Made in 1890, the image reproduced on the jacket of this book consists of two ōbon-size woodblock prints mounted vertically, giving it a height of seventy-three centimeters. It depicts the Ryōunkaku, or “Pavilion above the Clouds,” designed by the Scotsman William K. Burton and completed in 1890, the same year the print was created. Located in Asakusa, a religious and entertainment district in northeastern Tokyo, the tower was colloquially known as the Asakusa Jūnikai—the Asakusa Twelve-Story. These twelve floors rose sixty-nine meters in the air, making it the tallest building in Tokyo for a while. Featuring an elevator and electric lighting, in addition to its formidable height, it was the marvel of the metropolis in its day and was depicted in countless prints and photographs between 1890 and 1923, when the Great Kantō Earthquake irreparably damaged it.

But there is more to this image, as is suggested by the title, Ryōunkaku kikai sugoroku (Mechanism Sugoroku of the “Pavilion above the Clouds”), with kikai (mechanism; machine) referring to its internal workings. The image is not just a print, but a board for the game sugoroku, in which players would have rolled dice and advanced up the structure to the top. The central part of this large image has flaps that open up to reveal the inside of the Ryōunkaku, a detail of which is reproduced as the frontispiece to this book. The second through seventh floors housed a variety of shops, the eighth a lounge, the ninth an exhibition space, and the top three observation decks. In the print, flaps on all the floors from the first to the eleventh open to reveal these features of the structure. There are
additional flaps on the third and seventh floors, which open to reveal the elevator. Not only would players roll dice and proceed up the structure, but they would also open the flaps at each stage and learn about the “Twelve-Story.”

Players would vicariously experience this modern wonder as they moved through the space, opening and closing flaps, but another striking feature of this print is its insistent verticality. This is uncommon among sugaroku boards. Regardless of the theme depicted, game boards typically feature a layout that moves the players in some kind of spiral pattern, often from the edge of the board to its center. Kunimasa’s print moves the characters continually upward; to reach the top is to win the game. In addition to signifying a vicarious modernity and consumerism, Kunimasa’s board is the perfect metaphor for upward mobility in an era when the discourse was new and in a society being remade into vertically stratified classes under capitalism. Verticality was rapidly becoming a prominent metaphor in Meiji Japan, which even impacted conceptions of the archipelago’s geography: Tokyo was the apex and everything else was “below” it, regardless of cardinal direction or height above sea level.

The foundation of this new vertically oriented society is risshin shusse. In some decades the term took on quite narrow meanings of personal (or at best, familial) social advancement. Certainly to present-day Japanese ears, the phrase has an archaic ring and, to some, connotations of self-interest as the sole guide to action. However, my research on this topic has led me to consider risshin shusse in relation to a larger literary, social, political, and economic nexus and to see it as one of the most powerful ideologies of modernity. This is certainly a greater claim than is usually made for risshin shusse, and I will elaborate on and defend this more expansive view in the chapters that follow. At a fundamental level, risshin shusse is concerned with the achievement of individual ambitions and the attainment of worldly success. However, this is only one facet of a larger problematic, for “going out into the world and establishing oneself” is inseparable from the neighboring discourses of individualism and self-fashioning.

This book, Struggling Upward: Worldly Success and the Japanese Novel, explores the intersection of these facets of the modern experience with the prose narrative in the Meiji period (1868–1912). It does this through a focused examination of the relationship between the discourse on upward mobility and the Japanese novel during the final decade of that era. Its
starting point is the observation that the formation of the novel, the consolidation of the nation-state, and the emergence of the discourse on worldly success all occur at the same historical moment in Japan. The methodology is historicist, utilized with an eye toward putting the institution of literature in contact with the intellectual ferment and social dislocations of modern Japan. My thesis is that the modern novel developed as an artistic form to represent an upwardly mobile national subject negotiating the space of the emerging capitalist nation-state and, by the end of the Meiji era, an emerging empire in East Asia.

In their quest for a suitably grand theme in the new age, novelists, in particular, eagerly took up the problem of the gap between what one is and what one wishes to become in order to stage dramatic, conflict-filled encounters between the upwardly mobile individual and the ever-shifting social boundaries of a modernizing nation. There has been little in-depth exploration of the relationship between *risshin shusse* and the modern novel, despite the fact that most studies of Meiji literature are unable to do without some discussion of it, even if the focus of such monographs lies elsewhere. The fact that upward mobility is a mandatory reference point for examinations of such widely varying topics, themes, and genres should suggest at the very least that *risshin shusse* is important to the study of the modern novel in Japan. I will argue here that it is indispensable. I will move beyond focus on schools or movements or genres to show that *risshin shusse* is a form-giving discourse for the modern novel as a whole and thus that it structures narrative and crosses boundaries between genres. *Struggling Upward* places the discourse on worldly success at the center of the study of the novel’s emergence and maturation in Japan.

Modern fiction took up a set of issues surrounding upward mobility that emerged in the public sphere at the very beginning of the Meiji period, a set of issues that, like so much else in modernity, had roots in the preceding Tokugawa period (1600–1868). In that era, *risshin* and *shusse* had somewhat different connotations due to the separate ethico-linguistic worlds from which the terms originated: the provenance of the former lay in Confucian thought, whereas the latter emerged from popular Buddhism. Each term traveled its own route away from its origins to arrive at its respective meaning in the nineteenth century. By that time *risshin* was closely associated with samurai ideals of using knowledge and talent as measures of social status, and *shusse* had become joined to the commoner ideal of increasing one’s prosperity and social prominence. The
commonality between them can be found in their regard for the collective bodies that nurture individual efforts, for _risshin_ was also marked by a desire to strengthen the larger warrior house, whereas _shusse_ was meant to benefit the extended family lineage.

The joining together of these two strands of thought into one idea—the elevation of those of education and demonstrated talent to positions of social eminence and material advantage—originated with the class of low-ranking but highly educated samurai in the mid-nineteenth century. Their championing of social mobility is one expression of their discontent with the status quo at the end of the era of Tokugawa rule, by which time the sinecures of patronage and the system of inherited rank left little room for ambitious samurai to move up the hierarchy to a spot befitting their education and talents. The dissatisfaction among such low-ranking, impoverished samurai with the ossified social system of late Tokugawa suggests that the nascent ideology of _risshin shusse_ played an under-examined role in toppling the shogunate in 1868. Ultimately, however, _risshin shusse_, as two formerly distinct but related discourses cobbled together into one, was bound to the project of modernization, for it was yoked to the new socioeconomic system emerging in the wake of the Restoration. By the turn of the century, capitalism, industrialization, and urbanization were working profound and irreversible changes on the island nation, which required ambitious, upwardly mobile subjects for its needs. The Meiji state quickly realized the advantage of harnessing this energy for the long-term project of modernization and “catching up” with the West.

The strength of the modern capitalist nation-state would thenceforth rest on the individual desire for social advancement, for in a country confronting crisis, ambition was supposed to be an energy put in the service of securing the new polity rather than be reduced to mere self-interest. To accomplish the mission of liberating individual ambition and simultaneously coaxing the individual to put his energies to use for the benefit of the nation, proponents of _risshin shusse_ had to simultaneously borrow from and defeat an entrenched opponent in the form of the _kinei mibun seido_, the early-modern status system of the Tokugawa era. Rooted in a stark divide between samurai and the rest of the population, this was a system that valued social actors based on their utility to the maintenance of warrior society and sorted subjects into particular status categories determined by the occupation and residence of each. As David Howell
has argued, the status categories set the terms of social identity in early-modern Japan, but did so in broad strokes so as to ensure that the state was not involved in everyday life or in the realm of individual interest. As long as communities fulfilled their status obligations, both material and symbolic, the Tokugawa authorities kept clear of relations within communities and did not much concern themselves with whether or not individual subjects identified with the political order. (How different this is from the modern nation-state, which is obsessed with whether or not its citizens identify with the larger national body and which pursues this concern even into the psyche of its citizen-subjects.) In the early-modern system, the needs of the collective had priority; the household, not the individual, was the smallest meaningful unit of production and social calculus; and mobility, though it existed, was not valorized. From the perspective of a dynamic, vigorous, and full-blown capitalist socioeconomic system, the status system of the earlier era, in spite of having loosened considerably over the two and a half centuries of Tokugawa rule, was still far too rigid to meet the requirements of the new age. Indeed, as Fukaya Katsumi has argued, the early-modern status system represented an effort by the warrior-ruled state to fix human beings in place within the social system, though it could not ultimately suppress a desire for social advancement. The hold of this earlier mode of social organization extended for several decades into the new Meiji era, but by the end of the nineteenth century, this lingering opponent from an earlier age had been largely subdued, and the new ideology of social mobility spread throughout the archipelago from the defunct samurai class to the new national subjects of Imperial Japan. Obligation to the collective in the earlier form of social organization was transformed in modernity into a nationalist concern for the country’s welfare within a dangerous, imperialist world dominated by Great Power rivalries.

In its initial skirmishes with the early-modern status system, risshin shusse had formidable spokesmen, as I suggested in the preface. The overturning of the prioritization of the collective over the individual with the aim of granting wide scope for the exercise of agency to the latter are goals shared by the two foundational texts of the new ideology. Saikoku risshi hen, Nakamura Masanao’s translation of Samuel Smiles’s worldwide best-seller, Self-Help, is the first. This book’s siren song was powerful: with only slight exaggeration, Hirakawa Sukehiro calls it “the volume that created Meiji Japan” and notes that sales of the hefty and expensive tome
had reached a million by the time of the Meiji emperor’s death in 1912.10 The number of readers was several times this figure, and the number of people exposed to its ideas through school primers was greater still. Fukuzawa Yukichi’s *Gakumon no susume* (An Encouragement of Learning) is the second book. When the seventeen individual pamphlets were to be published in a single volume in 1876, Fukuzawa ruminated on the social penetration of his treatise; he estimated that each of the seventeen pamphlets sold about 200,000 copies, resulting in total sales of 3.4 million copies for the entire work.11 Even given Fukuzawa’s propensity for self-promotion through exaggeration (the later installments, for example, did not sell nearly as well as the earlier ones), we must surely expand Hirokawa’s statement and say that there were two volumes that defined Meiji Japan.

There are important differences between these texts, which should not be overlooked. The Christian convert, Nakamura, was translating the Victorian ideal of rugged individualism promoted in Smiles’s book, which places emphasis on work and labor over educational attainment and valorizes worldliness and invention. In contrast, Fukuzawa’s collection of essays, as the title suggests, places overwhelming emphasis on educating the nation’s citizens to be innovators. The similarities between the two projects, however, are ultimately more important than the differences in a larger historical context; and it should come as no surprise that these two treatises were penned by men who had been low-ranking samurai in the ancien régime—that is, exactly those men of education and talent who were frustrated by the lack of opportunity and the social rigidity of the early-modern status system. This goes a long way toward explaining the quickness of their embrace of new ideas from overseas. Both Nakamura (by ventriloquizing Smiles) and Fukuzawa argue for the reversal of the collective’s authority over the individual while retaining the ideal of service to the larger community so that the nation’s subjects can, through their own unhindered initiative, creativity, sense of purpose, and desire for social advancement, help elevate Japan’s status in the world and remove it from the purgatory of the unequal treaties. Each author places a high value on individualism and promotes the notion that those with initiative, ambition, and good ideas deserve more shares of society’s wealth and honors, irrespective of their social origins. In Takeuchi Yō’s succinct phrase, these two texts inaugurate “the liberation of ambition” (*yashin no kaibō*) in modernity.12 I agree with the inherited wisdom in seeing these
introduction

ideas as revolutionary. Worldly success reorganizes the relationship between the individual and the collective, invests the human life cycle with new meanings, and creates a social contract of sorts in which those who cultivate ambition are promised success and achievement.

If we are to view this liberated ambition as a form-giving discourse for the Meiji novel, what we need after the recognition of the centrality of *risshin shusse* to modernity are tools to theorize the way upward mobility, as a form of desire, was made available for literary exploration beyond mere theme. Nancy Armstrong’s study of the English novel in *How Novels Think* provides a powerful apparatus for thinking about how desire can mediate between society and literature. The focus of her study is on what might be called the novel’s pedagogical function: as she argues, the British novel “came into being, I believe, as writers sought to formulate a kind of subject that had not yet existed in writing. Once formulated in fiction, however, this subject proved uniquely capable of reproducing itself.”

This subject is the individual. The novel takes over from philosophical discourse on individualism to show (rather than tell) what it means to fulfill one’s desires in a world defined by inequality. This is accomplished through a specific technique: the novel, in Armstrong’s view, features protagonists confronting a gap between what they are and what they could be or wish to be; the novel thus inscribes the desire to close this gap as a “rhetorical additive” or, in deconstructive terms, a “supplement.” The protagonist may begin by being poor, or disenfranchised because of gender, or face discrimination due to race, but, through the inscription of desire, is launched on his or her mission of closing that gap between unequal social positions through the unfolding of the plot. Armstrong is less interested in the perennially popular question of the origins of the novel than in exploring the way that the energy of individualism is encouraged, subverted, or contained within literary works in different historical periods. In trying to reach a different state in the social hierarchy, the individual will inevitably confront barriers and resistance to the desire to transcend the social circumstances in which he or she is initially located by birth, all of which are historically contingent.

Such barriers were particularly complex in Meiji Japan, for they were entangled in shifting social boundaries, changing attitudes toward tradition, and new patterns of socialization. First, any discussion of worldly success involves both the singular and the plural in society, for the social hierarchy is a collective construction that is being constantly contested
and modified as society itself changes, making social boundaries, as well as the perspective from which one views individual striving, highly unstable. Regardless of how personally and intimately ambition and the fruition of subjective desires may be experienced, the individual would be unable to define and savor success or lament failure without the collective, for all yardsticks for measuring one’s place in the social order are socially produced. *Risshin shusse* also became entangled with shifting notions of tradition and modernity, in which transgressions of inherited social norms by those conversant in the upstart new discourses of success were viewed with suspicion. This collision between the ambitious individual seeking to rise in the world and the shifting social boundaries of an era implies, too, a story of socialization or its failure. Narrative can be seen as devoted at least in part to exploring the possibilities and limitations of the integration of the individual and his or her desires into society. Armstrong argues that in some periods narrative symbolically conditions individuals to accept the boundaries in place in a particular era, while in others it celebrates an individualism that challenges and exceeds those boundaries.

Ambition, then, propels the individual on a course of attempting to move up the social hierarchy and to close the gap between what one is and what one wishes to become, all while negotiating changing social norms. Narrative inscribes this desire in a protagonist in the form of a “supplement” or “rhetorical additive.” We will need to add one element that does not receive as much attention in Armstrong’s framework: a consideration of space. Ambition sets the protagonist of a novel on his (or sometimes her) course of attempting to close a social gap by traversing a spatial hierarchy, most emblematically by moving from the provinces to Tokyo. Given that educational and economic opportunities are unevenly distributed within a spatial hierarchy, the path of success would normally lead from one’s native home in the provinces, which is where the vast majority of the population lived in the mid-nineteenth century (possibly as much as 80 percent), to Tokyo, the nation’s capital and the center of learning. “Going up to the capital” (*jōkyō suru*) is indeed one of the major tropes of modern Japan and is not confined to literature. In addition to acknowledging Tokyo as the emperor’s capital, with “up” referencing the ruler’s exalted place, the phrase names the vertical path (the second meaning of “up”) linking the ancestral home to the metropolis, the humble life of anonymous toil in the country to the dream of a
Introduction

successful life in the capital. Movement up the social hierarchy and through the narrative thus entails motion across a literarily constructed space, for the village, the provincial capital, and the metropolis, among other communities, were differentially coded in relation to *risshin shusse*. The discourse on ambition has a cartographic dimension, mapping onto physical territory and charging different locales from the most remote provinces to the nation’s capital with valences as diverse as longing, fulfillment, anxiety, and discontent.

With Japan as an example, I follow Henri Lefebvre, in the epigraph to this introduction, in arguing that the revolution of *risshin shusse* does indeed produce a new space. Considered at the broadest level, *risshin shusse* was a mechanism created by industrial capitalism to facilitate the movement of a mostly rural population to the cities, where capital, industry, and educational opportunities were concentrated. It accomplished this by inscribing within the individual the desire known as ambition and by creating the social and institutional infrastructure that allowed for and even encouraged social mobility and self-fashioning. Such an infrastructure centered on credentialing in the educational system during the years of childhood and adolescence, and thereby acquiring an educational capital that could be converted to upward mobility as one advanced into the world of work and adult responsibility. There is, thus, also a temporality of success.

These considerations suggest that the study of literature’s engagement with *risshin shusse* can be enriched and deepened by drawing on a theoretical framework that allows one to link the representation of space and time. The chronotope, “time-space,” is a neologism created by the Russian literary and cultural critic Mikhail Bakhtin in the context of his work on the European novel. It names the way in which the representations of space and time are inextricably linked and take on expressive functions in narrative. In characteristically metaphorical language, Bakhtin writes: “Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.” What we have in the chronotope is the plasticity of time and space, with the “thickening” and “charging” referring to the artistic molding of both through narrative construction and selective, concentrated description. Furthermore, Bakhtin notes that “temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another”
and that they are “always colored by emotions and values,” thus indicating the way space and time are invested with varying desires and ideological values. The chronotope, then, helps us see that the representation of time and space bears meaning, functioning as more than just reference points for the presentation of narrative information.

The concept of the chronotope is surely the most enigmatic and least theorized of Bakhtin’s many fecund ideas. Moreover, since he himself tended to elaborate on the term within the context of a discussion of a typology of European genres, its utility outside of that framework was lessened. Attempting to untangle the contradictory and circular aspects of Bakhtin’s formulation in order to provide the chronotope with more analytical utility, Jay Ladin has shown that an individual “space-time-event cluster” becomes visible in the reading process only when related to a different cluster. There may be a dominant chronotope, but it can never be singular. The implication is that “we must abandon Bakhtin’s tempting vision of a complete taxonomy of chronotopes, a list of distinct space-times with specific generic, historical, and ontological implications.” Ladin instead reorients conceptualization of the chronotope around the portrayal of character in fiction and with the way authors, narrators, and readers relate to that character. “Thus,” Ladin concludes, “any representation of time and space implies a synthesizing consciousness (whether a character’s, a narrator’s, an author’s, or our own).” This accords well with the centrality of the protagonist in Armstrong’s formulation of the novel: narrative inscribes desire in the hero or heroine as a rhetorical additive and follows his or her effort to close a gap between that desire and the circumstances of birth. In literary study, then, the chronotope is most productively utilized in an analysis of the protagonist’s subjective experience of his or her world and of the techniques the narrator and author use to make that experience available to readers. In this book, that subjective experience can only be understood in relation to another, dominant chronotope.

I would argue that the discourse on *risshin shusse* creates this new, dominant chronotope for Japanese literature, one that is able to best represent the experience of modernity in terms of social mobility and self-fashioning and one that cannot be confined to genre. I will call it the chronotope of success. In terms of the axis of time, ambition defines the significance of a human being’s life in new narrative terms. *Risshin shusse* creates a new conception of the proper shape of the socially significant
life in modernity. This new desire called ambition propels the individual subject from childhood to the attainment of success, after which the life course can be considered completed and fulfilled—the end of the story, if not of the individual’s actual life span. *Risshin shusse* is a way of conceiving a life as having a definite, socially significant shape with a distinct, well-defined telos. The other axis of the chronotope is space. The temporal dimension of a *risshin shusse* narrative does not unfold against the backdrop of an empty, homogeneous space, but against spaces that had come to be invested with social meaning. *Risshin shusse* contributes to the reorganization of space in the cultural imaginary into hierarchical concentric circles stretching from the center of Tokyo (the imperial seat and the home of the first, and for a short time the only, imperial university) to the far corners of the nation. This also maps onto a heterogeneous topography of industrial development and modernization, with the highest concentration of capital and educational opportunities found in Tokyo and other major urban areas, then extending outward to the provincial capitals, and finally reaching, with a time lag, to the rural areas of the nation. After Japan embarks on its project of imperial expansion toward the end of the nineteenth century, its colonial possessions—Taiwan, the Korean peninsula, and especially Manchuria—became inscribed in the spatial imagination as a new periphery.

As we will discover, most literary texts do not feature protagonists who experience this idealized route to success. Rather, the chronotope of success is a kind of ground against which the texts project competing chronotopes. They may offer an alternative temporal or spatial axis; in extreme cases, they may even offer an oppositional chronotope. Yet authors cannot ignore the idealized chronotope of success. The construction of artistic chronotopes centers on the protagonist of a work of fiction and his or her subjective experience of the dominant ideology of worldly success. *Risshin shusse* impacts literary form by inscribing desire in the protagonist as a rhetorical additive and linking this desire to the representation of time and space. The result of such a complex negotiation is a narrative in which the protagonist traverses a spatial hierarchy in an effort to close the gap between circumstances and desire in order to achieve success. This yields a life story that shares some of the characteristics of the European *bildungsroman*.21

The novelistic spaces connected in the circuit of success necessarily involve metropolis and countryside, center and periphery. These spaces
may be hierarchically related to each other, but they are ultimately mutually dependent for their meanings. The study of literature’s engagement with the city has shed light on the urban experience from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, and chapters 3 and 4 in this book have profited enormously from this interdisciplinary work. The countryside has received less attention, perhaps because we are still prone to consider it the site of unchanging tradition. It is perfectly understandable that studies of modernity tend to focus on the city; after all, the metropolis is the first to see the material culture of the new era—the streetlights, the new architecture, new forms of consumerism, novel forms of entertainment, and so forth. Still, one of the important lessons from these studies is that the city depends upon the country for its meaning, just as the periphery lacks meaning without a center. Another goal of this book is to deconstruct this binary of country and city while acknowledging that the tension between them has a real, material basis. Indeed, a study of upward mobility in the novel can help us understand the ways in which a differential and heterogeneous rural landscape became unified under a national and imperial banner and how Tokyo came to exert the pull it did. This will require more detailed elaboration in subsequent chapters, but we can simply note here that urbanization deeply impacted the countryside in a number of ways, most obviously by siphoning off much of its population, who moved to the nation’s urban centers seeking new opportunities. It took less than a century for Japan to shift from an overwhelmingly rural population to a majority urban population. Every modernizing society has had to struggle with this phenomenon, but there is nothing natural or inevitable about the outcome.

Equally important, there is a modernizing nation in the background of these tales of individual striving, and the nation functions as a “third term” that prevents a simple analysis of competing dichotomies of country and city. The upwardly mobile subject travels not through a literary set piece, but through a nation-state in the making, nor through a decorative rural or metropolitan backdrop but within a national collective on the move. In the same way that social boundaries within this collective body are unstable and constantly shifting, the space of the nation-state is also neither stable nor homogeneous, not in the wake of the Restoration during early Meiji and certainly not during the subsequent era of imperial expansion, which began in fits and starts after Japan’s victory in the
Introduction


Uncovering the relationship between narratives and nations has been one of the most productive avenues within recent novel studies. We have learned that the novel is best conceived as a socially symbolic form that helps produce and sustain the nation conceived as an “imagined community,” to use Benedict Anderson’s now canonical phrase. Timothy Brennan has described this most admirably:

It was the novel that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the “one, yet many” of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles. Socially, the novel joined the newspaper as the major vehicle of the national print media, helping to standardize language, encourage literacy and remove mutual incomprehensibility. But it did more than that. Its manner of presentation allowed people to imagine the special community that was the nation.

Much of my analysis in subsequent chapters will connect the two forms Brennan and Anderson highlight by taking up novels serialized in newspapers and magazines. But to relate Brennan’s ideas to the current discussion, not only must we consider social mobility in a Japanese context to be a form-giving discourse for the modern novel; we must also see the novel as giving form to the nation. It thus satisfies a longing for the individual to be part of a larger collective body and helps members of that body forge imaginative connections to people within the nation’s borders.

The greatest challenge is to cultivate the double vision required to see the complex relationship involved in the era when novels made nations and nations produced novels. Though taking up a much earlier time period, Timothy Hampton’s gloss on Brennan’s discussion is instructive in this regard. From one perspective, the novel seems to follow in the wake of the emerging nation-state and to take that political formation as its object. Viewed from another perspective, however, the novel precedes the nation-state and, together with other forms of print capitalism, actively produces the political body within the cultural imaginary. Ultimately the only approach that can succeed in conceptualizing the relationship
Introduction

between novel and nation, as Hampton explains, is one that views it as a dialectical relationship, with the novel simultaneously objectifying and producing the nation through its spatial imagination. Hampton approaches the problem through the idea of genre mixing:

I shall show that the interplay of space, social identity, and narrative form . . . results in a much more complex dynamic than anything suggested by such well-worn phrases as “epic to novel” or “the rise of the novel.” Rather, I will show, it is precisely through their mixing of genres that . . . writers . . . attempt to confront the social transformations that accompany the emergence of modern nationhood. And, conversely, that very generic complexity constructs a spatial regime that gives expression to the inclusive volume of the nation-state.24

This is a way of conceiving the novel as a socially symbolic act that both produces and is produced by the “imagined community” of a nation in the making. It is also an instructive effort to concretely link nation-building and narrative form. Hampton ultimately sees a writer’s mixing and transformation of inherited genres as a sign of that writer’s effort to take the measure of an existing nationhood and produce the nation as such.

I have found such ideas insightful and productive, but in the pages that follow, I will seek a solution to the problem of double vision along different lines than genre mixing, which, though immensely productive in Hampton’s study of France, is not the crux of the issue in Meiji Japan, which witnesses the consolidation and hegemony of a single genre, the novel. In order to show that Japanese novels both follow and objectify the nation but also precede and produce the polity, I will kick those novels into the fray of the broader social debate on modernity. Every thinker and writer in Meiji Japan had to confront the complex entanglement of foreign and domestic ideas and to find some sort of resolution between individual striving to better one’s lot in life and social mores or barriers. The participation of literature in larger social debates in the age of modern print media will be the focus of the conclusion to this book, where I will connect print culture to the public sphere. The chapters in between will provide the evidence and tools. In preparation, we can note that as literature engages with larger debates in society, albeit through narrative construction rather than exposition, it seeks to persuade readers of its view
and also inculcates a particular imagination of the space of the nation. At the same time, such novels posit themselves against other views in the public sphere. They not only constitute themselves as alternatives, they take those other views and other imaginative visions as rejoinders and respond to them. They do this most visibly by proffering alternative chronotopes to the time-space of success. This way of viewing literature underlies my decision to juxtapose literary texts with other texts from different culturally demarcated zones and to pursue a historicist mode of literary criticism.

In order to show that the novel is a participant in a national debate over the fate of the nation, my study is synchronic. All of the works I discuss were written during the same historical moment: the final decade of the Meiji era. By narrowing my focus to a ten-year period, I do not wish to imply that *risshin shuse* was important only at the end of Meiji. I have chosen to concentrate this study on novels written within a few years of each other in order to demonstrate that novelists proffer a range of solutions to national dilemmas and, in important ways, “talk” to each other, even if indirectly. Additionally, late Meiji is an era when a range of important issues related to social mobility and national space come to the fore. First and foremost, it is the era of the Russo-Japanese War, which brings to the surface a number of underlying tensions in a rapidly modernizing country. Far from being a moment of national unity and celebration during a time of conflict and victory, the war and its aftermath witnessed an astounding diversity of reaction and opinion, ranging from a virulent, chauvinistic nationalism to a steadfast pacifism and internationalism, as well as everything in between. The war also revealed a fractured society and a public sphere engaged in tense, ambivalent, and ever-shifting relations with the state, none of which could be covered over by a stupendous military victory over a Western power. The Russo-Japanese War brought the nation-state itself into focus as an object of intense scrutiny and engendered debate about which part of the national space might best represent ideal cultural values. Furthermore, in the years leading up to and following the conflict—which was the first sizable international conflict of the twentieth century and an early example of an industrial war in Asia—capitalism came into its own in the archipelago, while industrialization and urbanization were creating enormous tensions between the countryside and the expanding urban areas, as well as tensions between both these and the state itself. The final years of the Meiji
era are strategically useful; social mobility, individualism, the welfare of the collective, nationalism, the country, and the city all came under intense debate in the public sphere and thus became the subjects of persistent thematic exploration in novels of the era, which constitute a narrative form that had reached maturity.

By organizing my book in this way—tracing a broad range of representations of space and social mobility at a particular historical moment—I hope to achieve a number of related goals. First, regardless of the agenda of a particular text, a confrontation with the tension among individual desires, social boundaries, and the nation is unavoidable, and each novel must negotiate a position among them. Second, by juxtaposing both heavily studied texts, such as the novels of Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), with such noncanonical works as the popular fare of Horiuchi Shinsen (1873–?), a forgotten author writing at exactly the same time, I wish to put in contact the venerated works of the modern canon and the generally ignored lineage of the popular novel in order to demonstrate their engagement with each other. What does it mean, for example, that Sōseki’s novel Mon (The Gate, 1910) specifically mentions the magazine Seikō (Success) in which Shinsen’s genre staples were serialized? This is merely one example of the larger dialogue I hope to evoke through this kind of juxtaposition of texts that occupy various places on a continuum of canonicity and that sometimes obliquely reference each other. Limiting one’s purview to canonical works or, alternatively, to the emerging mass fiction of the Meiji era yields a skewed understanding of how the novel engages with a social discourse; indeed, such a circumscribed approach limits the claims that can be made for the novel as a whole. Third, I hope to show that the novels herein engage in a struggle over representation, a struggle that centers on, but is not limited to, a conception of national space and a distinct representation of the human life cycle created by risshin shusse. In particular, they share an engagement with the dominant chronotope of success and its representational system. These three goals will ultimately allow the book to make a contribution to our understanding of the novel as a literary form, through a focused study of its representation of physical, social, and national space.

This book partakes of the larger trend within novel studies to historicize the dominant literary form of modernity. However, I am not aware of other scholarly work that shows how the novel and social mobility are mutually constitutive. It is my hope that Struggling Upward will suggest
avenues and approaches for those studying the novel in other periods and places. I also hope that this monograph can cast new light on familiar topics in Japanese literary studies, whether in relation to specific “schools” (such as naturalism), forms (serial novels, for example), theoretical approaches (especially historicist criticism), larger historical contexts (colonialism), or specific authors (Natsume Sōseki, for one). After all, each of these schools, forms, approaches, contexts, and authors appears in a new light when viewed from the perspective of worldly success.

Given that Struggling Upward is synchronic in conception and takes up the mature Meiji novel, it is worth glancing at some major signposts marking the intersection of worldly success and the prose narrative in early Meiji so as to provide some context for the discussions in subsequent chapters. Following Komori Yōichi’s basic narrative connecting risshin shusse and the literature of the 1870s and 1880s,26 I supplement it with the work of other scholars, especially that of Maeda Ai, and then develop a framework that can encompass the Meiji novel as a whole. Oda (or Niwa) Jun’ichirō’s (1851–1919) Karyū shunwa (Romantic Stories of Blossoms, 1879) is an abridged translation and adaptation of a minor British novel and its sequel, Ernest Maltravers (1837) and Alice (1838), penned by Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873). The Englishman’s current status as a lesser novelist unknown to any but specialists, should not deter us from recognizing how important his work was for the history of modern Japanese literature, on both linguistic and thematic levels. Oda helped raise the stature of prose fiction by rendering the hackneyed phrases of Bulwer-Lytton into an elevated Sino-Japanese rhetoric.27 Oda’s novel also thematizes the intertwining of love and success within a single narrative. The main characters are joined in a story of love gone astray at first then triumphantly consummated, as the man attains his success in the world of politics, and the woman attains her own kind of success by marrying him, thereby making a stupendous move up the social ladder. It is the quintessential story of “the man of talent and the beautiful woman” (saishi kajin), in which the gendered nature of risshin shusse is already evident. Sero nikki (Diary of a Life Journey, 1884) by Kikutei Kōsui (1855–1942) is the transposition of this basic form into a work written by a Japanese. In its thematization of the man of talent and the beautiful woman, Kikutei’s novel stays fairly close to the pattern established in Karyū shunwa. The novel makes use of retarding devices and suspense, but the hero and heroine, Hisamatsu Kikuo and Matsue Take, ultimately find their way
into each other’s arms. Equally important is the novel’s adherence to the quintessential route to success, which, in the era in which the work was written, necessarily centers on going to Tokyo and finding one’s way into the wider world with a beautiful woman at one’s side.

With the basic paradigm set by Karyū shunwa and Sero nikki, we next witness the gradual enrichment of the new form, with some writers continuing elements of the original model and others broadening its thematic range. Many political novels, such as Suehiro Tetchō’s (1849–1896) Setchūbai (Plum Blossoms in the Snow, 1886) and its sequel, Kakan’ō (Warbler amidst the Blossoms, 1887), took up and developed into elaborate narratives the story of the “talented youth,” who attains worldly success by reaching the pinnacle of the political system with the aid of a “beautiful woman” and the dowry she supplies. But the political inflection of risshin shusse was short-lived, partly because of the concerted efforts of other novelists to rid the template supplied by these early novels of their overtly political dimension. While harkening back to the complexities of both early-modern Japanese theater and heavily plotted British fiction in its tale of mistaken identity and recovered social status, Tsubouchi Shōyō’s (1859–1935) Tōsei shosei katagi (The Character of Modern Students, 1885–1886) is, like its predecessors, a story of failure and success among the student crowd, but one that divests the shōsetsu of its political themes. Shōyō’s novel retains the love story by joining the protagonist Komachida Sanji and the geisha Tanoji (though their marriage is not depicted in the novel) and reorients its valorized success around the politically neutral student and scholar. The critical acclaim that greeted Futabatei Shimeī’s (1864–1909) Ukigumo (Drifting Clouds, 1887–1889), with its portrait of the disaffected intellectual who neither succeeds in life nor gets the girl, provided the basic template for the serious novels that would emerge in the twentieth century. The qualification of being “serious” meant avoiding the happy ending in preference for critical distance and a generally pessimistic portrait of the embattled individual. Corresponding to the larger bifurcation during the turn of the last century between serious and popular fiction, the novels that make up the canon of modern Japanese literature would treat the discourses on ambition and success with skepticism, while the celebratory treatments of upward mobility retreated to the popular lineage of the novel.

Success stories of the kind that were common in the first half of the 1880s would look naive to major writers a decade later. In addition to
**Introduction**

*Ukigumo*, Mori Ōgai’s (1862–1922) “Maihime” (The Dancing Girl, 1890) is exemplary of the skeptical tradition of modern fiction. This rich short story has been analyzed from any number of perspectives, but is perhaps most fruitfully discussed through the lens of *risshin shusse*. The protagonist, Ōta Toyotarō, is sent by the Japanese government to Berlin to study law, but ends up becoming engrossed in the literary and art scene in the German capital. He also falls in love with a lower-class German dancing girl, Elise, ultimately getting her pregnant. This story pits *risshin shusse* against love, thereby providing the impetus for the protagonist’s probing self-analysis, which calls into question the conformity bred by the ideology of upward mobility. When, after being derailed from the standard course of success, the protagonist is offered a lifeline back to Japan, he takes it, thus choosing success and conformity over love, a choice he regrets for the rest of his life.

Maeda Ai links the divestment of politics from the narrative fiction of the late 1880s to the disillusionment with politics among serious writers after the failure of the Freedom and People’s Rights movement to found real democracy in the new Japan. But Maeda also locates another large-scale historical “cycle” (in his words), in which this disillusionment with an earlier form of *risshin shusse* is linked to a growing valorization of the countryside, as exemplified in Miyazaki Koshoshi’s (1864–1922) *Kisei* (The Return, 1890). This short novel recounts the narrator-protagonist’s return to his provincial home for the anniversary of his father’s death, but much of that narration is preoccupied with the way the natal home provokes anxiety and doubt about the metropolitan-based life course laid out for youth within the ideology of *risshin shusse*. Although it is appealing to see Miyazaki’s popular novel as the end of a cycle of works about success, I would prefer to view it as a contribution to the continuing enrichment of the links between worldly success and the novel, for even while it is true that politics was divested from such narratives, politics narrowly conceived was replaced by more sustained exploration of the links among city, countryside, and nation after 1890.

An excellent illustration of this trend is Tokutomi Roka’s (1868–1927) semi-autobiographical *Omoide no ki* (A Record of Memories), published by Min’yūsha in 1901. This organization was headed by Roka’s older brother, Tokutomi Sohō (1863–1957), and had published *Kisei* eleven years earlier. The two novels share much in common, especially a valorization of the countryside, but Roka navigates a far more complex ideological
terrain in his sprawling novel. The tale begins with childhood in the provinces and ends with graduation, marriage, and fame in the capital. Exemplifying the celebratory lineage of modern fiction, in contrast to *Ukigumo* and “Maihime,” it is that rare, perfect literary example of the chronotope of success, in that the narrative moves its protagonist, Kikuchi Shintarō, from rural Kyushū to Tokyo and from childhood struggle to worldly success in early adulthood. The spark of ambition is lit early on in a scene in which Shintarō’s mother drags her son to the grave of his deceased father, brandishes a knife, and demands that the boy restore the family, which has fallen into abject poverty. Here is the exact moment when desire is inscribed in the protagonist as a rhetorical additive. The narrative completes its arc eighteen years later, when Shintarō achieves success as a man of letters and revisits his father’s grave, his mother’s words still seared in his mind. But the provincial home remains a soothing memory, for, true to the tenets of *risshin shusse*, Shintarō marries and makes his home in Tokyo. Shintarō’s age is never explicitly stated, but through internal evidence it is clear that he, like his creator Roka, was born in 1868, meaning that his birth coincides with that of the new Japan. His personal success thus implicates the nation in addition to the family; and, given that his family was of samurai blood, his personal achievement is also a symbolic story of the samurai class’s successful transition to the modern era.

Roka also juggles politics and institutional religion, especially Christianity, and shows his protagonist to be infatuated with both during the era in which Meiji youth in general were exploring them with passion. However, politics and religion are largely pushed to the wayside by Shintarō’s abandonment of them (though he remains faithful to his personal view of Christianity). Instead, we have an exploration of the way the successful individual and the provincial home that formed his core values contribute to the welfare of the nation, as Shintarō chooses journalism as a career, thus keeping a watchful eye out for government abuses in the new Meiji polity. As Roka’s popular novel pointedly illustrates, by the turn of the century political success was largely divested from the novel, as others have noted, but what took its place was something that has not been thoroughly analyzed in previous scholarship: a complex topography in which the nation-state was inserted as a mediating term between city and countryside. This is why the study of space is so crucial to understanding the intertwining of worldly success and narrative fiction.
Struggling Upward continues this story into the final years of the Meiji era. The rich novels taken up in subsequent chapters offer differing agendas and thematic concerns and thus require different itineraries through their fictional worlds. Each chapter will center on a major novel, supplemented with discussions of other literary and nonliterary works. Chapter 1 focuses on Japanese naturalism, with particular emphasis on the fiction of Tayama Katai (1872–1930). Beginning with a discussion of Katai’s novella, Jūemon no saigo (The End of Jūemon, 1902), and continuing with his highly regarded but infrequently discussed novel, Inaka kyōshi (A Country Teacher, 1909), I show how the provincial naturalist text utilizes tropes of personification and revelation in order to rhetorically separate a homogeneous countryside into nature and provincial community. As a textual and rhetorical maneuver, this unmasking and bifurcation of rural Japan allows the natural world to function as a compensatory object for ambitions that must be perpetually deferred due to social inequality as the protagonist languishes in the countryside, longing for the city and the receding promise of success.

Chapter 2 shifts to almost completely unexplored terrain in Japanese literary studies, a genre of fiction called risshi shōsetsu (novels of ambition), associated primarily with Horiuchi Shinsen and popular during the decade after the Russo-Japanese War. Through a close reading of Shinsen’s iconic novel of ambition, the pungently titled Ase no kachi (The Value of Sweat, 1910–1911), I show how the work is part of a larger advertising network of the magazine Seikō, which not only helps sell the fiction but also helps sell success, and how the explicit didactic points in the novel reinforce and are reinforced by similar points being made across the magazine in such a way as to constitute a particular media network. However, I also demonstrate that the representational level of the text partakes of other social discourses and that the novel ends up providing a vision of success in a rapidly industrializing Japan that is a meaningful alternative to the dominant view. By then casting a wider net, I show how the novels that constitute the genre appropriate risshin shusse to effect a symbolic, utopian rebuilding of a beleaguered countryside threatened by the twin forces of urbanization and industrialization.

Chapter 3 turns to Natsume Sōseki’s first loose “trilogy,” Sanshirō (Sanshiro, 1908), Sore kara (And Then, 1909), and Mon (The Gate, 1910). Drawing on the concepts of gift and commodity from anthropology, this chapter shows how Sōseki utilizes the circulation and exchange of
Introduction

objects and money in order to structure the narrative and map out novelistic relations among characters. In tracing these connections in the middle novel of the trilogy, I argue that *Sore kara* explores the ways in which social relations are instrumentalized by *risshin shusse*, while also cumulatively offering up a portrait of the individual’s growing distance from society as a result of his resistance to the ideology of success, especially in its common Darwinian inflection. The alienation of the protagonist from society ultimately implicates the experience of the metropolis, and I show that Sōseki paints a portrait of the city as a space of ennui.

Chapter 4 asks a seemingly simple question that turns out to have a complex answer: Is there a *risshin shusse* for women in Meiji Japan? As I show, the very question was apt to generate anxiety about the unsettling of gender norms with the appearance of educated and upwardly mobile women in the nation’s capital. The chapter brings together Kosugi Tengai’s (1865–1952) melodramatic blockbuster, *Makaze kōikaze* (Demonic Winds, Passionate Winds, 1903), and the contemporaneous scandal journalism about degenerate schoolgirls in order to illustrate how these fictional and nonfictional narratives stage dramas of compromised female virtue as a way to generate and then master social anxiety about the city as a site of female self-fashioning. Such an approach helps us understand the difference between reactions to the upwardly mobile man and his female counterpart and helps explain why female success was ultimately reduced from its original universal promise to become merely marriage to a successful man.

Chapter 5 takes up Japanese-language works about the colonies in order to position the territories acquired through imperial expansion in relation to *risshin shusse*. One of the striking, if unsurprising, elements in Japanese fiction at the turn of the last century is the prevalence of an emerging Japanese empire at its margins. The narrative function of colonial Asia is with few exceptions that of a dumping ground for problematic characters. Drawing on contemporary discourses on emigration, I provide a framework for understanding such marginal characters by showing how colonial Korea and semicolonial Manchuria are coded as the destination for failures in the home islands. After uncovering the basic character types who light out for the colonies in works by Shimazaki Tōson (1872–1943), Natsume Sōseki, and Nakamura Seiko (1884–1974), I turn to a work by Takahama Kyoshi (1874–1959), his impressionistic novel *Chōsen* (Korea, 1911–1912), written at the very end of the Meiji period, in
which the colonies move from the margins of the novel to the main stage of its action. I argue that when viewed from the perspective of the national subject negotiating colonial space, the colonial settler is rendered as a representative, even pioneering national subject, but when the novel is viewed through the lens of *risshin shusse*, the Japanese expatriate functions as the Other of the upwardly mobile national subject in the home islands.

Compensation, utopia, alienation, anxiety, and adventure: these are the major themes that will emerge from our examination of late-Meiji narratives, including heavily studied canonical novels, popular melodramas, and forgotten potboilers. Some offer celebratory portraits of social mobility, just as other novels will savage the very notion of success as a delusion. Most take a critical stance as they explore the collision between the energetic, upwardly mobile subject and the shifting social boundaries that both empower and constrain the individual. For all of their differences, the novels share an engagement with a particular imagining of space: a developing capitalist nation-state and an emerging empire that consists of hierarchical concentric circles stretching from the capital to the colonies, all shaped by the ideology of social mobility.

In this introduction, I have highlighted the way the modern novel can be conceptualized as a literary form subtended by two primary thematic concerns relating to *risshin shusse*: the exploration of the relationship between the individual and the collective and the portrayal of the individual’s negotiation of national and colonial space in his (and sometimes her) effort to move up the social ladder and close the gap between circumstances and desire. If the sketch remains tentative in its details for now, I hope that it makes clear the importance of the discourse on social mobility for the understanding of modern Japan and the modern novel. Another goal is theoretical, directed at a larger audience than just scholars working in Japanese studies: to expand the problematic of desire in modernity to include ambition, success, and self-fashioning. We will begin our exploration in the rural provinces north of Tokyo, the favored venue of the naturalist school of writers.