social structure, and, as Hara argues, a threat to national wealth and power. Chogyū’s concept of *kokka shugi* is explained through the juxtaposition of the individual with the nation. In his doctrine, individualism is compromised when he personifies the nation and posits that the value and significance of the individual is judged according to his/her contributions to the nation. Since *hinmin* are, for Chogyū, incapable of participating in any direct (or indirect) economic or military enterprise to advance the nation, they are nothing but useless. Based on his *kokka shugi*, Chogyū then goes on to criticize the *shakai shōsetsu* as follows:

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\(^{31}\) For the history of *Jyukkyū kisoku* and subsequent political discussions regarding the poor relief law, see Ikeda Yoshimasa, *Nihon shakai fukushishi* (Kyoto: Hōritsu Bunkasha, 1986), 313-22.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., 191.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., 195.
What people call social fiction (shakai shōsetsu) today is nothing but a one-sided depiction of human life infused with an author’s personal feelings. In other words, an author sympathizes with a wretched class in society, and he attributes their suffering to external circumstances. The defects inevitably accompanying social structure are thus depicted as excuses for personal failings, and thus a social class with a heavy distribution of social power is seen as the root of social vice. Because of this, social fiction (shakai shōsetsu) is valueless as fiction and does not make a valid argument. Since it is literature representing the undercurrent of unhealthy social morals, we must reject it.34

Chogyū’s criticism is based on shakai shōsetsu’s limited class perspective. His rejection of personal emotion (shishin 私心) is also evident here. Although Chogyū acknowledges the imperfections of social structure, he argues that in shakai shōsetsu these defects are solely attributed to the privileged. It is important to note here that Chogyū’s criticism demonstrates that his view of society is based on a dualistic class structure. That is, in his essay, his language referring to social class is thoroughly dualistic: the rich (fusha 富者 or fukyōsya 富強者) and the poor (hinmin 貧民 or hinjyakusha 貧弱者). Thus, in Chogyū’s view, hinmin as social category emerges out of the juxtaposition with the privileged class. The class binary on which his criticism of shakai shōsetsu is based will be significant when we discuss Izumi Kyōka’s novella Hinmin kurabu in a later chapter. This is because Hinmin kurabu incorporates the paradigm of the privileged as morally compromised and the hinmin as virtuous.

(1.2) Taoka Reiun and the Hinmin as “the Voiceless”

A stance opposite to Chogyū’s was taken by Taoka Reiun, one of the foremost proponents of writers addressing hinmin as a socially located problem. In the 1890’s, when Taoka was most active, his literary essays demonstrated his criticism of the social structure of

Meiji and, by extension, of human civilization and modernity as well. His essay “Humanity” (Hyūmanichī ヒューマニチー, 1896) demonstrates his view most clearly:35

Look at the dark side of society. On a cold night, there is a man sleeping on an icy field with a single garment. There is a family eating no food for three days, letting their children cry over dried-up breasts. Unable to receive treatment because there is no doctor, the sick lose their jobs and are expelled from their houses. The world scorns them, rejecting them without taking notice. There might be some who do not deserve compassion because their circumstances are the natural consequence of their own sins. However, most of them are made to fall in a society where only the strong survive. The crimes they commit are a natural outcome after all. Alas, do not praise civilization. […] Rather, civilization takes work away from the poor (saimin) and gives it to machines, starving the poor (saimin) to death.36

In Taoka’s essays, the term “saimin” is used interchangeably with many other terms including kyūbō sha (the indigent 窮乏者), mazushiki mono (the poor 貧しき者), and karyū shakai no mono (person of the lower levels of society 下流社会のもの).37 The saimin are also described as those who lost out in the fight for survival. As in Chogyū’s writings, social Darwinist doctrines of competition and personal striving are also evident in Taoka’s essays. Within this underpinning dogma, Taoka’s point of departure is his critical stance against the existing social structure and his valorization of dojō (sympathy 同情); for Taoka, the writer’s duty is to raise awareness of the dire social suffering and miseries of hinmin. To do so, the writer must have a sympathetic feeling toward them.

The writer’s responsibility is not, however, confined to the issue of hinmin. In his essay, “The Truth of Society and the Novel,” (Shōsetsu to shakai no inbi 小説と社会の陰微, 1895),

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36 Ibid., 158.
37 Taoka Reiun, “Karyū no saimin to bunshi,” Seinenbun, September 1895, in Kindai shakai bungaku shū, 160.
Taoka also demonstrates his critical view of contemporary society. Taoka criticizes various customs practiced in the contemporary world, which he regards as indications of moral degeneration: bribery, usury, gambling, pursuit of sensual pleasure, and so on. It should be noted that his criticism is also directed toward the moral failings exhibited by scholars (gakusha 学者), literary men (bungakusha 文学者), dramatists (gekisakka 劇作家), and journalists (shinbun kisha 新聞記者), with whom Taoka as a literary critic probably associated in his daily life. For Taoka, it is important to accuse them first and raise their awareness of their responsibility for society. It is intellectuals—especially men of letters—that Taoka encourages to produce literary works for the improvement of society. At the end of his essay, Taoka expounds: “Shedding tears of compassion for humanity, embracing an increasing resentment stemming from moral obligation, great men of letters, I anticipate, will come to expose the vices of society.” After all, Taoka expresses his belief in the capacity of writers to address the moral decline of Meiji society, and, by extension, in fiction’s ability to instruct and enlighten its readers on good and evil. Taoka’s discourse on hinmin must be understood in this context. For Taoka, the issues surrounding hinmin are not limited to poverty and marginalization. In his essays, he does not actually propose solutions to the conditions of the poor. Instead, in his discourse, he continually reproduces the notion of hinmin as voiceless victim.

Alas! Upon whom should they depend to make appeals regarding their misery and their resentment? Many of them are illiterate and therefore they cannot resort to a pen or even their tongues to make their appeals. They return to the underground, swallowing all of their discontent and indignation.

39 Ibid., 138.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., 139.
42 Taoka, “Hyūmanichī,” 159.
The concept of *hinmin* as voiceless victim demonstrates Taoka’s eagerness for uncovering (and thus simultaneously constructing) *hinmin*. In other words, in Taoka’s discourse, *hinmin* are produced as a “hidden” social group. The *hinmin* undergo double concealment; *hinmin* are brought up in discourse only to be categorized as “invisible.” Taoka’s logic is that we speak, but “*hinmin*” do not speak, and therefore we speak for “*hinmin*.” Thus, he states: “Oh, who can relieve them of their despair other than a man of letters? Who can become their pen or their tongue?” But how can we really speak for “*hinmin*” if they only come to us mediated and filtered by “our” voice? Note Taoka’s sentimental language when he describes the dire living conditions of *hinmin*: “an icy field” (*shimosayuru gentō* 霜冴ゆる原頭), “dried-up breasts” (*karetaru chibusa* 淀れたる乳房). In Taoka’s essays, *hinmin* are conjured by his rich and flamboyant rhetoric. What has been ignored in the study of Taoka’s texts is an analysis of how the concept of *hinmin* actually functions in his discourse on society. In Taoka’s discourse, *hinmin*, as creatures of rhetoric, serve to criticize the social structure of Meiji, and, by extension, the moral decline of those who are not *hinmin*.

(1.3) **Victor Hugo and Hyūmanichī**

In the literary discourse on *hinmin* in the 1890s, writers and critics often referred to the French novelist Victor Hugo (1802-1885) and his works. For example, in his posthumously published essay “Society and the human” (*Shakai to hito* 社会と人), Kunikida Doppo (国木田...
独歩1871-1908) mentions Victor Hugo when he asserts that “hin” (poverty) is the fundamental problem afflicting society: “Victor Hugo, through his work Les Misérables, clearly expresses his compassion for the poor, and he hoped to save the poor by depicting in his novel the vice found in customary laws.” Just as Doppo used the word dōjō (同情) here for “compassion,” in the literary discourse on hinmin in this period, terms such as “sympathy” or “compassion” (dōjō) and “humanity” (hyūmanichī ヒューマニチー) are frequently used in conjunction with a reference to Victor Hugo.

The early introduction of Hugo’s works stemmed from a famous meeting in 1882 between the French writer and the liberal politician Itagaki Taisuke (板垣退助 1836-1919). After the meeting, Itagaki is said to have brought many of Hugo’s works into Japan. In 1884, the Japanese translation of Hugo’s work Ninety-Three (Quatrevingt-treize, 1874) was printed in Jiū shinbun, a newspaper issued by the Jiūtō (自由党 Liberal Party) formed by Itagaki. The novel Ninety-Three is concerned with the French Revolution. Since Itagaki was a prominent advocate of the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement at that time, we can legitimately suspect the political intention behind his introduction of Hugo’s novel.

After the early introduction of Hugo in the 1880s, it was Morita Shiken (森田思軒 1861-1897) who contributed to the explosion of Hugo’s popularity in the 1890s and onward. Among his translations of western novels, Shiken included a number of works by Jules Gabriel Verne.

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46 Ibid., 256-257.
47 The orthographic transcription of the word “humanity” in Japanese shows variations such as yūmanitē (ユーマニティー).
(1828-1905) and Victor Hugo. Shiken’s translations of Hugo’s works were printed in *Kokumin no tomo*, a magazine published by the Min’yūsha (The Nation’s Friend Society 民友社). In 1891, *Kokumin no tomo* printed Shiken’s essay titled “The Vice of Society” (Shakai no tsumi 社会の罪). The essay addresses the Gifu Incident, the unsuccessful assassination attempt against Itagaki Taisuke that took place in April 6, 1882. A man named Aihara Naobumi attacked Itagaki while he was on a political campaign tour in Gifu. Itagaki, who was then the leader of Liberal Party, was stabbed in several parts of his body by Aihara after his campaign speech. The Gifu Incident is now well known in the history of the Freedom and People’s Rights movement principally because of Itagaki’s famous words: “Itagaki may die, but liberty never!” After Aihara was pardoned in 1889, he visited Itagaki and begged his forgiveness. Although Itagaki forgave Aihara, the latter was said have thrown himself into the sea from a ship taking him to Hokkaido.

Shiken brought up this topic almost a decade after the incident in order to set forth his interpretation of Victor Hugo’s humanitarianism. As the title indicates, Shiken provides a sympathetic view of Aihara by ascribing the real cause of the incident to circumstances and conditions surrounding the assassin, that is, to society. Shiken argues that Aihara’s assassination attempt was driven by his conservative, anti-liberal beliefs, which were conditioned and fostered by early Meiji social customs and culture. Shiken refers to Aihara as a man living between “old beliefs” and the “new beliefs” of Meiji, and asserts that Aihara was after all the victim of the radical social change and transition that took place in the middle of the Meiji period.

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51 For the Gifu Incident, see Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 380-381.
53 Ibid.
Shiken’s essay “The Vice of Society” was based on his lecture given at a meeting of the Young Men’s Literary Society in 1891. His lecture was captured in shorthand, and this version was published after the essay was printed in *Kokumin no tomo*. It was in the stenographed version of “The Vice of the Society” that Shiken made a reference to Victor Hugo and his work *Les Miserables* (1862). Shiken concluded his lecture by telling his audience: “If a man like Victor Hugo had appeared in Japan, he would have written Aihara’s life story.”

His lecture and later publication of his essay drew a huge response from contemporary writers. To be sure, Shiken’s observations on a crime conditioned by a man’s social circumstances resonate with Hugo’s literary themes as represented in the story of the protagonist Jean Valjean in *Les Miserables*. Shiken’s contribution to promoting Hugo’s humanitarianism was significant; he not only translated Hugo’s works but also produced an essay observing an actual Japanese incident from a perspective modeled on Hugo’s.

The publication of Shiken’s essay and translations in a Min’yūsha magazine underlined their ideological message. By incorporating the term *heimin* (commoners), the Min’yūsha advocated *heiminshugi* (平民主義) or “commonerism,” with the intention of promoting a liberal and egalitarian society. The Min’yūsha’s huge influence on the Meiji literary field—as an ideological institution as well as a publishing company—was instrumental in promoting Hugo’s works among the reading public. The Min’yūsha, then, found a connection between its political

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55 Ibid., 278.
57 The term *heimin* refers to a new status category manufactured by the state.
principles and Hugo’s humanitarianism. Hitomi Ichitarō’s (人見一太郎 1867-1924) contemporary criticism of Hugo, published by the Min’yūsha, makes this clear.

From 1893 to 1903, Min’yūsha published a series of books called Jūni bungō (Twelve great literary figures 十二文豪). Each book in the series combined a biography with an account of a writer’s literary excellence. Hitomi, who was one of the oldest members of Min’yūsha, undertook the first critical biography of Hugo in Japanese, published under the title Yūgō (Hugo ユーゴー) in May 1895. Yūgō was the 9th book in the series. In the book, Hitomi repeatedly uses the term yūmanitē (humanity ユーマニテー) to describe Hugo’s personality as well as literary themes. In the chapter entitled “An Essay on Hugo and his character” (Yūgō no jinbutsu wo ronzu ユーゴー的人物を論ず), Hitomi observes that yūmanitē is present in most of Hugo’s works and thus he asserts that Hugo is an incarnation of yūmanitē. Hitomi does not provide a clear definition of yūmanitē, although he states that the concept is derived from the Bible. His repeated use of the term yūmanitē clearly indicates his conscious rhetorical emphasis (he used the term 34 times in the chapter). Thus, we might legitimately speculate that Hitomi’s intention was to install the connection between the author Victor Hugo and a particular term rather than to provide the meaning and specificity of the term itself. It is important to note that slightly after the publication of Hitomi’s Yūgō (May 1895) the term yūmanitē (or hyūmanichī) begins to appear frequently in reference to Victor Hugo’s works in contemporary literary

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59 For the list of twelve writers, see Kawazoe Kunimoto, “Hochū” in Kindai hyōron shū 1, 451, notes 86.
61 Hitomi Ichitarō, “Yūgō no jinbutsu wo ronzu,” in Min’yūsha bungakushū, 192.
62 Ibid., 187.
63 Ibid., 187-194.
criticism. For instance, in his review (December 1895) of Higuchi Ichiyō’s work *Nigorie (Troubled Waters, 1895)*, Taoka Reiun mentions Hugo along with the term *hyūmanichī*:

To observe a human being, a writer must exercise his generosity and compassion. He must look into the inner part of a person’s mind, rejecting any superficial observation. A writer must not attempt this without the intention of protecting his subject, and this is where what we call humanity (*hyūmanichī*) lies. Hugo depicts Jean Valjean with much mercy and compassion, and this is the reason why people call him a man of humanity (*hyūmanichī)*. Taoka’s comments on Hugo clearly resonate with Hitomi’s in the way that the term *hyūmanichī* is tied to Hugo. Taoka’s valorization of the author based on his depiction of a particular character is then used to evaluate Ichiyō’s depiction of Oriki, a female protagonist who suffers from being an indentured prostitute. Aside from his review of *Nigorie*, Taoka mentions Hugo or the term *hyūmanichī* in his essays “Lower-Class Saimin and the Man of Letters” (Karyū no saimin to bunshi 下流の細民と文士, 1895) and “Humanity” (*Hyūmanichī ヒューマニチー*, 1896). In another contemporary review of Ichiyō’s *Nigorie* in 1895, Uchida Roan (内田魯庵 1868-1929) uses the term *hyūmanichī* to point to her literary excellence:

> Prostitutes are, as the victims of society, the most pitiful of beings. The author of *Nigorie* gives unstinted sympathy to this prostitute (Oriki), which allows her to receive no little admiration. It is natural for the author to abominate prostitutes since they are enveloped in the most ignoble and obscene outer skin. Nevertheless, she pours her tears of sympathy upon the prostitute, and this convinced me that she deserves great admiration despite the many defects found in the story as a whole. It is rare to find an author so full of humanity (*hyūmanichī*) even among contemporary male writers.

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65 Ibid., 162.
69 Ibid., 367.
Roan uses the term *hyūmanichī* to praise Ichiyō. In this context, *hyūmanichī* is tied to the sense of sympathy (*dōjō*) projected by “the author” toward the protagonist Oriki in *Nigorie*. Aside from the term *hyūmanichī*, Roan’s use of the term *dōjō* and his view on the prostitute resonates with Taoka’s following comment:

I cannot but admire Madame Ichiyō’s sharp depiction of the world and her exuberant sense of sympathy. The work *Nigorie* situates a lady of pleasure as its protagonist. But the author pours limitless compassion into this despicable woman and I see the delicate reflection of her empathy in this work.\(^{70}\) [Emphasis mine]

Taoka’s view on the prostitute as a marginalized being connects to Roan’s, and for them prostitutes are the objects of *dōjō* solely on this account. The italicized words sympathy, compassion, and empathy above are all expressed as *dōjō* in the original text. It is important to stress here the prevalence of the term *dōjō* in conjunction with the term *hyūmanichī*. As a matter of fact, both *dōjō* and *hyūmanichī* have Christian connotations in the Meiji period.

In his 1893 work, “Essay on the Pantheist and Spiritualist Trend” (Hanshinteki yuishinteki keikō ni tsuite 凡神的唯心的傾向に就て), Yamaji Aizan (山路愛山 1865-1917) stressed the importance of literature’s participation in social issues as opposed to the idea of literature as the pursuit of transcendental principles proposed by Kitamura Tōkoku (1868-1894) and Hoshino Tenchi (1862-1950).\(^{71}\) The literary dispute between Aizan and Tōkoku now known as *jinsei sōshō ronsō* (the What-Intersects-with-Life Debate 人生相渉論争) revolves around the concept of literature as an autonomous art based on Christian transcendentalism.\(^{72}\) In Aizan’s essay, we can observe the use of the term *ninjyō* (人情) glossed as *hyūmanichī*, indicating the

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\(^{70}\) Taoka, “Ichiyō joshi no ‘Nigorie,’” 164.

\(^{71}\) Yamaji Aizan, “Hanshinteki yuishinteki keikō ni tsuite” in *Kindai hyōron shū* 1, 123-125.

\(^{72}\) For *jinsei sōshō ronsō*, see Kawazoe Kunimoto, “Hochū” in *Kindai hyōron shū* 1, 450, notes 70.
humanitarian concept’s connection to Christianity. In literary criticism written by Christian
gwriters, there is the prevalence of the term *hyūmanichī*. For instance, in “Theory of Inner Life”
(Naibu seimei ron 内部生命論),73 written in 1893, Tōkoku defines *hyūmanichī* as “the attribute
characteristic of humans” and thus, “poets and philosophers must, without doubt, be the
observers of *hyūmanichī*.74 Matsumura Kaiseki (松村介石 1859-1939), the founder of the
Japanese church movement *Dōkai* (The Society of the Way 道会) wrote an essay entitled “The
Meaning of Humanity” (Hyūmanichī no imi ヒューマニチーの意味), printed in the first issue
of the literary magazine *Sanrai* (The Three Harmonies 三韻) in 1893.75 In the essay, Matsumura
uses the term *hyūmanichī* as a spiritual attribute, which he thinks is absent from the society of his
time. As Matsumura hears “the whistle of the train blowing the sound of civilization,” he
observes “the straitened circumstances of the poor homes” which are aligned along its railways.76
Thus, Matsumura points to the contradictions of Meiji modernization: behind the development of
modern civilization there is an increasing economic deprivation of the poor. In order to relieve
the spirit of the poor afflicted by such contradictions, Matsumura calls for *hyūmanichī* as a
source of spiritual salvation. Matsumura’s social criticism mirrors that of Taoka Reiun, who also
views the poor as the other side of Meiji civilization. But here it is important to emphasize the
use of the term *hyūmanichī* in the early 1890s among Christian thinkers and writers. Before
Taoka and Hitomi discussed the literary excellence of Victor Hugo in terms of *hyūmanichī*, there
was already the prevalence of the term in Christian literary discourse.

73 Kitamura Tōkoku, “Naibu seimei ron,” *Bungakukai*, May 1893, in *Kitamura Tōkoku shū*, vol. 29 of
74 Ibid., 145.
75 Onishi Yasumitsu, “Kitamura Tōkoku to Matsumura Kaiseki: zashi ‘Sanrai’ wo meguru kōsatsu,” *Mie
http://hdl.handle.net/10076/6541.
76 Matsumura Kaiseki, “Hyūmanichī no imi,” *Sanrai*, March 1893, quoted in Onishi “Kitamura Tōkoku,”
129.
Another Christian thinker, Ōnishi Hajime (大西祝 1864-1900), in his essay “The Need for Shakai shugi” (Shakai shugi no hitsuyō, 1896), argues the importance of the notion of shakai shugi (社会主義) to ameliorate the widening gap between the rich and the poor. What should be recognized is the connection he maps between his understanding of shakai shugi and Biblical equality. In his essay, Ōnishi asserts that if religion’s purpose is to save those who suffer from the inequalities of the society, shakai shugi’s objective of achieving an egalitarian society parallels the teachings of the Bible. Therefore, for Ōnishi, shakai shugi is a necessary concept for society.

Ōnishi’s view demonstrates the concept of hinmin that was prevalent among Christian ideologues and writers. In his discourse, the issue of hinmin is discussed in terms of Christian egalitarianism. As opposed to Takayama Chogyū, who regards hinmin as social inferiors, Ōnishi finds the roots of inequality in social structure and he views hinmin as victims. It is equally important to point out, however, that the binarism of the rich (fusha) and the poor (hinja) we have found in Chogyū’s writings underpin Ōnishi’s discourse as well. Despite their differing ideological positions, Ōnishi and Chogyū’s discourses betray the class-consciousness of the 1890s, which was expressed through the dualistic opposition of the rich and the poor.

In the next chapter, we will examine how Izumi Kyōka’s literary text, Hinmin kurabu, responds to the concept of hinmin discussed above. As we have seen, Taoka, as a literary critic, constructed the hinmin as voiceless and hidden, and thus in need of writers to speak on their behalf. Kyōka’s Hinmin kurabu may be considered an effort by a writer to speak for the hinmin, but in contrast to Taoka’s voiceless victims, Kyōka’s hinmin are visible and noisy, articulating their positions in distinctively rebellious voices. Although the class binary of the rich and the
poor also resonates through Kyōka’s story, the literary work proposes, as we will see, an imaginary solution to this unequal social structure.
(2.1) The Monstrous and Fantastic in Hinmin kurabu

In his study on the construction of the fantastic and monstrous in the Meiji period, Gerald Figal discusses the literary motif of the supernatural found in Izumi Kyōka’s texts. Drawing on Tzvetan Todorov, Lance Olsen, and Rosemary Jackson’s theories on the fantastic as literary genre, Figal makes a convincing argument that the literary fantastic is “a mode of social and political critique,” a subversive literature functioning to destabilize “reality” and expose its socially constructed nature. Figal notes that Izumi Kyōka was “the most conspicuous practitioner” of this literary mode during the Meiji period. With themes and motifs drawn from traditional Japanese folk tales and supernatural beliefs, Kyōka’s literary texts often serve to criticize Meiji’s social institutions and the rationalized customs brought by modernity.

This chapter explores how Kyōka’s Hinmin kurabu (貧民倶楽部, The Poor Club, 1895) employs monstrous and supernatural motifs to destabilize the class hierarchy of “the poor” and “the privileged.” By incorporating contemporary social discourse on hinmin, carnivalesque elements, and intertextual references to slum reportage, Hinmin kurabu attempts to articulate and propose solutions for social and political dislocations in the Meiji period. Figal’s concept of

78 Ibid.
79 My argument here is indebted to Jane Tompkins’ concept of “cultural work,” in which she contends that literary works are capable of offering an example of a culture’s self-definition, both reinforcing and challenging historically contingent social beliefs and values. See, Jane P. Tompkins, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), xvii.
supernatural motifs as a mode of social and political criticism provides a useful framework for analyzing the text of Hinmin kurabu.

In Monster Theory: Reading Culture, Jeffrey Cohen argues that the monster is “the harbinger of category crisis.”80 Monsters refuse easy categorization because, according to Cohen, “they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration.”81 Cohen’s observation is useful for explaining the connection between monstrosity and the hinmin in Kyōka’s novella. First, this is because the hinmin also resist categorical encapsulation in terms of occupation and socio-economic standards. Situated at the very margin of society, the hinmin are tied to monstrosity by their extreme ostracization. Second, monstrosity allows the hinmin to assume a double-role in Kyōka’s literary imagination. In the narrative, the socially marginalized group of hinmin is juxtaposed against the aristocratic class, kazoku (華族), constructing a class binary of the rich and the poor. At the same time, the hinmin, depicted as monsters, function to destabilize, by their resistance to categorization, the status hierarchy constructed in the narrative. The monstrosity or monsters tied to hinmin, then, transforms the text into a blatant form of social criticism regarding class and the kazoku system in the Meiji period.

Hinmin kurabu is characterized by an episodic plot structure. The female protagonist Otan lives in Samegahashi, known as one of the biggest slums in Tokyo. She works for the Maiban Shinbun (毎晩新聞), a newspaper company in Kyōbashi. By reporting scandals involving aristocrats, she earns a living and supports other hinmin group members living in the slum. The narrative plots are constituted of the repeated transgressive acts committed by Otan

81 Ibid.
and her hinmin group members: Otan’s stripping off of her clothes at a charity bazaar, the procession of a group of hinmin from Samegahashi to the bazaar hall and the ensuing riot, their attempt to kidnap an aristocrat, and their repeated invasions of aristocratic houses. The hinmin’s transgressions are depicted in a celebratory manner, in contrast to aristocrats who are consistently portrayed as exhibiting moral failings of various sorts.

Hinmin kurabu’s reception demonstrates a shift in the evaluation of the class-consciousness represented in the story. In an essay entitled “New Currents in the Literary World,” (Shōsetsukai no shinchōryū 小説界の新潮流, 1895), Uchida Roan commented unfavorably on Hinmin kurabu. Roan’s criticism is directed at the representation of the class antagonism between the hinmin group and aristocrats. He argues that the disparity of the rich and the poor in Japan’s society was not so extreme as to cause a riot by hinmin—as happens in Hinmin kurabu—against aristocrats. Some years later, in 1925, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (芥川龍之介 1892-1927), in his short essay entitled “On The Complete Works of Kyōka” (Kyōka zenshū ni tsuite), took an opposite position and favorably evaluated Hinmin kurabu and its representation of class antagonism:

According to the female protagonist Otan in Hinmin kurabu, philanthropy is not always a virtue. As long as it is used as a form of self-justification by the rich and noble, it must be considered a vice. The hinmin, even if they suffer from poverty, must find happiness for the future in uniting and refusing this kind of philanthropy. […] The moral values Kyōka expressed are not to be confined to some decade during the Meiji era. Aren’t these, at the same time, also the moral values of Proletarianism in the Taishō years?

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83 Ibid., 370.
85 Ibid., 526.
According to Akutagawa, the hinmin in the Kyōka story unite as a group to reject the hypocrisy of the privileged; he finds here a prototype of the class-consciousness in Proletarian literature. While Roan regarded Kyōka’s portrayals of class as unrealistic, Akutagawa praised the thematization of class conflict in Hinmin kurabu from the perspective of Proletarianism available in his time. This direction of argument is worth noting; reading the text as an expression of emerging class-consciousness in the late Meiji period provides considerable purchase in understanding the representation of class in Hinmin kurabu.

Hinmin kurabu has drawn attention from scholars who use it to discuss the issue of class and poverty in Kyōka’s works and Meiji literature in general. Tōgō Katsumi points out the intertextual connections between Kyōka’s novella and Matsubara Iwagorō’s Saiankoku no Tokyo. Tōgō contributes to the textual analysis of Hinmin kurabu through his discussion of the topography of the slum in the text; he argues that Samegahashi is strongly tied to the formation of status hierarchy, which is represented through the juxtaposition of the slum with the residential areas of aristocrats. Akiyama Minoru’s extensive analysis of the social discourse of the women’s charity gala (fujin jizenkai 婦人慈善会) succeeds in situating Hinmin kurabu in its historical context. My discussion of jizen discourse in this chapter is mainly indebted to Akiyama’s selection of materials.

In this chapter I analyze the representation of hinmin in Kyōka’s novella. First, I focus on how the text incorporates literary motifs and tropes that are tied to monstrosity and the fantastic. My point is to demonstrate how such monstrous portrayals of hinmin are combined with the plot elements of their transgressive acts to destabilize the class hierarchy constructed in the narrative.

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87 Ibid., 29.
Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of carnival and the grotesque body, I examine the literary trope of carnival and hyakkiyagyō (night procession of one hundred demons 百鬼夜行) used in the text. I argue that the association of hyakkiyagyō with the hinmin in Kyōka’s novella works in the interests of “liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order” in literary imagination. The contemporary social discourse on kazoku allows us to see the common notion of class represented in their discourse. By examining these, I hope to demonstrate how fiction responds to the issue of class and how it participates in producing the sense of hinmin in the literary imagination.

(2.2) Otan as Monster

The female protagonist Otan is an elusive character due to her constant disguise. While she proclaims herself a “woman beggar” (onna kojiki), she is not economically marginalized. She has a means to earn a living as a newspaper reporter and supports her hinmin allies in the Samegahashi slum. Moreover, throughout the narrative, Otan often changes costumes and impersonates people of differing occupations, which prevents us from gaining a coherent image of her as a character in the narrative. In one scene, for instance, Otan makes an appearance as a woman beggar, wearing shabby attire. In another scene, however, she disguises herself as if she were a middle-class woman, wearing a fine kimono and such. The portrayals of Otan demonstrate her resistance to encapsulation, which connect her to the grotesque, incoherent bodies of monstrosity. Cohen’s notion of monsters as “disturbing hybrids”89 applies to the portrayals of Otan.

The following scene in Hinmin kurabu provides the first instance of the hinmin’s acts of transgression targeting the women’s charity gala. Otan, a leader of the hinmin group living in Samegahashi, strips off her clothes at a charity gala held by female aristocrats. Otan tells the lady assistant her intention to buy one of the shirts displayed for sale. When her rude manner draws no response from the assistant, Otan grabs the shirt and begins to change her clothing:

She suddenly threw off her shawl, which made her even more conspicuous. The guests and host(s?) at the charity hall stared at her with astonishment. She quickly untied her waistband and pressed down the belt of the undergarment, and then, without hesitation, she stripped herself to the waist. Ignoring all the eyes turning toward her, she stood, wearing only a loincloth. She stood, without covering her breasts, which were clearly visible. Her unsoiled skin was as white as snow, and her long, light-color yūzen-dyed undergarment flapped over, showing the lining of scarlet cloth, which was as vivid as a burning flame. Those who were accustomed to the world could stare at her, yet, since these ladies were so noble, they could not stare at her directly. They all turned away in embarrassment. The hall was filled with distinguished ladies and gentlemen, even military officers wearing swords and officials with decorations. It was outrageous, indeed, to see a half-naked woman standing boldly among them. (64-5)90

The narrator uses Otan’s highly sexualized body to celebrate her transgressive act. The whiteness of her exposed skin is contrasted against the fiery red color of the lining of her undergarment, providing a vivid image. During the scene, the narrator refers to Otan as a “voluptuous monster” (yōen naru bakemono 妖艶なる妖精, 69), an entity marked by both its sexualized figure and its utterly disturbing activities. The combination of the words “voluptuous” and “monster” is important for thinking about the portrayals of Otan throughout the text. At the scene of her disrobing, Otan appears to be nonchalant about exposing her naked body. This contrasts with the reaction of the female aristocrats present at the bazaar hall (they could not stare at her directly). That is, Otan’s uncovering her body marks an extreme form of gender

90 All quotations from the text are taken from Hinmin kurabu, vol. 2 of Kyōka zenshū (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1942), 58-167. Further page references to Hinmin kurabu in this chapter will be shown in parentheses.
transgression. And this is juxtaposed with the sexualized image projected upon Otan on the level of discourse. This transforms Otan into “voluptuous monster.”

Akiyama Minoru points to Otan’s moral values demonstrated in her actions. He comments that Otan has “extremely pure emotions”91 (shijun no jō 至純の情) that are expressed through her acts of protecting the weak and defying authority. For instance, Otan financially supports her hinmin allies living in Samegahashi. The hinmin’s poor living conditions depicted in the story foreground her dedication to her associates. Otan lives in the Samegahashi slum with her hinmin fellows, which is quite a contrast to the aristocratic characters, whose philanthropic work is depicted as hypocrisy throughout the narrative. In addition, when Tetsuzō, one of Otan’s henchman, sells his daughter to a street vendor, Otan vents her anger and punishes him physically. Her strong moral sense, together with her leadership to unite the hinmin, invites the reading of Otan as the heroine in the story. Her repeated attempts to expose the vices of the aristocrats surely place her on the side of virtue in the narrative. However, in one scene in the story, Otan’s moral position is complicated by the excessive violence she inflicts on one of the aristocrats. After Otan and her henchmen capture an old aristocratic lady, Otan attacks the old lady’s daughter-in-law, Mitsuko, in front of her to make her change her arrogant behavior:

The old lady gritted her teeth, betraying her bad temper. She said, “I am kazoku.”
“So what?” replied Otan.
“I am kazoku.”
“Ok, I see. I assume you’re saying my cooking isn’t good and doesn't suit your taste.92 I see. It’s my fault. All right, then. Shall I add seasoning to your soup? Tetsu! Kuma! Hold her tight! Don’t let her move an inch!”

Responding to Otan’s order, the horse-headed and ox-headed demons pulled Mitsuko down on her back. One grabbed her arms, and the other her legs, pressing her on the ground.

91 Akiyama, “Jizen no jidai,” 47.
92 Here, Otan likens her treatment of Mitsuko to cooking. This appears to be triggered by her own earlier statement: “If you’re hungry, why don’t you eat her [Mitsuko].” (131)
“Oh, no!” Mitsuko was breathing faintly.
The old lady spoke to herself in her heart, “I am kazoku.”
Otan, with her knee on Mitsuko’s bosom, raised her whip and glared at the old lady with a fierce expression. “You won't stop, will you?”
The old lady kept her silence.
“You won't stop, will you?” Otan said again, emphatically.
The old lady, turning blue with fear, said, “I am kazoku.” […]
Mitsuko screamed in pain. With her head rolling left and right, her black hair swept the ground. Otan, by mistake, let her last blow hit Mitsuko badly. Mitsuko writhed and died. (132)

As Kamei Hideo acutely points out, the extreme violence inflicted against Mitsuko makes it difficult to read Otan as a carrier of moral legitimacy.93 Kamei even comments that in this particular scene, Otan transforms herself into a “dokufu” (poison woman 毒婦), a conventionalized female villain from Meiji gesaku (playful 戯作) writings.94 On the level of narrative, however, the text appears to project a different monstrous image tied to the otherworld (jigoku 地獄) and absolute authority. In this particular scene, the narrative discourse constructs the scene as “the realm of the dead” from Japanese mythology by incorporating the terms “horse-headed and ox-headed demons” (gozumezu 牛頭馬頭) to refer to Otan’s henchmen. These are demons that serve Enma-O, or the King of the world of the dead, who judges the dead and assigns appropriate punishment for sins committed. During the scene, the text also includes grotesque depictions of the dead bodies of animals such as dogs and cats with reference to the term jigoku. The intertextual reference to Japanese mythology implicitly connects Otan to “the King of the world of the dead,” which can be argued to be a unique representation of “otherness” (since he resides in the otherworld) and a monstrous embodiment of “power and authority” that challenges the law and juridical system of the modern state.

94 Ibid., 96-97.
(2.3) Charity Bazaar as Carnival Space

Mikhail Bakhtin’s notions of the carnivalesque and the grotesque body provide a powerful framework for understanding the text’s participation in social and political discourses.\(^95\) For Bakhtin, the literary trope of carnival is tied to humor and chaos, and is rebellious against authority. The carnival demonstrates the subversion of social values and hierarchies in literary imagination.

The concept of carnival is associated with another literary trope, that of the grotesque body. By its emphasis on the excess of “the body” or the primary needs associated with “the corporeal,” the trope juxtaposes the fundamental materiality of human life against any abstract social institutions and belief systems. The trope often involves excessive eating, drinking, sex, nudity, and bodily elimination such as urinating. Our understanding of the concepts of the carnival and the grotesque body would be incomplete without touching on “the collectivity” or the power of the masses. The carnival, literally or metaphorically, encourages the physical contact of bodies, uniting sensual and material bodies as a whole. Due to its subversive nature, the collectivity represented in carnival is, as Bakhtin notes, situated “outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socioeconomic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the festivity.”\(^96\) Bakhtin’s notion of the collectivity associated with carnival is significant to the following discussions on the representation of the hinmin group. The comical and grotesque portrayals of the hinmin’s procession and the disturbance caused at the charity bazaar are nothing if not the carnival that Bakhtin finds in François Rabelais’ works. Kyōka

\(^96\) Ibid., 255.
incorporates the literary tropes of carnival and the grotesque body of *hinmin* in his novella to mediate the issues associated with class and poverty during a period of radical social transformations.

The scene of the disturbance caused by *hinmin* at the charity gala contains rich carnivalesque elements. After the *hinmin* group breaks into the premises of the Rokurokukan, where the charity bazaar is held, they snatch items for the sale, eating, drinking, singing, dancing, and scampering about the bazaar. The *hinmin* are metaphorically described as various creatures such as foxes, wolves, raccoons, ravens, owls, weasels, squirrels, centipedes, and snakes, which are collectively framed by the narrator as *chimimōryō* (evil spirits 魑魅魍魎). Here, the monstrosity of *hinmin* is metaphorically emphasized. The narrator’s rhetoric reinforces a sense of speed and force through its rhythmical idiomatic compounds such as *jyūōkōchi* (freely, right to left 縦横交馳), *ranbōrōzeki* (outrageous acts of violence 乱暴狼藉), and *kōtōburyō* (utter nonsense 荒唐蕪涼). The boisterous revelry turns the charity gala upside down. The *hinmin*’s eccentric behavior and the juxtaposition of “evil spirits” and “aristocrats” constitute Kyōka’s carnivalesque world. The representation of the *hinmin*’s voice is particularly noteworthy. During the scene, one of the *hinmin* members directly confronts the aristocrats, expressing his critique of philanthropic activities: “You guys talk about alms and charity like the devil. You understand? It just treats people as beggars. It despises inferiors instead of sympathizing with them.” (87) The same *hinmin* comments on the perfumes worn by the aristocratic ladies: “Oh, it’s not only choking me but also appalling to me. You’re swimming in perfume.” (87) When the trope of unpleasant smell is used to portray *hinmin*, it marks their destitution and lack of material possessions. In the *hinmin*’s discourse above, however, the malodorousness (of perfume) is tied to extravagance enjoyed by the aristocratic ladies. The incorporation of the discourse (voice) of
hinmin marks the free interaction between people despite their manifest difference in terms of socio-economic background and status. Such coexistence of social speech styles is defined by Bakhtin as an important characteristic of carnival.

The representation of authority is also a significant part of the carnivalesque elements in Hinmin kurabu. During the scene of the disturbance, the hinmin confront a police officer. When the officer tells them to stop the disturbance and accuses them of having rude manners, Otan replies, “The poor do not have customs and manners.” (91) Otan’s discourse is characterized by evasion and wit, which is juxtaposed against the discourse of stereotyped questions employed by the police officer. Whenever police officers appear in other scenes in the story, their powerlessness is humorously depicted. In one scene after the hinmin group kidnaps the old aristocratic lady living in Surugadai, they march by a police station. Some of the hinmin members form a human shield facing the police station so that they can carry the old lady by without drawing the notice of the authorities. In this story, the hinmin provoke police officers, but they can easily escape by manipulating the situation. The trope of the hinmin’s comical confrontations with police officers achieves a carnivalistic rebellion against seriousness as well as authority.

(2.4) Pandemonium and Parade in Hinmin kurabu

Michael Dylan Foster discusses the visual taboo associated with hyakkiyagyō represented in medieval literary texts.97 Hyakkiyagyō, literally translated as “night procession of one hundred demons,” refers to a procession of monsters and evil spirits marching through the capital at night.

According to Foster, the term *hyakkiyagyō* is found in literary texts such as Ōkagami (Great Mirror 大鏡, c.1119), *Konjaku monogatari shū* (Tales of Times Now Past 今昔物語集, early twelfth century), *Uji shūi monogatari* (Collection of Tales from Uji 宇治拾遺物語, early thirteenth century),\(^{98}\) where it is believed to be something that must not be seen. If one witnesses the apparition of *hyakkiyagyō* on the street, it will cause one’s death. The notion of *hyakkiyagyō* is thus associated with danger and chaos. Foster makes a sharp observation when he finds in the discourse on *hyakkiyagyō* (and *yōkai* 妖怪 in general) a relationship between “that which cannot be seen (because it is invisible, indescribable, or numinous) and which must not be seen (because it is terrible to look upon, frightening, or dangerous).”\(^{99}\) Putting historical context aside, *hyakkiyagyō* can be considered as one of the most blatant forms of “otherness” found in the Japanese literary imagination.

It is the visual representation of *hyakki yagyō* that overturns such taboos. *Hyakkiyagyō emaki* (百鬼夜行絵巻), picture scrolls depicting the procession of *yōkai*, flourished during the Edo and early-Meiji periods. The artist Kawanabe Kyōsai’s (河鍋暁斎 1831-1889) *Hyakkiyagyō emaki* provides comical renditions of monsters and evil spirits, through which the earlier literary motif of *hyakkiyagyō* is not only visualized but also parodied, Foster observes:

Ironically, through expressions such as the comical *Hyakkiyagyō emaki*, an inversion occurs, and that which should not be gazed upon is rendered visible—and gazed upon with pleasure. The unseen (unseeable) is transformed into spectacle; the mysterious spirits of untamed nature are transmuted into familiar everyday objects; terror turns into humor; pandemonium becomes parade.\(^{100}\)

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\(^{98}\) Ibid., 27.

\(^{99}\) Ibid., 28.

\(^{100}\) Ibid.
Foster’s discussion of the *Hyakkiyagyō emaki* provides a useful framework for analyzing the comic representation of monsters in modern literary texts. The political, religious, and social discourses associated with taboo is radically challenged and ridiculed through the transformation of monsters into something visible and comical. Bakhtin’s notion of carnival is significant to this direction of the argument. For Bakhtin, the carnival in literary imagination functions to negate hierarchical belief systems that govern the social order. The parade of *yōkai* and the procession of *hyakkiyagyō* represented in fictional Japanese urban topography, then, must be regarded as resistance to and liberation from the established order of society.

The literary trope of *hyakkiyagyō* as carnival is effectively incorporated into Kyōka’s *Hinmin kurabu*. Kyōka associates the socially marginalized group of *hinmin* with *yōkai* through repeated portrayals of procession and parade. In the narrative, the aristocratic characters, to their dismay, often encounter the processions of *hinmin* on the streets of Tokyo. What follows the encounter are always acts of transgressions committed by *hinmin* such as the riot at the charity bazaar, the kidnapping of aristocrats, or intrusion into noble residences. The depictions of *hinmin* are playfully associated with the grotesque and monstrous, which allows us to connect the *hinmin*’s parade to *hyakkiyagyō*.

The text is characterized by the prevalence of actual place names, which are associated with the slums, on the one hand, and the residential areas of aristocrats, on the other. While the text thus constructs a hierarchically structured fictional urban topography, the repeated manifestations of *hinmin* parades serve to deconstruct it. The intrusion of the “apparition” of the *hinmin* group is always sudden and never anticipated by the aristocrats. The *hinmin* group’s parades function to disturb the modern concept of time and space, which is magnified by the text’s construction of the topography of urban space.
For instance, in one scene, the aristocratic female protagonist Ayako runs into a procession of hinmin on the way back to her house in Kōjimachi. The purpose of their march from Samegahashi, one of the biggest slums in Tokyō, is to cause a disturbance at Rokurokukan, where a woman’s charity bazaar is being held. The monstrous (and erotic) images of hinmin are most prominently on display in this scene:

Tied to the tip of a bamboo pole is a flag made of soiled cotton cloth, a female undergarment, which is loathsome to watch. A middle-aged woman aged 35 or 36, leading the procession triumphantly, lets the flag flap in the wind. The inscription on the flag says “The Plague Deity.” She also carries a newborn baby on her shoulder, letting her kimono hang down loosely in back, exposing the greasy soot-colored skin of her shoulders. Her poisonous-looking breasts are exposed above her waistband. The woman brings her boy aged 7 or 8, pale looking, with his ringworm-infected head covered by white spots. His neck is hidden between his shoulders, and his limbs look like dried stalks of taro. [...] Following is a woman aged 15 or 16, losing color on her face, with her hair unkempt, wearing no kimono, no sash and covering her naked skin with a worn-out blanket. Her head sticks out from a torn spot. Her thighs and knees are exposed as she takes each step; if the policeman came to reproach her, she would reply to him, “I am a hinmin,” which justifies her disgrace, indeed. [...] And fat pigs and haggard dogs are also there. Hairy caterpillars, hornworms, maggots, and centipedes—they form a continuous line. [...] There are more than 30 members in total. Wearing sandals or barefoot, they kick up dust and let the sand cover their bodies. In a cloud of dust on the street, they loom like a parade of various spirits and demons. (82-83)

A literary trope of hyakkiyagyō allows the socially marginalized to manifest themselves in fictional urban topography. The hyperbole of the hinmin’s destitution is tied to monstrosity; the epithets “soiled,” “loathsome,” and “poisonous-looking” project negativity onto the hinmin’s external appearance, which evoke a sense of both misery and supernatural eeriness. The inscription, “The Plague Deity” (Yakubyōgami 疫病神), is emblazoned on the flag representing the hinmin living in Samegahashi. By labeling themselves as “The Plague Deity,” the hinmin here frame themselves as powerful evil beings, bringing disease and misfortune to others. Like the flag used in a peasant uprising (nōmin ikki 農民一揆), the flag raised by the hinmin mother
can also be seen as a declaration of war, a war in this case against female kazoku who use a charity bazaar for hinmin in order to promote their reputations. The elements of monstrosity—the quality of deviating from natural form or character—are prevalent in the depiction of hinmin in Kyōka’s novella. As we see in their procession, the hinmin are mostly constructed through external markers such as physical deformity, uncleanness, and disease. Moreover, obscenity is projected on them through their attire, and their language is sometimes interpreted (either by a character or the narrator) as barbaric. These tropic elements of hinmin are, as the next chapter demonstrates, tied to contemporary journalistic texts, especially to a slum reportage written by Matsubara Iwagorō.

(2.5) Hinmin and Jizen

Hinmin kurabu’s direct participation in social criticism is demonstrated through the discourse of jizen. During the scene at the charity bazaar, the narrator inserts comments on female peers and their charitable activity.

Although the ladies are making a healthy profit, far from being virtuous, their greed for charity never reaches a ceiling. Even after making a huge amount of money, they still think it is not enough for aiding the needy. How generous are these talented ladies! They work hard for the money. To be sure, it is leisure for them. They serve a lot of customers who are fawning and obsequious. They are condescending to their customers and they indulge themselves in selling things: they spend their day in such a playful manner. Is this really what we call charitable work? Is this why society gives them standing? —Oops, I should refrain from being cynical. (67)

The oxymoronic term “jizen no yoku” (greed for charity 慈善の欲), which combines the words yoku (greed 欲) and jizen (philanthropy 慈善), ridicules the female peers’ enthusiastic pursuit of self-interest through their superficial philanthropic deeds. In the passage, the narrator
constructs the image of female peers as being condescending, frivolous, and desirous of promoting their reputations. Through the satiric comment on *jizen jigyō* (charitable work 慈善事業), criticism is extended to the larger society (*shakai* 社会) as well. *Hinmin kurabu* utilizes the social discourse of *jizen* prevalent at this time, participating in the criticism of hereditary peerage.

The term *jizen* (慈善) derives from the Chinese term *cí shàn*. The two characters that constitute the word *jizen* are *ji* (慈), literally “mercy“ or “compassion,” and *zen* (善), “good“ or “benevolent.“ Prior to the Meiji period, the term *jizen* can be found in the *Shasekishū* (Sand and Pebbles 沙石集), a five-volume collection of Buddhist parables written in 1283, as *jizen gon* (慈善根), which means the foundation of a merciful heart, from which all good deeds occur. It is in the Meiji period that the term *jizen* is specifically tied to “philanthropy” or “charitable activity” as the effort to help *hinmin* became one of the central issues among social workers, including Christian philanthropists.

*Jizen* constituted a prevalent social discourse in the Meiji period. There were an overwhelming number of newspaper articles, essays, and novels addressing philanthropy or reporting charitable activities. In his wide-ranging study of Meiji slum documentaries and the life of the underclass, Kida Jun’ichirō provides a long list of writings on *jizen* including *Hinmin kurabu*, commenting that “the Meiji period is, in a sense, the era of *jizen* (*jizen no jidai* 慈善の時代). Society was filled with *jizen*.” On June 14, 1884, a Yomiuri Newspaper article reported a female charity gala (*fujin jizen kai* 婦人慈善会) held at the *Rokumeikan* from June 12th to 14th. According to the article, the charity bazaar was quite successful: on the first day, the total sales

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103 Ibid.
were about 2,200 yen, the visitors numbered approximately 2,800 people, and 80 percent of the total goods were sold. The charity donated all the sales to Yūshi kyōritsu Tokyō byōin (有志共立東京病院), the hospital later known as Tokyō jikei iin (東京慈恵院). The charity gala was sponsored by prominent female social figures and the wives of politicians such as Ōyama Sutematsu, Itō Umeko (the wife of Itō Hirobumi), Tsuda Umeko, Inoue Takeko (the wife of Inoue Kaoru), and so on. From 1884 to 1892, charity galas were held 9 times at the Rokumeikan, attracting strong media attention.

While the media reported the success of charity galas in terms of sales and the number of visitors, these events also drew criticism and sarcastic comments as well. In June, 1890, Kokumin no tomo criticized charity bazaars under the subheading “Charity Bazaars by Noble Women” (Kifujin no jizenkai 貴婦人の慈善会): “I have seen gentlewomen holding charity bazaars one after another. However, I have not yet seen one held for hinmin.” Kitamura Tōkoku wrote an essay entitled “Hoping for progress in philanthropic work” (Jizen jigyō no shinpo wo nozomu 慈善事業の進歩を望む, 1894) in the magazine Hyōron (The Review 評論). Tōkoku harshly criticizes female charity galas: “Seeing those who are the organizers of female charity galas, they are not those who embody what I think are the tenets of jizen.” Tōkoku then expounds his idea of jizen as follows:

Perhaps what hinmin want is not a miniscule donation […] but true sympathy from the rich. The resentment and hatred of hinmin toward the rich do not in the least come from their want of money. The lives of the hinmin and the rich come from the same origin. But the arrogance and extravagance of the rich invite resentment from the hinmin. Riding

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104 “Rejisufueya,” Yomiuri shinbun, June 14, 1884.
106 “Kifujin no jizenkai” Kokumin no tomo, June 1890, 47.
108 Ibid., 165.
horses wildly and letting carriages run in all directions, trampling down hinmin and treating them as slaves; these are the actions that lie behind the grievances of hinmin.\textsuperscript{109}

Tōkoku questions the concept of the charity bazaar itself: the salvation of hinmin through monetary aid. Instead, he advocates the importance of dōjō (同情) or “sympathy.” For Tōkoku, any form of jizen does not reach hinmin without the givers’ truly sympathetic understanding of them. In his essay, the image of hinmin and the privileged are dialogically constructed; hinmin as the weak, needing assistance from the privileged, and the privileged as the strong, betraying their moral failings through their treatment hinmin. Being situated on the opposite poles, they both complement each other’s image. This structure is embedded in Kyōka’s Hinmin kurabu as well. As we have seen, the contemporary social discourse on jizen is clearly incorporated in the text of Hinmin kurabu. Together with the carnivalesque and monstrous elements, the discourse on jizen serves to reinforce the elements of the text as a mode of social critique.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 166.
At the end of the nineteenth century, journalists began to publish documentary accounts of the underside of urban life. Representative works of this genre include *Hin tenchi kikan kutsū tanken ki* (Records of Exploration in the World of Dire Poverty, Hunger, and Suffering 貧天地饑寒窟探検記, 1893) by Sakurada Taiga (桜田大我 1863-1922), *Saiankoku no Tokyō* (In Darkest Tokyō 最暗黒之東京, 1893) by Matsubara Iwagorō (1866-1935), and *Nihon no kasō shakai* (Japan’s Underclass 日本之下層社会, 1899) by Yokoyama Gennosuke (横山源之助 1871-1915). In the 1890s, these journalists participated in the discursive processes that produced the sense of ‘poverty’ and ‘the slum’ as new social issues of the Meiji period. For the connection between Kyōka’s monstrous depictions of *hinmin* and contemporary social discourse, Matsubara’s *Saiankoku no Tokyō* deserves a close examination. Matsubara’s grotesque portrayal of *hinmin* in the slums resonates with Kyōka’s, and there are some other elements that point to the intertextual connections between Matsubara’s documentary and Kyōka’s novella.

*Saiankoku no Tokyō* was intermittently serialized from November 1892 to August 1893 in the newspaper *Kokumin shinbun*. *Saiankoku no Tokyō* was published in book form by the Min’yūsha in 1893 after its serialization in *Kokumin shinbun*. It is important to stress Matsubara’s association with the Min’yūsha in terms of ideology and literary production. In advocating *heiminshugi*, the Min’yūsha, during the early 1890s, pushed their ideal vision of the egalitarian society, in which “the interests of the ‘common man,’ rather than those of an
entrenched privileged elite, were dominant.” Thus, for the Min’yūsha, the ideal audience of *Saiankoku no Tokyō*, as literary product, was “commoners.” The *hinmin* was presented to this audience as a group that did not even belong to “commoners,” reinforcing the structure of *hinmin* as the Other, and also as an object of consumption.

Matsubara’s documentary on slums is made up of 35 chapters, and arranged topically. Each chapter name represents a topic related to the conditions of lived life such as “Lodging houses” (Chapter 2), “Housing and furniture” (Chapter 4), “Occupations of the poor district” (Chapter 5), “Hinmin and food” (Chapter 8) and so forth. What should be noted is that there is a chapter entitled “Hinmin kurabu” (The poor club 貧民倶楽部); Kyōka most likely borrowed the title of his novella from *Saiankoku no Tokyō*. In *Saiankoku no Tokyō*, Matsubara uses the word *kaijinshu* (mysterious people, or mysterious race 怪人種) or *kaibutsu* (monsters 怪物) to describe people living in slums. “Passing by the houses of the town and entering one step into this den, there are numerous mysterious kinds of people now finishing their work in the big city.” Matsubara’s language betrays his view of *hinmin* as the excluded Other, socially invisible, and therefore something unusual. The *hinmin* in Matsubara’s documentary are thus represented as monsters, entities that essentially elide definition in the eyes of people outside of the slums.

Matsubara’s monstrous depiction of *hinmin* is most prominently displayed in Chapter 20, entitled “The Monster in the Depth of Darkness” (*Saiankokuri no kaibutsu* 最暗黒裡の怪物).

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When Matsubara collects material for his hinmin documentary at the hot-spring resort of Ikaho (伊香保), in Gunma Prefecture, he finds in the topography of the town the structure of its social hierarchy. The historic spa resort of Ikaho was located halfway up a mountain, and Matsubara divides the resort into numerous strata according to both vertical geographical location and economic capacity. According to Matsubara, luxurious restaurants, tea-pavilions, and hot-spring houses occupy the upper stratum, where visitors stay for vacations or recreation. In the lower stratum, there are various shops selling items such as liquor, lamp oil, and food; or providing services such as book-lending and laundry, to meet the needs of visitors during their stay. Matsubara’s listing of shops and stores ends at the stratum where the local houses are situated. Below the lowest strata, there are caves where, according to Matsubara, people lead the life of saiankoku no sekai (the darkest world 最暗黒の世界). These caves are situated under the floor of “lower” shops such as vegetable or liquor stores, and a ladder is used to climb down to them. What Matsubara finds in the caves are people who are subjected to extreme marginalization.

Now I examine these invalids and I find cripples, the lame, a giant monster (ōnyūdō) with a lump the size of a potato on his forehead and eyes squashed in like oysters, a little monster (shōnyūdō) with a shaved head, a blind itinerant musician with her face disfigured by smallpox, a paralytic who moves by supporting his weight on his knuckles, a victim of elephantiasis, and a dwarf—from five to seven or eight all living in a single unit. Although the inside is dark and it is impossible to distinguish objects, there is no need for lamps since the occupants are all blind. Among these hundreds of inhabitants, there is a leader, a large acupuncturist with a huge, bowl-shaped lump on the left side of his forehead who enjoys four women ranging as retinue. Their ages are from about 25 to 40 and they serve as his attendant, wife, and concubine. At mealtimes he enjoys the services of these women, seated in a row from left to right.

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113 Ibid., 105-106. My translation here is indebted to Seiji M. Lippit and James A. Fujii’s translation of Maeda Ai, Toshi kūkan no naka no bungaku (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1982). In Toshi kūkan, Maeda quotes a longer part of this scene and notes the connection between monstrosity and social marginalization. For Lippit and Fujii’s translation of this scene, see “Utopia of the Prisonhouse: A Reading of In Darkest Tokyo,” in Maeda Ai, Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 52.
Matsubara’s rhetorical construction of the socially marginalized focuses on physical deformity, which will be later repeated in the descriptions of the hinmin characters in Kyōka’s novella. He uses terms such as ōnyūdō (a giant monster 大入道) and shōnyūdō (a little monster 小入道), which are traditionally used to refer to yōkai with large or small shaved heads. His use of the literary motifs of yōkai, together with his rhetorical device of simile, demonstrates his engagement in representing the marginalized by utilizing literary resources. In Matsubara’s discourse, the bodies of the poor are represented as carnivalesque bodies transgressing the borders of normality.

In Chapter 9, “Hinmin kurabu,” Matsubara narrates the hinmin’s act of mingling and exchanging gossip at a zanpanya (残飯屋), or a leftover shop, where people can buy leftover food for a cheaper price. The chapter title, “Hinmin kurabu,” the combination of the term hinmin and kurabu (倶楽部), the phonetic transcription of “club,” is clearly a case of parody as well.114 According to Matsubara, this leftover shop serves as the hinmin’s community center.

If you mingle with literary men, you hear about literary men. If you mingle with politicians, you hear about politicians. The same goes for hinmin: if you mingle with hinmin, surely, you hear about hinmin. People often share the secrets of those who are within their own society. If secrets are not shared, people cannot but get bored. In this world, there are literary clubs, or political clubs, or there are places such as clubhouses or meeting places where people tell stories of achievement or failure, or strange and ludicrous tales of people within their community. Just as trivia like newspaper gossip leak and accumulate in this world, in the hinmin’s clubhouse, all the secrets about hinmin flow and circulate in their society.115

As the passage above shows, in Saiankoku no Tokyō, the hinmin’s community is represented as a microcosm of the larger society. The places for hinmin’s social gatherings are

114 In the middle-to-late Meiji period, there were a number of social clubs for politicians, aristocrats, and businessmen. For instance, the Tokyo kurabu (Tokyo Club 東京倶楽部) was established in 1884 and its membership included aristocrats, a member of the Imperial Family, and influential politicians and big businessmen.

115 Matsubara, Saiankoku, 49.
compared to literary or political clubs, and they exchange information and gossip for entertainment. Here, what is depicted is not the hinmin’s destitution, want of resources or means of subsistence. Rather, in the text, the lived lives of hinmin are constructed to mirror society, where people consume “trivial matters” or “secrets” of others through newspapers or chatting. Through the depiction of hinmin, therefore, what is actually demonstrated is Matsubara’s satirical views on contemporary society, and the mention of “literary” and “political” clubs in the passage indicates his ironic view of the intellectual world as well.

The quoted passage above is then followed by a pair of hinmin stories that Matsubara gathered at the leftover shop, where he works in disguise as a manservant. In one instance, Matsubara recounts an episode of seyomai (施与米), a rice donation provided at Takanawa Sengakuji temple. One day, after it is announced that five gō of unmilled rice will be provided per person, hinmin come all the way to Sengakuji temple to receive the provision. They find out, however, that the rice will be provided the next day, and Matsubara has the following to say about the hinmin’s nature.

What a surprise! They came to receive the exchange ticket for the rice but not the actual rice! The rice would be delivered the next day! Alas, what a shame! Shame to the benefactor for being so ignorant of “hinmin.” Hinmin never patiently wait for tomorrow. If a hinmin could afford to wait for tomorrow, how could he or she end up being hinmin anyway? Hinmin are always restless and distressed, so much so that they cannot afford to wait even for today or tonight.\(^\text{116}\)

The comments above serve to formulate the paradigmatic nature of hinmin as sewashinaku (restless セワシナク) or kurushiki (distressed クルシキ), due to their want of sustenance. While the hinmin’s “impatience” appears to mark their moral failing, this lack of patience is justified tautologically—because this is what, according to Matsubara, defines them

\(^{116}\) Ibid., 51.
as hinmin after all. During a scene in Kyōka’s novella, one hinmin character shares the following episode, which points to an intertextual connection between Kyōka’s and Matsubara’s texts.\(^\text{117}\)

When a hinmin tries to enter the site of the charity bazaar at the Rokurokukan, a guard tells him to buy an entrance ticket. An old female hinmin replies to the guard as follows:

No, I’ve had enough of tickets, even if you give it to me for a cheaper price. Now listen to me. The other day, there was an announcement of rice provisions at Karatachidera temple. I went there, on foot, from Samegahashi to Yushimakudari, which takes half a day or so. Then, they gave me a ticket, telling me that I could come tomorrow to exchange it for the rice. Oh dear, I am not capable of caring about tomorrow, you know? […] I am thankful for a half-rin given now instead of 1 ryō tomorrow. (84-5)

We can clearly observe an echo in the episodes of rice donation in the two texts. In both Matsubara’s and Kyōka’s texts, the episodes share structural similarities: an announcement of the rice donation is made, and a hinmin comes to the temple only to receive an exchange ticket for the rice. Hinmin in both texts are depicted as being critical of their treatment by the benefactors.

Another story Matsubara introduces involves the cooperative aspect of hinmin.

Matsubara emphasizes this together with the hinmin obsession with food for survival, showing how news of leftovers or donations quickly spreads among hinmin, and how they come together in a throng around the food provided. Matsubara’s following comment demonstrates his views on hinmin. His use of the term “Communism” suggests another facet of the hinmin’s collective power.

If one lives as a hinmin, one is not allowed to be singly avaricious, taking possession of the rations of others. He must earn admiration from others as the best worker of the day, and the goods he procures are immediately divided and consumed by surrounding people,

\(^{117}\) Tōgō Katsumi also mentions this intertextual connection although he does not provide textual analysis. Tōgō Katsumi, “Izumi Kyōka: Sabetsu to kinki no kūkan,” in Izumi Kyōka: Bi to gensō, ed. Tōgō Katsumi (Tokyō: Yūseidō, 1991), 29.
providing profits fairly to the area. This is because, in hinmin society, a system almost like Communism is practiced.\textsuperscript{118}

According to Matsubara, in hinmin society, one must be altruistic, procuring sustenance for others. This mutual aid system is compared to kyōsan shugi (Communism 共産主義), a concept that, in this context, is probably closer to “primitive communism,” characterized by free cooperation and the sharing of foods in a hunter-gatherer society.\textsuperscript{119} Although we cannot determine from this passage alone whether Matsubara regards the hinmin community as an anachronism from an utopian world, the stories he shares depict hinmin as a collective, united by the urgent need for survival.

In Kyōka’s novella, as we have seen, the hinmin’s collective power is demonstrated through the repeated use of their monstrous processions. As noted earlier, at one point in the narrative, the hinmin cause a disturbance at the charity bazaar held by female aristocrats. They plunder the goods and foods, precipitating chaos at the bazaar. The depiction of the hinmin is characterized by their soiled attire, bad smell, nudity, and physical deformity. The metaphorical presence of animals (fat pigs and haggard dogs) and insects (hairy caterpillars, maggots, and so on), accompanying their pandemonium, reinforces their strangeness and monstrosity. When the hinmin intrude as a group, the aristocrats are overwhelmed, shocked, and thus powerless. While the narrative constructs the blatant class binary between the privileged and the underclass, this hierarchical relationship is reversed through the hinmin’s transgressive collective acts. In this power attributed to hinmin en masse, the trope of hinmin in Kyōka’s imaginary world resonates with Matsubara’s slum documentary.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 52-53.
\textsuperscript{119} Primitive Communism refers to the earliest mode of production found in hunter-gather societies as discussed in Marxist thought. See, A Dictionary of Marxist Thought, 2nd ed., ed. Tom Bottomore (Oxford, UK: Blackwell References, 1991), s.v. “primitive communism.”
CONCLUSION

This thesis has been concerned with the concept of hinmin in Japanese literary texts in the 1890s. As I have argued, the term “hinmin” elides definition because the concept involves empirical complexity in terms of class and economic instability during this period. Moreover, in literary discourse on hinmin and related issues, the term often appears as rhetorical symbolism, whose function is to mark the social dislocations in Meiji society. This directs our attention not only to the issue of economic marginalization *per se*, but also to the competing ideological positions from which references to hinmin were made.

During the Meiji period, there were two opposing views on hinmin. Some believed that becoming a hinmin was due to behavioral factors; Hara Takashi and Takayama Chogyū regarded becoming hinmin as the natural course for social inferiors or “lazy commoners.” On the other hand, literary critics like Taoka Reiun and Morita Shiken ascribed the phenomenon of hinmin to social circumstances and extended their criticism to the social structure of Meiji, which propelled the rapid economic and social marginalization of hinmin. My analysis of Taoka Reiun’s discourse on hinmin has uncovered that, while it attempted to raise awareness of the issue of poverty, his rhetorically embellished version of hinmin functioned to criticize the moral decline of contemporary society.

Although the critics’ discourse on hinmin reveals their differing ideological standpoints, their discussions on hinmin, as we have seen, reinforce the concept of the class binary of the rich and the poor. In their discourse, the notion of class is expressed only in binary terms, which did not necessarily reflect the economic reality experienced by the people of the Meiji period. It is possible to argue that their sense of economic and class instabilities drove them to seek out such binary concepts to better express their “crisis consciousness.”
*Hinmin kurabu* is a fascinating example of “cultural work,” both reinforcing and challenging the concept of *hinmin* prevalent in literary and social discourse of the 1890s. For instance, Kyōka’s text incorporates the contemporary literary trope of *hinmin*, as shown in Matsubara’s slum reportage, building up the image of *hinmin* as “monstrous.” On the other hand, while literary critics like Taoka construct the notion of *hinmin* as a “hidden” or “voiceless” social group, Kyōka makes *hinmin* characters directly confront members of the aristocracy, criticizing their philanthropic activity. The repeated disturbances caused by *hinmin* are powerful forms of revolution enacted in Kyōka’s imaginary world. *Hinmin kurabu* attests to the capability of literary works, as Jane Tompkins argued, to mediate and offer solutions to contingent social issues.\(^\text{120}\) In addition, the monstrous and grotesque elements used to depict *hinmin* in the novella, I argue, must be understood in terms of the carnivalesque inversion of the social hierarchy, norms, and value systems that govern contemporary society. With its incorporation of the social discourse of *jizen*, I conclude, the literary trope of *hinmin* transforms *Hinmin kurabu* into a blatant form of social criticism.

Although I cannot deal with it here, a similar project can be carried out for the pre-war period, especially during the advent of Proletarian literature in the 1920s. As we have seen, Christian thinkers such as Ōnishi Hajime discussed an earlier form of *shakai shugi* during the 1890s when they identified Biblical equality with the egalitarian society idealized in *shakai shugi*. In the 1920s, as Marxist and Socialist theories developed in response to economic contingencies, class antagonism between proletarians and capitalists was brought to the fore. This contrasts with the class-consciousness we have observed in the texts of the 1890s, in which the concept of class was expressed through highly unstable terms such as *hinmin* vis-à-vis the rich. It is, nevertheless,

equally important to point out the consistent tendency to view social class structure in terms of dualism, which this project has uncovered. Recall Akutagawa’s review of *Hinmin kurabu*, in which he finds a connection to Proletarian literature in the class antagonism of *hinmin* and aristocrats. Further research on the historical dimensions of the shifting concept of *hinmin* would thus be an effective approach to the study of the representation of class in Japanese literary texts.
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