# TOWARD SUBLIME BEAUTY: POLITICS OF AESTHETICS IN MODERN JAPANESE LITERATURE, 1870-1947

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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The study explores the relationship between modern Japanese literature and the notion of Beauty (*bi*), the element that was purported to be the sole object of artistic exploration in the modern philosophy of art. In the 1870s, literature (*bungaku*) was newly introduced from the West as one of the artistic categories of the fine arts, whose only purpose was to arouse in the beholder the pleasure of Beauty. The study asks what Beauty meant and signified, what roles the pleasure of Beauty played in society, and why the philosophical debates justifying the value of Beauty emerged in parallel with the rise of industrial capitalism and continued to persist well into the 1940s.

By recontextualizing the origin and the development of modern literature in the theoretical framework of aesthetics (*bigaku*)—the branch of scientific study on the perception of Beauty, this study goes back to the basics. It excavates the understudied discourse of Beauty that set forth the fundamental agenda of modern literature.

The study demonstrates that the aesthetic quest for Beauty was a philosophical investigation of the pathway leading to transcendence, a sublime state attaining self-effacement by aligning oneself with the morality of Nature. By claiming disinterestedness in both moral and utilitarian concerns of the sociopolitical domain, aesthetic notion of

Beauty prevented intervention of ethical value systems external to the boundary of art. The study demonstrates that in its place, morality immanent in Nature was invoked as the locus of the good, wherein Beauty and Nature became morally allied and identical. To align oneself with the morality of Nature was to seek the timeless universal human experience within the particularity of the self. Hence, the study argues that Beauty was a politically-charged ideology of aesthetics that aimed at re-uniting the vanishing bond of organismic communities.

The study begins by examining the rise of the discourse of Beauty in the 1870s and traces its development up to the 1940s. It re-analyzes the major literary movements (i.e. Romanticism, Naturalism, and Modernism) from the perspective of modern writers' aesthetic quest for the timeless essence of Nature=Beauty and scrutinizes its shifting meanings and symbols.

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# CHAPTER I
# INTRODUCTION

This study is about modern literature and the notion of Beauty (*bi*). More specifically, it inquires the role Beauty played as literary intellectuals back in the modern period (1868-1945) sought, justified, and promoted the value of aesthetic pleasure. What was the good of Beauty and what relationship did it have with the society at large?

Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916), one of the noted modern writers and the scholar of English literature, had a simple answer to this:

> If you work by reason, you grow rough-edged; if you choose to dip your oar into sentiment's stream, it will sweep you away. Demanding your own way only serves to constrain you. However you look at it, the human world is not an easy place to live. […] So if this best of worlds proves a hard one for you, you must simply do your best to settle in and relax as you can, and make this short life of ours, if only briefly, an easier place in which to make your home. Herein lies the poet's true calling, the artist's vocation. We owe our humble gratitude to all practitioners of the arts, for they mellow the harshness of our human world and enrich the human heart (Natsume 2008, 27–28).

In the famous opening passages of "Grass Pillow" (Kusamakura, 1906), Sōseki portrayed a painter-protagnist, who dwells on his treatises on art. According to this painter, art is something that eases the heart of people, who find the human world a difficult place to live in. Art brings those people to a realm of imagination for a brief moment, where both reason and passion are under control and one's egotistic self-interest suppressed. Art yields such noble effect relative to the harshness of the reality of society. Therefore, even though art is removed from the human world, it is not entirely detached from it.

The image of art Sōseki portrays here is a familiar one. It is typical in the sense that it easily evokes the image of a poetic hermit, who takes refuge in the secluded world to live privately musing on the beauty of a tranquil life. This worldview embracing the ideal of the "other side" or the Buddhist ideal of liberation from all worldly fetters has led many literary historians to identify some aspects of traditional aesthetic penetrating his

modern treatises on art.[1] Sōseki confirmed his stance in the commentary he later published that, he intended nothing in this work, but will have his main goal satisfied, "as long as a beautiful impression lingers" in the audience (Natsume 1957, 34:109). Beauty is all that matters to art. To follow the logic of the painter-protagonist, to appreciate the value of Beauty was to illuminate the downside of the human world. Beauty heals wounded souls. Beauty purifies the mind filled with desire, selfishness, and a purpose to accomplish or gain something for profit. Beauty has the enigmatic power, even though it achieves nothing practical.

As we take a glance at the broad historical spectrum of modern literature, we notice that poetic recluses are not few. Numerous writers retreated from the public domain and engaged in artistic activities from the outside. These are both canonical and non-canonical writers, such as Kitamura Tōkoku, Tayama Katai, Shiga Naoya, and Kawabata Yasunari, to name a few, who nonetheless developed the trajectory of modern literature. This study strives to offer some rationales that direct our attention to see them from a different light—not as recluses, but as rebels against the ethics of the society.

This study, "Toward Sublime Beauty: Politics of Aesthetics in Modern Japanese Literature, 1870-1947," argues that "Beauty" in modern literary discourse functioned as a politically charged notion. The study demonstrates that Beauty encompassed within it an implicit criticism of the forces of modern political and capitalist ethics, which promoted the cults of success and utility, and accelerated social inequality, division, and stratification. The study illustrates that literature (*bungaku*), which was a new artistic category introduced in the 1870s, was promoted in both academic and literary worlds precisely because of its lack of "utility" and "purpose," and for its function to promote the aesthetic pleasure of Beauty alone. To illustrate how proper cultivation of Beauty was deemed essential in fostering civilization, the study analyzes Western aesthetics, a new field of study introduced to Japan, that gave a theoretical justification for the role of art in society. In the context of aesthetics, Beauty did not merely refer to a feeling of delight that, for example, a beautiful flower evokes in us. Beauty referred to something more profound and mysterious in depth, something we associate with the concept of eternity or

[1] See "Natsume Sōseki: The Past as Style Kusamakura" in Rimer, J. Thomas. 2014. *Modern Japanese Fiction and Its Traditions: An Introduction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 38-61.

infinity that provokes awe and reverence. Beauty is what invoked transcendental experience. Based on this specific usage, I capitalize the word to distinguish it from beauty or the beautiful.

**Meiji Reception of Western Aesthetics: Onset of "Literature"**

In 1878, Ernest F. Fenollosa (1853-1908) arrived in Japan to be the first lecturer of the philosophy of art at Tokyo Imperial University. Philosophy of art, or "aesthetics," which came to be called *bigaku* in Japanese was a new study to the Meiji audience, along with new notions, such as the fine arts (*bijitsu*) and literature (*bungaku*), which denoted activities of aesthetic contemplation. In a speech he gave to the members of the Dragon Pond Society (Ryūchikai) in 1882, Fenollosa maintained that art is an autonomous activity pursued for its own sake and to be appreciated for its pleasure, rather than its practicality. The new idea of art introduced from the West was that its main function is to please people's mind and elevate their spirit with Beauty. His thesis severed art from utilitarian function. He explained that while art is disinterested in fulfilling any purpose, Beauty in art bears the good in itself. He stressed this even more firmly in a subsequent lecture he gave at Tokyo Higher Normal School in 1898, this time by focusing on a theory of literature. His main four points can be summarized as follows. First, literature is not utility, and yet it has inherent value; second, literature evokes pleasure only insofar as it is free from any kind of interest and purpose; third, literature does not aim to produce information, and yet it generates some educational knowledge; and fourth, literature does not prompt moral growth, but has integrity that cultivates ethics internal to itself (Marra 1999, 39–41).

Western aesthetics introduced a new discursive space, framework, and vocabulary to create and evaluate literature, along with a rationale that justified the value of aesthetic contemplation. From the very beginning, however, the Meiji Japanese audience's response to the new artistic paradigm was divided. Firstly, the basic premise of the function of Beauty described above provoked great doubt, confusion, and debate. Its presupposed lack of purpose was deemed an obstacle to the national modernization effort, for knowledge was valued based on its utility instrumental to the building of enlightened citizens. The controversy between political leaders and cultural critics over

the value of literature continued well into the 1900s. Secondly, normalization of the new philosophy of art had to confront and resolve an inevitable conflict with the existing categorical designation of literature. Namely, modern critics had to face the challenge of how to justify the value of the new field of literature that, for centuries, had been closely allied with the Confucian study of ethics.

In the pre-Meiji semantic context, literature (*bun*) did not mean fictional writing. It referred to learning or scholarship, which covered the realm of the knowledge of the Way and its application in history and politics. *Bun* was understood as practical instrument in the sense that it was an "intellectual and ethical means for keeping men in good order" (Treat 2018, 12). The new conception of literature (*bungaku*), which became standard in the late 1880s, was in direct opposition to this traditional view of *bun* grounded in practical learning. As such, the challenge that confronted the Meiji aesthetic critic was how to promote and justify the value of modern literature grounded in an aesthetics that was premised on its ontological autonomy and liberation from practical concerns external to itself.

Scholar Nishi Amane (1829-1897), who first introduced aesthetics to Japan in the 1870s after studying at Leiden University in Holland, was quite positive that this paradigm shift would actually benefit society at large, not that he thought Beauty should be contained peripheral to the social domain. Starting from the 1870s, Nishi led a campaign to institute the study of the fine arts in the university educational curriculum. He was quite successful in his campaign. In the public lecture he addressed to the national leaders in 1877, he argued that appreciation of Beauty is what distinguishes humans from savages (Nishi 1999, 27). At the time when the state of civilization was considered in the evolutionist scheme, his argument that the taste for Beauty is a monopoly of humans justified his point that the cultivation of Beauty was necessary for building enlightened citizens. Thanks to Nishi's successful campaigns, foreign scholars like Fenollosa were invited to Japan and the study of the fine arts officially took off by the late 1870s. Importantly, however, Nishi promoted aesthetics not for the sake of defending the independent boundary of art. His initial interest in instituting aesthetics as a proper field of study was more about politics than a love of art. It was that he saw the potential in "the good" in Beauty that, together with morality and laws of administration

in public domains, complement the harmonious order of society.

In the essay "The Theory of Aesthetics" (Bimyōgakusetsu, 1877), which he originally addressed in a public speech, Nishi explained that there are three principles that form the core of enlightened society: aesthetics, morality, and law. He argued that that while they are individually isolated, they are "reciprocally interrelated" in perfecting the order of the society (Nishi 1999, 20). He explained that humans are originally endowed with the nature of these three properties. They respectively allow people to distinguish the beautiful from the ugly (aesthetics), the good from the evil (morality) and the just from the unjust (law). What is special about the property of aesthetics, he argued, is that aesthetic feeling is an "innocent pursuit that does not fall prey to the will in the slightest measure" (35-36). In other words, he insisted that one's judgment of Beauty has no relation to personal interests; aesthetic feeling is free from notions such as rights, gain, loss or win or lose. The implication is that unlike the properties of morality or law, Beauty suspends judgment that sets the subject in a position oppositional to the object in contemplation.

Nishi was aware that such an understanding of Beauty was richly suggestive for Meiji society—at a time when Japan had started to establish a legal system based on standards set by the Western powers and was encouraging economic liberalism based on the ethics of capitalism. He saw aesthetics as a potential venue that resisted those ethical orders of the public domain, which endorsed classification, stratification, and competition for survival and success. Aesthetics was deemed useful as it could exhibit the good in the form of Beauty. It had the potential to restore and cultivate communal solidarity undermined by the properties of morality and law. Having seen that the Confucian ethical system was replaced by the economic and legal systems that predominantly ruled the Meiji social order of his day, Nishi turned to aesthetics, which he thought could resist social division and foster human ability to sympathize with each other. Contrary to the prevailing assumption that one of the hallmarks of "modern literature" lay in the representation of the birth of the individual, who constructs personalized identity through socialization and through liberation from organic community, the new discourse of Beauty posited otherwise that literature celebrates communal bonds over individualism, and laws of nature over laws of society.

Nishi was not the only one who found in aesthetics political implication. The Meiji youths, such as Kitamura Tōkoku (1868-1984) and Kunikida Doppo (1971-1908), who aspired to succeed socially in politics, but later disillusioned by it, started to make forays into literature. They turned to literature, not to seclude themselves from society to live in the isolated world of imagination. Rather, they sought in literature an opportunity to seize power to criticize the harmful influences of social ethics and laws, and to resist various political forces and economic factors that alienated individuals from each other.

The present study sheds light on those modern writers, who enacted the "politics of aesthetics," which in my usage refers to the literary enterprise that attempted to restore communal unity by means of invoking Beauty. The assumption that guides this study is that the politics of aesthetics began in the late nineteenth century, at the time the discourse of Beauty was introduced, and continued well into the 1940s. The study traces major literary movements in the modern period, starting from Romanticism, Naturalism, and lastly Modernism, and demonstrates how they operated and evolved in line with the spirit of the politics of aesthetics. In doing so, I excavate an understudied discourse surrounding Beauty that was pervasive throughout these periods, demonstrating that a group of canonical and noncanonical works, which has been criticized variously for its lack of social dimension and political confrontation, engaged with issues of universal human experience through their symbolic deployment of Beauty.

The overriding question of the study revolves around the notion of Beauty itself. How is it so that Beauty has no practical purpose? And yet it has value internal to itself and hence generates unintended effect of cultivating one's morality from within, as Fenollosa insisted. What evoked the feeling of Beauty? What did Beauty stand for to the modern writers representing each major literary movement? As each chapter will show, the referent of Beauty was by no means consistent. The symbol of Beauty shifted and multiplied over time. Since Beauty referred to the aesthetic feeling of pleasure and not to any definite object, its inscrutability caused tremendous debate and controversy in late nineteenth-century Japan, as I will discuss in Chapter II. As a matter of fact, the Japanese reception of aesthetics began with the attempt to uncover the complex definition of Beauty that, in the West, evolved from the legacy of the of pre-Enlightenment artistic tradition grounded in theology.

While Beauty presupposed no specific object, it was framed in such ways that it oriented itself to refer to Nature, which served as a substitute for the Infinite, or God, in the post-Enlightenment paradigm. Here, let me briefly turn to the context of Western aesthetics in which the notion of Beauty originally emerged. While Beauty itself was a novel idea to the Japanese audience, the way it was imagined in reference to the eternal principles of cosmic order found a strong echo in the Japanese indigenous aesthetic traditions.

**A Brief Look into the History of Philosophy of Art in the West**

The term "aesthetics" derives from the Greek word, *aisthesis*, a word meaning sensation or perception. The term became a label for the study of the artistic experience of Beauty with the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten (1714-62), who wrote the first systematic theory of aesthetics in *Aesthetica* (1750). As his linguistic borrowing from Greek indicates, the philosophy of art had a long history of its own, and the inquiry into art has been very much a part of the intellectual activities of many civilizations. But what distinguished the eighteenth-century study of aesthetics from its tradition of preceding generations was that, for the first time, art itself became the center of philosophical concerns.

As the rich body of classical texts shows, interest in the philosophy of art and Beauty can be traced back to Greece. Plato (427-347 BCE) regarded a group of creative forms, such as tragedy, sculpture, and painting, as skilled craft. He argued that art is *mimesis*, or mere imitation of reality in the celestial realm, criticizing all imitations for failing to depict the "eternal ideal realities," or so-called Idea, which was the absolute truth (Freeland 2002, 31). He considered ordinary material things as imitation of transcendent forms of Idea, and hence saw the value of art as dubious. For Plato, art was not particularly useful in helping humankind to cultivate an ideal state, for art was not strictly truthful. His student Aristotle (384-322 BCE) agreed that art was mere imitation. But he did not believe, unlike Plato, that there was a higher cosmos or the realm of the Idea. Similarly, he did not agree with Plato that art was useless. Aristotle argued that it is man's nature to learn something from imitation, and that the plots of tragedies, for example, could stimulate people's emotions and senses. In case of both Plato or Aristotle,

the mimetic theory of art went hand in hand with how art should serve for a purpose—specifically for instructing citizens with truthful knowledge to build an ideal state.

The classical Greek philosophy of art had a profound impact in Europe in the Middle Ages, from around the fifth to the fifteenth centuries. During this time, and particularly from around the thirteenth century, the Platonic separation of the social and the ideal realms gave way to one grounded in theology. The Platonian metaphysics was succeeded by the worldview of theology, where the cosmos was seen through the mind of the Creator. The source of truth to draw analogy from shifted from the Platonian cosmology to the world where God rules as Creator. Following this shift, the conception of art changed. As Cynthia Freeland writes, Medieval philosophers were not concerned with theorizing art for the sake of art, as their focus was on God. The essential ideas of the time were of religious issues, and the question of art was suppressed for religious ends. For example, the Italian priest Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), who advanced a new theory of Beauty, considered that Beauty was the "transcendental" property of God (Freeland 2002, 38). It was conceived that Beauty was the sign of a well-made design that reflected the mind of God. Eternal reality, or Idea, was now found in the creation of the universe, with its orderly harmony and proportional conformity that reflected God's reason. The artists of this period followed three key principles that were considered to be the essential properties of Beauty: proportion, light, and allegory. Those qualities were meticulously integrated into the forms of art, such as Chartres Cathedral in France designed in Gothic style, where its formal representation alluded symbolically to the illuminous realm of heaven.

Moving to the seventeenth-century Europe, we witness that the conception of Beauty undergoes a dramatic change. To appreciate this moment of paradigm shift, it helps to take a brief look at an experience related by the English critic John Dennis (1658-1734) recounted in *Miscellanies* (1693), a memoir describing his Grand Tour of the Alps. His account revealed that upon crossing the Alps, and seeing all the magnificent landscape along the way, he was filled with emotions mixed with dread, fear, and delight. He wrote that the wilder sight of nature triggered in him a "delightful Horror, a terrible Joy" and was "infinitely pleas'd [sic], I trembled" (quoted in Stacher 2019, 64). His encounter with "raw" nature altered his conception of the universe, an aspect of God's

design unknown to him that the word "the beautiful" could hardly do justice. As a Christian critic and poet, he had been trained to see nature as "nothing but that Rule and Order, and Harmony, which we find in the visible Creation" (quoted in Abrams 1953, 17). But today he is best remembered as the leading critic of the time to discover the aesthetics of "the sublime," a new sensibility to the infinity that inspired awe, terror, and delight. Hence, the conception of Beauty gradually shifted in the late seventeenth through the eighteenth century, as people like Dennis, as well as geologists and astronomers, started to discover unforeseen landscape and the new physical laws of the universe as interrelated results of the development of natural science, colonialism, and leisurely activities. Beauty was no longer equated with the culturally domesticated, well-ordered forms reflecting God's reason. The new sensibility of the sublime became subsumed under Beauty, which came to denote the fecundity of infinite power.

This shift in the notion of Beauty paralleled the decline of the theological framework used to define it. Many interrelated factors prompted art's separation from religion starting in the late seventeenth century, but the major cause was the development of positivist thinking and science. René Descartes (1596-1650) was particularly influential in calling into question the theological worldview. He criticized, from a positivist viewpoint, the notion that the human soul aligns with the outer world of matter due to God's design is dubious. As Charles Taylor writes, Descartes' positivist thinking instead demanded that one must gain "mastery of oneself" using the power of reason, and observe how human bodies and the natural phenomena functioned independently (Taylor 1989, 143–47). The Cartesian science denied the Christian myth of the Creation and proposed instead that humans and the universe are functioning mechanically according to the law of physics.

The development of science had an immense impact on the discourse of art, and the eighteenth century was one of the major turning points. As I have illustrated, there existed a long history of art's philosophy throughout the Western civilization. But it was only in the eighteenth century that art itself was placed at the very center of philosophical concerns. It finally gained its autonomy and saw separation from the realms of politics and religion. Yet, the eighteenth-century philosophers confronted a great challenge as to what art's ideal should be based on. If it had been the eternal reality of Idea or God that

had inspired and gave the audience spiritual experience of transcendence and bonded humans and the universe together, what alternative Beauty could artists in their time find to invoke transcendental experience? The aesthetics philosophers of the eighteenth century solved this by finding the source of Beauty in the innermost depths of one's nature. Instead of imitating classics, one's own intuitive "perception" (i.e. aesthetics) started to play the key role in cognizing the manifestation of the cosmic law in one's own nature.

While Baumgarten first set the study of aesthetics into motion, it was the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who brought aesthetics into the central discipline of the philosophy of art. In Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790), many of the key ideas of modern aesthetics are discussed. In his reworking of the definition of Beauty, he bridges theory and practice, and spiritual experience with the science of pragmatism. In the work, his main focus involved clarifying such key notions as Beauty, the sublime, genius, and judgement of taste. In doing so, Kant suggests that the experience of Beauty is where the congruence of nature and morality is realized in the form of transcendence. In the section entitled "Analytic of the Beautiful," he shows the subjective nature of aesthetic judgment of taste, stressing how the taste for Beauty is deprived of interest, purpose, and concept.

> First moment: *Taste* is the ability to judge an object, or a way of presenting it, by means of a liking or disliking *devoid of all interest*. The object of such a liking is called *beautiful*.
> Second moment: The Beautiful is what is presented without concept as the object of a *universal* liking.
> Third moment: *Beauty* is an object's form of *purposiveness* insofar as it is perceived in the object *without the presentation of a purpose*.
> Fourth moment: *Beautiful* is what without a concept is cognized as the object of *necessary* liking (Kant 1987, 53–95).

Kant argued that Beauty is no more a predetermined object that one can find in the works of classics. Beauty is the product of one's aesthetic judgment of taste. The new definition of Beauty is based on the empirical experience of the subject. This subjective intuition is then translated into a concept of metaphysical universality (i.e. Beauty=nature), which is the intellectual maneuver that the subject undertakes by taking advantage of the infinite

freedom of reasoning. The most striking aspect of his argument is that while judgments of taste are subjective, they nevertheless make a universal claim. Kant argues that if something only pleases him, he ought not to call it beautiful. If the aesthetic satisfaction for him is disinterested, he argues that it implies in his judgment a ground of satisfaction for all:

> He cannot discover such private conditions because his liking is not based on any inclination he has (nor on any other considered interest whatever): rather, the judging person feels completely *free* as regards the liking he accords the object. Hence he will talk about the beautiful as if beauty were a characteristic of the object and the judgment were logical (namely, a cognition of the object through concepts of it), even though in fact the judgment is only aesthetic and refers the object's presentation merely to the subject. He will talk in this way because the judgment does resemble a logical judgment inasmuch as we may presuppose it to be valid for everyone (54).

Kant argues that Beauty is called as such because it lacks private interest, purpose, and given concept. Only under such condition can one claim universal assent, and can anticipate building emotional sympathy with others. He uses this as his rationale for calling Beauty the "symbol of the morally good," for it is only in this respect that it generates pleasure, making one's mind feel "ennobled" (228). In reformulating the philosophy of art, Kant, while holding Christian ideals, separated religious ethics from the notion of Beauty. In speaking of Beauty in the new aesthetic context, he filled the void once occupied by the moral order of God with the autonomous law of nature immanent in each individual. Eighteenth-century aesthetics designated that it is the subject's intuition and the power of reasoning that discovers the sublime in Beauty, and by attuning one's own inner nature to the corresponding rhythm of nature in the universe. To summarize, Beauty shifted from the eternal order of God to the eternal order of Nature, and it existed nowhere but in the mind of the subject, who discovers it through aesthetic judgment.

**Aesthetic Traditions in Japan**

As I have illustrated, the notion of Beauty in the history of Western civilization had been defined by the cosmological models of the universe. While the fact that Beauty

was an empty signifier stimulated critical debates in Japan, some intellectuals, such as Kitamura Tōkoku, readily accepted and domesticated it to launch a politics of aesthetics in the 1890s, as I will discuss in Chapter II. This was precisely because the newly introduced notion of Beauty had a strong ideological proximity to some aspects of Japan's indigenous aesthetic traditions.

To start off, it goes without saying that just as the notion of Beauty in the pre-Enlightenment West had been inseparable from religious ideology, Japanese aesthetic traditions were firmly grounded in Buddhism as well as Taoist and Confucian ethics of "the Way." With the absence of the transcendent deity in the Eastern religious system, the idea of Beauty was historically associated with the eternal principles of creative forces that regulated the law of the universe. In the medieval period (1185-1600), for example, art and religion were inextricably tied to one another. This can be seen in the way that artistic activities were called "the Way of art" (*geidō*). In the concept of Japanese Way of art, the representation of cosmic nature was culturally encoded with religious meanings in accordance with the ethical principles of the Way. Its underlying philosophy was embodied in technical artistic terms such as *aware, yūgen*, *wabi,* and *sabi,* which were conventionalized in certain formal representations so that artistic works conformed to the moral principles of the Way. As Steve Odin writes, those aesthetic values reflected the artistic sensitivity to "the sublime beauty of nature," which was to regard nature as "a continuum of organismic relationships and dynamic processes" of becoming (Odin 1998, 99).

There is a striking similarity with Western artistic traditions in that the source of Beauty was inspired by the principles organizing the laws of the universe. Traditionally in the West, such laws were conceived in terms of "telos" or "God's design." There is a pattern of practice in the Japanese aesthetic tradition that paralleled this idea, in which Beauty was considered as the manifestation of the profound mystery (*yūgen*) of the working of the universe. Unlike the taste for Beauty in the West, which was shaped to symbolize the sublime infinity of God in precise proportion and harmonious order, the medieval Way of art in Japan evoked images of tranquility, vagueness, and transitoriness to embody the indescribable depth of the universe.

Moving to the early modern period (1600-1868), the Way continued to exert

great influence on artistic activities. The representation of Beauty, however, was less static. Indeed, it underwent great changes that reflected the aesthetic sensibilities of the time. For example, the new genre of poetry called *haikai*, which emerged in the late medieval period and flourished in the Edo period, challenged the spiritual worldview of medieval aesthetics. It replaced the aesthetics derived from the sensibilities of the noble classes with aesthetics based on the proclivities of commoners, bringing into the poetic imagination more secular sentiments. Some schools of haikai poetry foregrounded vulgar elements and worked comically against the established images of sacred and religious figures.

In contrast, there existed other schools of poets less concerned with playfulness. Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694) exemplified this group. He fused the rising aesthetic taste of everyday commoners with the existing literary tradition, continuing to refine the Way of art in spiritual ways. He regarded the pursuit of art as the pathway of enlightenment leading to transcendence. To the eyes of modern Japanese writers, such as Tōkoku, and later Modernists Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927) and Yokomitsu Riichi (1898-1947), Bashō was in many ways the pioneer, who had cultivated artistic philosophy that, they found, was surprisingly attuned to the ideology of the newly introduced notion of Beauty. Bashō's philosophy of art cited below attests to this.

> The fundamental spirit that stands at the root of Saigyō's poetry, Sōgi's linked verse, Sesshū's paintings, and Rikyū's practice of tea is one and the same. Those who practice such arts follow the Creative and make the four seasons their friends. What one sees cannot but be cherry blossoms; what one thinks cannot but be the moon. When the shape is not the cherry blossom, one is no more than a barbarian: when the heart is not the cherry blossom, one is no different from an animal. Leave the barbarians, depart from the animals, follow the Creative, return to the Creative! (quoted in Shirane 1998, 260).

The passage appears in *Backpack Notes* (*Oi no kobumi* 1709) written by Bashō's disciple, who recorded his mater's treatises on the art of poetic composition. Bashō teaches that the Way of art reaches perfection under the condition when the following three elements are blended into one: one's heart, the spirit of great artistic predecessors, and the creative force that governs the principles of the universe. All three elements are

united by the common spirit, which is when art attains truth. As Haruo Shirane explains, the dogma of "following the Creative" was closely allied with the "truth (*makoto*) of poetic art," which held that the unification of the above elements would elevate one to the "higher dimension" (258). The Way of art was a pathway leading to self-transcendence, where one realizes the higher reality or truth—that is, one's sameness with other cosmic creations, and vice versa.

To enter into this realm, the poet must cast off self-consciousness. One must leave human self to correspond with the spirit of the cherry blossoms and with all other creations, or one remains as a savage animal. This rhetoric, which suggests that aesthetic feeling is a monopoly of humans, is laden with moralism in that its cultivation is crucial in restoring organic unity and in identifying self in other beings.

In these treatises on the Way of art, we find some strong philosophical imprints of what comes to be introduced as the Western aesthetic. The very close similarity, particularly the principle that identifies the essence of art with cosmic law, was one of the major factors allowing the study of aesthetics to be readily accepted in Japan. But here, let me clarify my argument that the modern discourse of Beauty, which this study traces, needs to be genealogically separated from the indigenous aesthetic tradition that had existed earlier.

The most important difference lies in Beauty's independence from the notion of cosmic laws grounded in Asian political and religious value systems (i.e. The Way of Taosim and Confucianism as well as Buddhist worldview of transience). As we saw in Nishi's awareness of the decline of Confucian values in the Meiji public domain, the realm of art could no longer rely on the vanishing ethical systems of premodern Japan. For the "truth" of art has to be in line with the truthful principle of the cosmic law in a given historical paradigm. In this regard, truth of art has to be grounded in legitimate knowledge of science or popular belief in order to elicit universal assent.

This shift is a turning point that marks the onset of modern "literature" (*bungaku*), which was designated as a field of art that pursues the value of Beauty internal to itself. Hence, the present study begins by first starting to examine the fuzzy period of theoretical reception in the late Meiji nineteenth century, when scholars started to grapple to find the new locus of Beauty. As the histories of art philosophies both in the

West and in Japan have shown, Beauty requires a firm anchor in the all-encompassing energies of the organic realm. Consequently, as each chapter will illustrate, modern writers enacting the politics of aesthetics turned to various areas of scientific and occultist knowledge, such as physics and biology or the spiritualist myth of immortality of souls, in search of the sublime principle of nature as the ultimate symbol of Beauty.

**Chapter Synopses**

Chapter II lays the groundwork of this study by examining Japan's reception of Western aesthetics in the 1870s and the onset of the discourse of Beauty. The histories of modern Japanese literature generally begin by citing Tsubouchi Shōyō's (1859-1935) *The Essence of the Novel* (*Shōsetsu shinzui*, 1885-86), which is known as the first comprehensive theory written on the nature and the role of the novel. His call for works portraying emotions and customs and manners in a realistic manner is best remembered as the turning point in literary paradigms, in which the focus of the novel shifted from didacticism to psychological realism. Overshadowed by this oft-discussed manifesto is Shōyō's assertion that the aim of art is "only to give pleasure and to achieve a transcendent beauty" (Tsubouchi 1885). It is evident in this definition that his new theory of the novels was written under the influence of the aesthetic discourse of Beauty. But his theory left much room to be improved. For he failed to address how to reconcile the realistic depiction of emotions, customs, and manners with the achievement of transcendent beauty. Shōyō's theory, which called for the autonomy of literature, exemplified ambitious literary enterprise that was taking place in the Meiji cultural circle. Yet, the reception of Western aesthetics did not immediately yield any consistent literary theories. Rather than seeing Shōyō's call for psychological realism as the new guiding principle that set modern literature in motion, this chapter focuses on the notion of Beauty, which I argue, was the main contested ideology that promoted literature's autonomy with its own moral framework.

As I reconsider the driving force behind the onset of modern literature in light of aesthetics, this chapter explores some key literary issues and theories that revolved around the emergent discourse of Beauty in the late nineteenth century. After giving a broader picture of the Meiji theoretical landscape, I then shift attention to examine the

Romantic writer Kitamura Tōkoku's literary enterprise, as he pioneered the politics of aesthetics in revolt against the Meiji social ethics. I treat Tōkoku as one of the first Meiji alienated intellectuals, who recognized the potential that Beauty had in reuniting the organic bond of the natural community, and as the first one to succeed in formulating a viable literary theory. In unpacking his series of theories, I demonstrate that he invoked the notion of life (*seimei*) as the referent of sublime Beauty, presenting it as the universal property of nature by drawing on various sources of knowledge, such as then popular Christianity and the scientific philosophy of transcendence promoted by the Romantic writer Ralph Waldo Emerson.

In Chapter III, I continue to examine writings that represent the period of Japanese Romanticism, where natural landscape played a key role in Beauty's manifestation. Unlike the previous chapter, where literary debates revolved around literary circles, this chapter explores how literary theories on Beauty were actualized in works of fiction using "symbolic" representations, while continuing to trace the discourse of Beauty. The center of examination is Kunikida Doppo (1871-1908) and two of his works of fiction, which respectively unfold against the backdrop of natural landscape. The first of these is Doppo's seminal work "Musashino" (Musashino, 1898), set in the suburb of Tokyo and written as he strolled about his living neighborhood. The other is "The Shores of the Sorachi River" (Sorachigawa no kishibe, 1902), set in the wild landscape of Hokkaido and written based on Doppo's brief experience participating in the colonial development.

Doppo is given special credit in the study of histories of modern Japanese literature, often discussed in the context of "the discovery of interiority."[2] In portraying the suburban landscape, Doppo revealed his aesthetic taste that parted from traditional aesthetic sensibility, and is hence reckoned as one of the first modern writers to privilege subjectivity in making sense of the world. As regards Doppo, my analysis similarly starts from the oft-discussed issue of burgeoning subjectivity. But the guiding question of the chapter is why he discovered his interiority in relation to the natural landscape. The

[2] The term "the discovery of interiority" appears in Karatani Kōjin's influential work *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (1993) and gained currency in the secondary literature. For his discussion on Doppo, see Karatani, Kōjin. 1993. *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*. Durham: Duke University Press. 65-75.

chapter argues that while Doppo was modern in the sense that he privileged his own power of judgment, his awareness of self-identity was filtered through a Christian perception of the world. His interaction with the natural world was essentially guided by his knowledge that human nature had organic and spiritual ties to the universe and its Creator.

By taking account of Doppo's religious faith, I demonstrate that his search for sublime Beauty in landscape reflected his desire for dissolution of the self in Nature, touching on influences he received from writers such as Wordsworth and Turgenev, who represented religious sentiment of immortality in their works. In doing so, I argue that his politics of aesthetics reflected the popular energy of the turn of the century, where people longed for transcendental experience. In order to highlight how Doppo's politics of aesthetics engaged with a broad public interest in the transcendence of the human soul, I situate his literary enterprise in the contemporary historical context, where popular religions and spiritualism were in vogue.

Moving to Chapter IV, the locus of Beauty shifts from the outer world to human interiority, where timeless laws of organisms are discovered in the biological function of "heredity." This chapter focuses on the movement of Japanese Naturalism, which started in the 1900s and maintained its dominant status until the early 1920s. In my analysis, I demonstrate how the movement of Japanese Naturalism was set forth by the fusion of science and aesthetics.

The main literary theme of Naturalism, which originated in France, was to study how determinant factors of heredity impact human behaviors. As a form of scientific study conducted in literature, the Naturalist motto was to observe human behavior in a detached manner and find and represent universal human experience using the data collected from social surroundings. It has been commonly pointed out, however, that "Japanese" Naturalism deviated from the precepts of French Naturalism. The difference was pronounced in regards to Japanese writers' tendency to limit the focus of observation to one's personal life, moving toward incorporating autobiographical elements in fiction. Literary historians have assessed this inward turn of literature negatively, where self-consciousness was privileged over any sense of confrontation between society and individual. And as Edward Fowler rightly observes, the trend toward such privatization

of literature reaching its apex in the 1900s had been prepared by writers such as Tōkoku and Doppo (Fowler 1998, 104).

My reassessment of Naturalist writers regards this inward turn as the marker of their engagement with the politics of aesthetics. I argue that they privileged subjectivity because it was the only cognitive tool available in intuiting the revelation of sublime Beauty, which was hidden in the depth of their own interior. To examine one's inner instinct was the pathway leading to transcendence, as it was where one's particular individual experience ascended to take on a universal meaning.

I start the chapter by looking first at the essay "A Debate on the Aesthetic Life" (Biteki seikatsu o ronzu, 1901) written by Takayama Chogyū (1871-1902), a literary critic and scholar of aesthetics. He introduced the influential notion of "aesthetic life," which referred to the aesthetic contemplation of instinct. He played a crucial role in setting the timeless essence of instinct as the referent of Beauty. The chapter traces how the Naturalist discourse of Beauty revolved around the human instinct of sexual desire, and moves on to analyze Tayama Katai's (1872-1930) major work *The Quilt* (*Futon*, 1907). When writers like Chogyū and Katai turned to Beauty, they did so for latent political reasons, as it was in the early 1900s that literature and politics fought severely over power in eliciting ideological support from the Meiji youth. To underscore the political implications of the Naturalist recourse to Beauty, I discuss how writers of the time justified and promoted the "impractical" value of literature for so-called "anguished youth" (*hanmon seinen*), who were disinterested in public services and were searching instead for the higher meaning of life.

Chapter V moves to the period of literary Modernism. Unlike Romanticism and Naturalism, where literary movements developed more or less collectively under the single referent of Beauty respectively, literary Modernism encompassed various artistic schools and politically oriented factions. This naturally precludes an assumption that there was a single definite referent of Beauty that guided the movement into one direction. The chapter illustrates that during this period, what counted as the referent of Beauty multiplied in number and co-existed side by side, which can be seen in the diversification of genres and artistic schools that characterizes the Modernist movement itself.

This implies that by this time, people's knowledge about Nature varied greatly. The notion of Nature was so diverse in sources (e.g. science, philosophy, or popular myth) that writers could freely reason and associate aesthetic feelings of pleasure with any concept of Nature that best exteriorized their taste. To give an example, it is well known that Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886-1965) persistently thematized masochistic pleasure in many of his works. He justified his obsession with such "Beauty" and was willing to share its pleasure with all his readers, for he was certain from his contact with Freudian psychology that masochism is a universal human experience. If we look over the broad cultural landscape of literary Modernism, however, it is clear that not all Modernist writers pursued the kind of Beauty=Nature formula that Tanizaki found ideal. Many writers had their own taste for Beauty and sought self-transcendence in various different communal footings imaginable. For example, the members of the Japan Romantic School (1935-38), who supported fascism, turned to a myth and invoked the timeless notion of ethnic blood as their referent of Beauty=Nature.

As all this implies, the Modernist period witnessed a great deal of aesthetic conflict in taste. This conflict can be seen in the different genres and artistic factions that developed over the course of Modernist movement, such as the New Sensationalist School, proletarian writers, the school of aestheticism, and the Japan Romantic School, and more. That these ideologically diverse and mutually hostile groups were all subsumed under the single artistic category makes it difficult to discuss literary Modernism in any holistic manner. For this reason, the chapter first establishes the argument that the overarching agenda of literary Modernism, as an "artistic" movement, was that it strove to seek transcendence through invocation of Beauty. I argue that all literary factions involved in the movement strove to restore the natural bonds of organic community; and yet they pursued different ideals of Beauty=Nature from their respective ideological standpoints.

After providing a broader picture of the movement, the chapter narrows down the focus of analysis to the notion of Beauty of three Modernist writers, who best represented the politics of aesthetics in the spirit of art for art's sake. One of them is Tanizaki, whose perception of Beauty was grounded in modern science, as I mentioned above. I examine his short fiction "The Tattooer" (Shisei, 1910) and illustrate that he

continued to explore the depth of nature for which the Japanese Naturalists paved the way. He idealized what he called "eternal woman" (*eien no josei*), who assumed the benevolent and awe-provoking aura reminiscent of the Virgin Mary. Seeing that all men universally possess the desire to be terrorized into submission before such a sacred idol, in his fiction, Tanizaki *artificially* creates and transforms a female figure into the image of the "eternal woman," who triggers transcendental experience in the male protagonist. Tanizaki hence celebrates the timeless aspect of human desire that remains unchanged over time as much as the power of culture man has in manipulating that very nature to satisfy the primordial human desire.

The other two Modernist writers that I examine, Yokomitsu Riichi (1898-1947) and Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972), both originally started as members of the New Sensationalist School. Indeed, Literary Modernism in Japan is said to have officially started with the launch of the New Sensationalist School in 1924. It derived new artistic inspiration from the rebirth and growth of metropolises in the years following the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake. Accordingly, Modernist elements are commonly associated with their interest in the vital energy and the animating spectacle of the world of machines and technology, which cultivated new aesthetic sensibilities to light, sound, and the fast tempo of speed.

The chapter demonstrates, however, that from the very onset, Yokomitsu and Kawabata held radically different ideals of Beauty. There has been little scholarly scrutiny of the multiplicity of aesthetic tastes that characterized the varying artistic agendas of New Sensationalists. If Yokomitsu was more drawn to finding a way in which the twentieth-century humans could establish an organic relationship with the *material* surroundings, Kawabata was more concerned with restoring the *spiritual* bond of human beings with all living organisms. By examining their different aesthetic theories of Beauty, the chapter demonstrates how they respectively privileged their own epistemological truth in an attempt to reunite human beings with the surrounding universe. I examine Yokomitsu's essay "The Sensationalist Movement: The Sensationalist Movement and the Paradox of Criticizing Works Addressing Sensation" (Kankaku katsudō—Kankaku katsudō to kankakuteki sakubutsu nitaisuru hinan eno gyakusetsu, 1925), which is widely considered as the theoretical expression of New

Sensationalism. I will compare this with a series of literary treatises by Kawabata to highlight how the two writers belonging to the same School could nonetheless envisioned Beauty very differently.

In the final section, I examine Kawabata's *Snow Country* (1935-47), which unfolds in a remote mountain village. The work best exemplifies his aesthetic attempt to invoke transcendental experience, by focusing on a man and his communion with the immortal spirit of nature. Although the work has been commonly criticized for partaking in a nationalist discourse that idealizes ethnic essentialism and Japan's mythic past, the chapter argues instead that Kawabata sought Beauty in the belief in the immortality of the souls. While one's present life is mortal and transient, Kawabata believed, human souls live on permanently, as they transmigrate to other forms of life under the law of the cycle of birth and rebirth. Based on religious and popular mythic beliefs he found in both the West and the East, Kawabata held that all organisms in the universe possess the same soul and are indistinct in essence, echoing what Romantics like Tōkoku had earlier proposed in their politics of aesthetics. The chapter demonstrates how Kawabata's particular aesthetic ambition was shaped after experiencing the earthquake of 1923, when he launched his literary enterprise by announcing his intention to deliver salvation to the people through the power of Beauty.

## CHAPTER II
## THE DAWN OF THE CULT OF BEAUTY: KITAMURA TŌKOKU AND THE AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY OF TRANSCENDENCE

### Introduction

In the essay entitled "My View of Meiji Literature" (Meiji bungaku shikotsu, 1893), writer Kitamura Tōkoku (1868-1894) set forth a definition of literature that was new to the Meiji literary world. In the essay, he succinctly argued that "Literature is one kind of enterprise that studies humanity and the eternal" (Kitamura 1950a, 2:163). Every individual life, he argued, is transient and mortal in body, but is immortal and infinite in soul. He argued that it is nature that bestows moral order on human beings, explaining that all human begins are equally and universally subject to the natural fate of birth and death. Calling this timeless law of nature, the "true Beauty of the universe," he argued that literature is concerned with exploring the eternal "moral life" inscribed in human souls, an element that he termed "the sublime (*saburaimu*) Beauty" (154).

Tōkoku's discussion of the role of literature is important, especially in the contemporary Meiji cultural context when the new notion of "literature," as we understand it today as one category of fine arts, was newly introduced from the West. Under the new scheme of fine arts, the sole purpose of literature was to proffer the aesthetic pleasure of Beauty without any concern over utility or purpose. The pleasure of Beauty, however, was not a mere aesthetic contemplation that lacked any moral benefit, as Tōkoku's argument suggests. Beauty was closely allied with morality, as Beauty, he contended, is the revelation of the lasting law of nature that all human beings equally inherit and possess. His discussion of the role of Beauty in literature was a part of a larger Meiji cultural efforts to establish literature as an independent field of art freed from politics and history, the two public domains that had traditionally remained inseparable from literature under the preceding literary paradigms. For Tōkoku, literature could no longer be a tool utilized for political purpose to indoctrinate moral virtue in accordance with the value systems of Confucianism; nor could literature be an educational medium used to distinguish the just and the unjust, or right from wrong, through the study of historical events. Instead of subordinating literature to the external moral systems, he

defended the autonomous value of literature by advocating Beauty as an alternative moral source that belonged to the realm of art. Tōkoku posited that the aesthetic contemplation of Beauty is a pathway leading to self-transcendence, and that each individual has access to the moral source immanent in the self—in the unconscious region called human nature. The aesthetic contemplation of Beauty, then, was a subjective experience that one could have privately, and yet one that also claimed universal assent, as Beauty was nothing but the realization that one is attuned to the moral order of nature.

The aim of this chapter is to shed light on the understudied legacy of Tōkoku's literary theories on Beauty, which found a lasting echo in the major literary movements of the modern period. Despite this, he has been treated marginally in the secondary literature on Meiji literary theory, often cited as one of the principal writers that prompted the inward turn of literature, one that avoided social confrontation.[3] But his retreat to human interiority and immersion in nature, which has often been identified with Japan's premodern artistic traditions, was by no means a withdrawal into the native art rooted in Zen Buddhism, nor did it indicate any lack of interest in social affairs. On the contrary, he held that the aesthetic contemplation of Beauty was a means to re-unite isolated individuals like himself with the surrounding world through the universally common property of nature, which had been curtailed in a new capitalist society based on competition, inequality, and division.

Like many of the Meiji youth in his generation, Tōkoku started out as an activist interested in the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement (Jiyūminken undō) and pursued career success in the field of politics. By the 1880s, however, he had abandoned his career goal, having become disillusioned with government policies that distributed power unequally and squelched the right of individuals to intervene in state affairs. Writing in 1887 in a letter to his future wife Ishizaka Minako, he declared that he had "completely fallen from the ladder of ambition" and instead resolved to "lead political movements through the command of my brush" (Kitamura 1955, 3:168). As his lofty aspiration

[3] See for example, Fowler, Edward. 1998. *The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishōsetsu in Early Twentieth-Century Japanes*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 78 and Harootunian, Harry D. 1999. "Between Politics and Culture: Authority and Ambiguities of Intellectual Choice in Imperial Japan." In *Japan in Crisis: Essays on Taishō Democracy*, edited by Bernard S. Silberman, 110–55. Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press.

evinces, he saw artistic enterprise as something just as socially significant and engaging as politics. To properly understand his "politics of aesthetics," a term I use in referring to the writer's desire to restore the source of transcendence through the invocation of eternal Beauty=nature, it is crucial to understand that the quest for Beauty was art's rebellion against modernity—that is, against its cults of rationalism, utilitarianism, and materialism, which had propelled the spread of egocentric concerns and the acceleration of social division. The goal of this chapter is to recontextualize Tōkoku's literary theory in the context of the newly introduced study of Western aesthetics, which he drew on heavily in setting forth the agenda of the role of literature in his age. In order to highlight his distinctive position among other oft-discussed Meiji literary theorists, I situate him in a broader cultural context centered around the emergent discourse of Beauty in the late nineteenth century. Hence, I will begin the chapter by sketching out the process of Japanese reception and domestication of Western aesthetics from the 1870s, examining the major literary theories that prevailed and the mainstream debates that developed over the definition of Beauty—before they reached theoretical stagnation. I will then move on to examine Tōkoku's literary career and essays, focusing on the influences he received from Christianity and from Emerson's philosophy of transcendence, as well as the impact of Edo *haikai* poet Bashō and his poetry.

**Modern Aesthetics: Nature as Beauty**

Exploration of aesthetic study in Japan dates back to the 1870s, when the scholar Nishi Amane (1829-1897) began to establish a philosophy of art by introducing modern Western aesthetics.[4] At this initial stage, Nishi played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of modern aesthetics by introducing the idea that art is an activity pursued for its own sake. In 1872, the new term "*bijutsu*" was coined as an equivalent of the English term "fine art." This term denoted the autonomous value of art, distinguished from arts and crafts (e.g. *gigei* and *kōgei*) that emphasized skills and their utility.[5] Included in the

[4] On Nishi's roles, I consulted Marra, Michael F. 1999. *Modern Japanese Aesthetics: A Reader*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 1-37.

[5] See Marra, Michael F. 2001. *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 4-8.

category of *bijitsu* were prose and poetry, among others, which became the objects of aesthetic contemplation.[6] In accordance with this change, slightly later in the late 1880s, "*bi*" became the standard Japanese translation to discuss Beauty in the philosophical context of art, in place of native terms such as
*birei* and *utsukushisa,* which had been previously used as a translation of Beauty.

The major role Nishi played was to introduce the advanced study of Western aesthetics to his audience, the Meiji emperor and the leading members of the Meiji government, and to convince them to recognize the benefit of artistic education in fostering the healthy spirit of the nation. In one of his earliest works *The Theory of Aesthetics* (*Bimyōgaku setsu*, 1877), which he addressed to these leaders, he maintained that aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that is related to fine arts and is committed to investigating its underlying principles. To explain why aesthetics is worthy of proper education, he started off by proclaiming that the desire for Beauty is a part of human nature. According to him, human nature is originally endowed with the properties of morality, justice, and aesthetics. While morality and justice enabled people to distinguish the good from the evil and the just from the unjust, aesthetics enable them to discern between beauty and ugliness. While the nature of morality and justice is essential to the formation of human society from the onset, the property of aesthetics, he argues, develops only after the human societies have reached civilized status (Nishi 1999, 26–28). It follows that the human awakening to Beauty is a sign that human society has moved from the stage of savagery to that of civilization.

No sooner did the discourse of Beauty enter Japan than the idea of Beauty as a marker of civilization took root. As Saeki Junko has discussed, Tsubouchi Shōyō employed the same rhetoric linking human nature and aesthetics in his *The Essence of the Novel*, where he defined the novel as one category of fine art. Arguing that no barbarians could take pleasure in aesthetic feelings, Shōyō wrote that "Aesthetic feelings are truly lofty emotions. Unless one belongs to a country that opens up to culture and civilization, such emotions will never exist" (quoted in Saeki 2001, 27). Since the cultivation of an enlightened nation was a major agenda of Japan at the time, the notion of Beauty as proof

[6] The others were painting, sculpture, engraving, architecture, music, Chinese calligraphy, dance, and drama.

of civilization was particularly appealing: it confirmed the central role of aesthetics in the accomplishment of that national mission.

Despite this, the campaign to establish the status of aesthetics faced tremendous difficulty because the idea of Beauty lacked a reference to, or a pragmatic use within the realm of politics. Nishi's definition of Beauty is a case in point, where he emphasized the potential that Beauty has to ennoble the human spirit, and yet for no specific goal. In the same essay, he defines Beauty as that which "elevates the human world into a lofty realm," and asserts simultaneously that "it is not the purpose of the fine arts to have a direct bearing on policies" (Nishi 1999, 37). As we can see in his conflicting descriptions of Beauty—of its effect of uplifting one's spirit and the lack of purpose to serve any ideology of policies, the autonomy of Beauty emerged as a highly elusive concept that lacked both a referent and a specific moral purpose that could reinforce the good. This was apparently a problem from an educational viewpoint. At the time when modernization was the major goal of the country, the inclusion of aesthetics in the developing field of modern education depended on its "pragmatic" use in facilitating the enlightenment of the people. As a result, Nishi had to first reconcile the two opposing agendas between the aesthetic premise of the autonomy of fine art with the pragmatic benefit of a form of knowledge that, by default, lacks utilitarian value.

This paradox was in fact at the root of the modern aesthetic notion of Beauty imported from the West. In the history of Western aesthetics, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) played a significant role in divorcing Beauty from ethical and utilitarian concerns. Kant set forth many of the key ideas of modern aesthetics in his *Critique of Judgment* (1780), which had an immense influence on the formation of new notions of art and the discourse of Beauty in Japan. In one noted section of his work, entitled "Analytic of the Beautiful," Kant argued that Beauty as a reference to the feeling of "pleasure," "*cannot be other than subjective* (Kant 1987, 44). He then went on to maintain that any judgment of taste, accompanied with the consciousness of practical use and interest, cannot be called Beauty, as aesthetic pleasures is independent of all interests. He held that beautiful things do not serve ordinary human purposes that we tend to think in terms of utility. For example, the beautiful view of a river pleases us, but not because we want to drink its water or to wash something in it. His way of explaining Beauty was to say that something

beautiful has "purposiveness without a purpose" (73). The river itself might have its own purpose (i.e. to flow into the oceans), but that is not why it makes the subject feel it beautiful. Something about its formal aspects—such as the way it flows regularly into one direction or its shape and array of colors—prompts the subject to feel that it is "right." He held that the subject responds to the object's form and rightness of its design, which satisfies one's senses, even though one is not evaluating its purpose.

Herein lies the moral dimension implicit in the doctrine of "purposiveness without a purpose." For, to be able to find "rightness" in the ways things are—or in the way the universe is designed, is to affirm the beneficent plan of its Creator. To be able to cognize Beauty in the natural order of the universe, independent of, and even in defiance of the notion of interest, is to appreciate the moral purpose of the universe in and of itself. Beauty hence brings about moral effect, which pertains to one's realization that nature itself is purposive (i.e. designed for certain ends) and that it is the source the good. To put this differently, the value of Beauty does not need to be judged on the basis of criteria external to itself. Beauty can be justified as a legitimate pursuit that brings about moral cultivation internally through one's inquiry into the morality of nature, and hence it operates separately from the norms of utilitarian ethics. This explains why, as Nishi stated earlier, Beauty ennobles one's soul, but does not serve the purposes of policymaking. This presupposition is viable only because aesthetic judgment is geared toward aligning one's sense of morality with the law of nature, and not with the ethics of the public spheres, which are designed to satisfy certain practical ends.

That being said, what Nishi confronted was the challenge as to where to find the ultimate locus of Beauty. Initially, Nish had a good reason to think that aesthetics could be useful in the instruction of ethics in the Meiji period, after seeing that the Confucian moral framework had started to lose its authority in his time. As a scholar trained in the Confucian learning, he was keenly aware that some holistic framework of nature, one that could unite and regulates the interrelated spheres of family, state, and the universe under a uniform doctrine—needed to be re-instituted. Traditionally, Confucian ethics had explained human nature by drawing analogical patterns with the Way of Heaven. But Nishi could no longer subscribe to the Confucian notion of nature, for to his modern eye, to explain natural phenomena according "to the pattern of heaven" was scientifically

groundless, and lacked universal validity (discussed in Marra 1999, 20). What the discourse of Beauty demanded, then, was a new notion of nature grounded in the modern knowledge of science. As Beauty was closely allied with nature, the aesthetic theory of Beauty needed to be framed in line with the morality of nature.

In fact, not many literary critics correctly addressed the cardinal notion of nature in their debates on Beauty. This was also the case with Shōyō's reputed essay, *The Essence of Novel*. The reason I stress the importance of Tōkoku's literary theory over Shōyō's is that Tōkoku successfully formulated a viable theory for the first time, after Shōyō failed to pin down what Beauty stood for. As I noted earlier, Shōyō echoed Nishi in *The Essence of Novel* that aesthetic feeling is a sign of civilization, whose property of nature must be cultivated by means of fine art. If Nishi's primary role had been to establish the foundation of aesthetics by introducing the use of beauty in the realm of modern education, Shōyō narrowed down his focus to literature and attempted to elevate its autonomous value and status as serious art. Consequently, he turned to "Beauty," because it was the only rationale that he could employ to differentiate literature from other forms of knowledge. In his essay, Shōyō discussed the role of art by citing the aesthetic theories of Ōuchi Seiran (1845-1918), a Buddhist monk and art critic, and Earnest F. Fenollosa (1853-1908), the first professor to teach philosophy of art at Tokyo Imperial University. In doing so, he stressed the liberation of art from all practical purposes and maintained that pleasure represented its sole essence:

> As art in itself has no practical use, one expects its "aims" to be only to give pleasure and to achieve a transcendent beauty. Its perfection may inspire the beholder to forget greed and cruelty, and rejoice instead in nobler thoughts, but this to me is a natural side-effect rather than an "aim" of art. It is, so to speak, a chance product rather than an end in itself. Were it not so, the artists of the world, painters and sculptors alike, would have to work with ideas restricted by the bounds of a preconceived matrix of "human development."…It follows that art, different by nature from practical crafts, should never be created with predetermined controls. To arouse in the beholder by its sublime beauty emotions so profound that his spirit seems involuntarily to soar—that is its proper objective, and that is what makes it art (Tsubouchi 1885).

Shōyō's definition of art echoes that of Nishi's. In the passage above, he argues that the sole role of art is nothing but to give pleasure. But importantly, he does not then continue

on to explain how that "transcendent beauty" can be achieved. Instead of dwelling on what he means by Beauty, he rather goes on instead to give instruction on how to create a piece of work:

> The novelist, then, should concentrate on psychological realism. Once his characters make their appearance in the story, he should think of them as living people. In speaking of their feelings, he should stand by as an onlooker and describe things as they really are, rather than superimposing his own ideas of emotion, good or bad, upon them.[7]

This oft-cited passage became a canonical point of reference in speaking of the origin of modern literature, particularly because it highlights the way in which Shōyō precluded moral concerns from artistic creation. The passage illustrates Shōyō's disinterest in constructing a story involving moral judgments, and rather encourages novelists to be a detached observers and record the surroundings as they naturally unfold. Though this passage is often celebrated, it remained more confusing than inspiring for some contemporary readers. How, they asked, did this emphasis on the realistic depiction of the surroundings relate to the invocation of transcendent Beauty, which Shōyō described as the ultimate purpose of art.[8] In other words, despite his argument that what matters to art is the pleasure of Beauty, he offered on no objective referent that could invoke transcendence is discussed. We may here recall that Beauty bans intervention of any external ideology; because it is premised on the idea that each individual is born with the natural moral properties to judge goodness, justice, and beauty. While the judgment of Beauty is subjective, the pleasure of Beauty does not occur out of nowhere; it occurs through the subject's contact with a certain object. Because Shōyō sidestepped the discussion of a referent for Beauty, he failed to present a clear literary guideline for his audience.

It is well known that Shōyō's failure to address the nature of Beauty (or what

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Scholar of aesthetics, Takayama Chogyū (1871-1902) criticized in 1898 that while Shōyō prompted the "discourse of literature's independence," his theory only promoted "realism" and invited the downfall of the literary world of his time. See "The Time to Renovate Novels" (Shōsetsu kaikaku no toki, 1898) in Takayama, Chogyū. 1926. *Chogyū Zenshū*. Vol. 2. Tokyo: Hakubunkan. 433-45.

was commonly called Idea or Ideal [*myōsō*] at the time) came under attack, most notably by Futabatei Shimei (1864-1909) and Mori Ōgai (1862-1922). Unlike Shōyō, who eventually denounced the inscrutability of the Ideal of Beauty in preference for objective realism, both Futabatei and Ōgai insisted on the need of Ideal in setting the goal of literature. For example, Futabatei was quick to criticize and respond to Shōyō's theory in his essay, "General Theory of the Novel" (Shōsetsu sōron, 1886), arguing that the goal of novel is to depict the "truth of human feelings" as opposed to mere "human feeling" (Suzuki 1997, 22). While the difference might seem trivial, his insertion of "truth" alluded to the definitive order of nature. He explained that Ideal exists in the "nature of the universe" and that artists must grasp this invisible phenomenon through inspiration (Hasegawa 1938, 5:6).[9] In this context, he regarded Ideal as the property of the heaven (*tenka no i* 天下の意), which is something that "develops in accordance with the law of nature" (6).

The same rhetoric was employed by Ōgai, who argued in "Non-Ideals of the Waseda Bungaku" (Waseda Bungaku no botsu-risō, 1891) that art must represent Ideal.[10] The controversy between the two is known as the "the dispute on hidden ideals" (*botsurisō ron*), and it lasted for over a year. In his essay, Ōgai touched on the workings of so-called inspiration (*shinrai* 神来) and explained the process through which artists find Ideal. He wrote that the "inspiration" of artists happens when they are in a state of "unconsciousness," just as "the the Creative emerges from Tai Chi (*taikyoku* 太極) without any artificial intervention" (Mori 1923, 396). His argument here echoes that of Futabatei, except that his notion of cosmic law is formulated in the Confucian teminology. According to Ōgai, Ideal is not controllable with human consciousness, as it is not something intellect can manipulate. The Ideal springs up spontaneously in the mind of artists, as it emulates the workings of heavenly laws, which work autonomously. For both Futabatei and Ōgai, Ideal is hidden in this heavenly law of nature, in the unconscious realm separated from the the boundary of intellect. Ōgai and Futabatei both

[9] Futabatei drew the notion of ideal (*i* 意) from Russian literary critic Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky (1811-1848). He described ideal as something hidden or deformed in the façade of Form and in various phenomena.

[10] Ōgai was influenced much from German philosopher Eduard von Hartmann and his aesthetic idealism.

regarded this nature as something that is designed purposefully as dictated by the heavenly power, and that it is self-regulative, and that it operates autonomously in all creation including human beings. It can be said that by supporting Idealism, Futabatei and Ōgai foregrounnded the philosophy of transcendence underlying the notion of Beauty. By arguing that Ideal is immanent in all creations, they encouraged writers to turn their eyes inwardly to nature, as this was where Beauty and morality resided.

Despite the conviction behind these aesthetic theories, however, it is questionable, whether they actually culminated in any work of fiction, or if the authors themselves had their own aesthetic frameworks in mind when they wrote *The Drifting Cloud* (*Ukigumo,* 1887-1889) and *The Dancing Girl* (*Maihime,* 1890), respectively. These works, which are said to have represented the budding ego of modern man, both portrayed male protagonists who strove to climb the social ladder fueled by "the good" inscribed in the cult of success, whose ideology was then called into question as they were tempted by the more primordial passion for love. The protagonists indeed occillates between the pursuit of success and the pursuit of love, but neither of them chooses to orient themselves to the Ideal of Beauty, which is disinterested in wordly passions that the two men are obsessed with. Natural surroundings are nowhere to be found in these works, where centerstage is set in urban space and confined to a small study room or an attic as if to indicate the protagonists' alienation from the rest of the world.

Why is this gaping disjuncture between theory and practice so prominent? For one thing, I would suggest that it derived from the imperatives of the academic context of the time, when Beauty had to be first and foremost posited as an urgent national goal of enlightenment. Japanese scholars consequently standardized the discourse of Western aesthetics as the model to imitate without giving the notion of Beauty much deliberation or establishing consensus as to how to frame its Ideal. The introduction of theory was not immediately followed by its effective domestication, and Japanese literati rather discarded the inscrutability of Beauty altogether (Shōyō) or failed to further explain, scientifically, why the rule of analogy drawn between human nature and the surrounding universe could still hold up in their time (Futabatei, and Ōgai). Another important factor—though this is more speculative—is that these canonized writers were, as it were, more men of success than men with no decent career standing. Given their established

status not only as writers, but also as scholars in higher acadmic institutions (a medical officer in the Army in case of Ōgai), it is difficult to imagine that they did not embrace the ideology of social advancement. It is less likely that they would have willingly pursued transcendence by abandoning their status, fame, and self-esteem in want of some kind of spiritual enlightenment that negated will or desire. In other words, these mainstream theorists were relatively privileged to the extent that Beauty was a faddish theory that added scholarly grounding to the field of literature, not an ideologically-charged device that was capable of criticizing the unnaturalness of "the good" normalized in the Meiji discourse of progress.

I suggest that it was those alienated intellectuals, who were not only politically defeated, but were cut off from access to power that espoused the cult of beauty, turnining its potential for transcendence into an aestheitc means of politics. I therefore single out Tōkoku, who plays this adversary role to seek salvation through his philosophical investigation of transcendence via Beauty. In what follows, I trace his theory of sublime Beauty, which kept developing over the course of two years. In the first section I will look at the influence of Christiany, followed by his encounter with Emerson's philosophy of Transcendence, which gave him a scientific rationale for the analogy between human nature and the natural world.

**The Sublime Beauty: Christianity and the Notion of the Eternal**

Tōkoku is perhaps best remembered as the first Japanese writer to introduce the Platonic ideal of love (*ren'ai*) in the essay "The World-Weary Poets and Woman" (Ensei shika to josei, 1892), which he published for the *Magazine for Women's Education* (*Jogaku zasshi*). At the height of careerism when the value of life was measured by one's social advancement, his bold opening remark, "Love is the key that unlocks humanity," left a tremendous impact on his readers like "the shot of a huge canon," as Christian writer Kinoshita Naoe recalled (quoted in Mathy 1963, 44). From then on, he regularly wrote for *Jogaku zasshi* and came to befriend a few writers including Shimazaki Tōson (1872-1943), with whom he launched in 1893 the journal *The Literary World* (*Bungakkai*), which became a major mouthpiece of Romantic philosophy. While the idea of romantic love was what initially brought Tōkoku his reputation, his most significant

career achievements as a writer were concentrated in the years between 1893 and 1894, prior to his suicide, when he articulated numerous literary theories.

Before he became a leading figure of *Bungakkai*, Tōkoku was a typical Meiji youth interested in politics. His hostility toward the modern bourgeois values of success and utilitarianism was shaped during the political turmoil of the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement of the 1870-80. Born in the year of Meiji Restoration, he grew up envisioning his future in the world of politics and majored in political science and English literature at the Tokyo School of Special Studies (present Waseda University).[11] During his teens, he participated in the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement to call for a representative assembly and universal suffrage. But the ideal of democracy was curtailed by the government's prohibition of public gatherings; and, in the end, only a handful of the privileged were granted the right to vote.[12] In addition to the alienation from political participation, his generation of youth came to face a severe struggle of survival in the competition for career success. Hard work was celebrated because every man now ostensibly had an equal opportunity to succeed in the society. Particularly influential were the enlightenment novels of Samuel Smiles' *Self Help* (*Saigoku risshihen*, translated in 1871) and Fukuzawa Yukichi's *An Encouragement of Learning* (*Gakumon no susume*, 1872-1876), which provided a bright prospect of career success through self-reliance and hard work.[13] These works spread a promising vision of independence and self-realization, while at the same time pandering to the ideology of progress that the government promoted. As Earl Kinmonth has discussed, during the early years of the Meiji period, the career advancement of youth served the larger goal of the state, because there was a relatively higher demand for bureaucratic positions

[11] The most detailed biography of Tōkoku and his intellectual yield in English is provided in Mathy, Francis. 1963. "Kitamura Tōkoku: The Early Years." *Monumenta Nipponica* 18 (1–4): 1–44. I also consulted "Biography of Kitamura Tōkoku" in Kitamura, Tōkoku, and Ichiyō Higuchi. 1956. *Kitamura Tōkoku, Higuchi Ichiyō shū.* Vol. 4. Gendai nihon bungaku zenshū. Tokyo: Chikuma shobo. 423-26.

[12] Only one percent of the population fulfilling the payment of a high-rate tax was allowed to vote. Universal male suffrage was established in 1925, female 1945. For the enforcement of laws prohibiting political activities, see Gluck, Carol. 1985. *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. 50-52.

[13] For the impact of these books on readers, see Kinmonth, Earl H. 1981. *The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought: From Samurai to Salary Man*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

(Kinmonth 1981, 333-37). But the employment prosperity came to decline as the higher positions quickly filled; and job scarcity was exacerbated by the government officials' intervention in the educational system, whereby they privileged Tokyo Imperial University graduates for top bureaucratic positions.

A year before he resigned his career pursuit in politics in 1887, Tōkoku had converted to Christianity, which had offered a philosophical guidance to the young protesters like himself who had embraced the cause of individual freedom and equality. Unlike the notion of individualism in the political sense of natural rights theories, which accords individuals the rights to intervene in state affairs, Christian advocacy of individualism helped spread the ideal of the "uniqueness of the individual's inner life" and "the equality of all individuals" (Walker 1979, 63–64). Having no way of partaking in political mediation nor of ascending the social ladder, Tōkoku, like many youths of his generation, turned inwardly. Under the guidance of Christianity, he sought to cultivate his own interiority, as this was the only space where he could realize the higher meaning of life through religious contemplation. While starting his career as a writer, he worked as an interpreter and translator for missionaries, and through these activities, he came to know the Quakers in 1889. He was inspired by their notion of "inner light," which prioritized a personal communion between man and God without the mediation of church officials and formal dogmas.

Just as religion was a private activity freed from social intervention, so was literature—and Tōkoku soon realized that this was another space where he could freely exercise his thought. Writing that there is no "spiritual freedom" in the public domain of politics, he wrote in "My View of Meiji Literature" (Meiji bungaku shikotsu, 1893) that he made forays into "the world of ideas," where the access to freedom was guaranteed (Kitamura 1950b, 2:167). But freedom, in the context of his usage, did not mean that the realms of both religion and literature are free from any creeds or moralism. He was free only in the sense that he could exercise his own subjectivity to the fullest, that is, by disciplining oneself by using one's own judgments of the good. This is evident in his literary theory entitled "On the Inner Life" (Naibuseimeiron, 1893), where the Christian influence is evident in the title. He described that the "inner life (*seimei*)" refers to the "autonomous" moral principle that runs through every individual's life,

"correspond[ing]" with the moral principle of the "the Creative" (*zōka* 造化) or "the universe" (Kitamura 1950b, 2:245–46).[14] Tōkoku defined Beauty by linking it to the laws of nature internal to human nature. He argued that morality is something that every individual possesses and can discover on his own, without any external instruction. He defended the value of literature based on this logic, which presupposed that moral cultivation is possible via Beauty, without resorting to any external moral system.

Tōkoku's argument justifying the value of literature developed as he partook in fierce debate with a critic of the Min'yūsha School, Yamaji Aizan (1865-1917), who conceived of literature in utilitarian terms. In the course of these exchanges, Tōkoku came to formulate a unique literary theory different from those of Nishi, Ōgai, and Futabatei. Most importantly, he incorporated the Christian notion of eternity.

The first of Aizan's essays, entitled "The Development of Commoner's Tanka" (Heiminteki tanka no hattatsu, 1892), appeared in *Nation's Friend* (*Kokumin no tomo*). There, Aizan criticized that the native literary traditions of *waka* and *hokku* as products of the culture of Heian aristocrats and Edo commoners, respectively, and thus tinged with Buddhist pessimism and moral weakness. He wrote that Japanese poets who practice the traditions of *waka* and *hokku* are prone to identify themselves with the natural world and that they have a strong fondness for the elegant and tender aspects of nature. Because their eyes are sensitive only to the beautiful nature surrounding them, he lamented that these poets were blind to the "action" of great heroes of "will," such as warriors on the battlefield, politicians, and even angel-like women in the household (Yamaji 1901, 373). He criticized this literature for its lack of utilitarian rigor—a quality that he thought necessary in enticing people into action. His view that literature ought to serve for some kind of practical purpose is further emphasized in the opening passage of the subsequent essay "On Raijō" (Raijō o ronzu, 1893):

> Literature is a form of enterprise. The writer wielding his pen, like the hero wielding his sword, does not do so to strike at empty air; he does so to accomplish something. If swords and bullets do not contribute to the good of the world, they are nothing but vanities. Flowery words and beautiful

[14] He used the terms "the Creative" and "the universe" interchangeably.

> sentences in however many volumes are but empty and vain unless they benefit mankind (quoted in Mathy 1964, 95).

Seeing literature's ultimate role as the practical service to the benefit of the society, Aizan argued that the beautiful elements of literature were of secondary importance. For him, what was most important is the use of literature in fulfilling some purpose. In addition, he criticized *waka* and *hokku* for their lack of "the quality called the sublime (*saburaimu*)," which "evokes the sense of awe and reverence" (Yamaji 1901, 372). He observed that while *waka* brought forth a relatively higher sense of dignity and religiosity tones reminiscent of the sublime, *hokku*, which emerged in the Tokugawa age of "skepticism," came to downplay religious sentiments. He brought up Bashō as a case in point, arguing that he followed the model of his much-admired predecessor Saigyō (1118-1190), and yet abandoned the pursuit of religion, which was central to Saigyō's poems.

Tōkoku had much to argue against Aizan's utilitarian conception of literature, and he responded pointedly in the essay "What Does It Mean to Benefit Mankind" (Jinsei ni aiwataru towa nan'no ii zo, 1893) published in *Bungakkai*. Unlike Aizan, who measured the value of things based on the satisfaction of utilitarian purposes, Tōkoku maintained that the aim of literature differs from goals of enterprise concerned with practical use. Comparing literature to things such as mountains, which remains silent, but surpasses the power of any speech by their sheer magnificence, he regarded literature as a spiritually noble enterprise. Its "heroes," he argued, brandish their swords at "empty air without expecting any reward from fellow mankind, just like gods, who rather grant humanity favors" (Kitamura 1950a, 2:115). He argued that writers in the East and the West, from Saigyō and Bakin to Shakespeare and Wordsworth, all fought on the battlefield, but not against visible enemies. Rather, they grappled for and "aimed at the infinite mystery of the universe" (117).

Literature, argued Tōkoku, is a philosophical inquiry into the realm of mystery—an exploration of the wonder of the infinite of the universe. While arguing so, and defending the works of some writers, Tōkoku agreed with Aizan that Japanese poetic traditions lacked the element of the sublime. The sublime was a sentiment closely associated with the infinite and the eternal, whose magnificence and immeasurable

magnitude are that which provokes the sense of fear and awe.

In "The Idea on the Otherworld" (Takai ni taisuru kannnen, 1892), which he published for *Kokumin no tomo*, Tōkoku, too, lamented that in Japanese literature, the force of nature lacks formidable power and that the supernatural creatures are meek compared to the lofty representations of spirits and demons found in Western literature. Due to an insufficient appreciation of the other world, he maintained, Japanese literature "lacks sublime dignity" (Kitamura 1950a, 2:42). In particular, he denounced the traditional Buddhist ideas that permeated the Japanese aesthetic worldview—ideas such as reincarnation, transience (*mujō*), and annihilation (*jakumetsu*), which he saw as inimical to the sentiment of sublimity.

It is in this context that Tōkoku exalted Christian philosophy, which he thought made Western literature spiritually rich in sublimity. As Lynn White illustrates, the Christian account of cosmology posits that God designed the universe in such orderly ways that the world lasts permanently without change. It teaches that after the initial Creation of the universe, God created human beings by imparting His own image to them, and allowed them to name and rule all imperfect animals and plants in the world on His behalf (discussed in Hamamoto 2014, 137). It states that the permanence of the universe is promised, only insofar as human beings follow and maintain the purposive order that God had laid out elsewhere, both in man's nature and the surrounding cosmos.

Importantly, what mattered to Tōkoku was not so much his faith in God itself as the worldview of the eternal related to the purposive design and the order of the universe. This is most clearly expressed in the way he juxtaposed the two contrastive philosophies that inform the aesthetic sensibilities of the West and the East. That is, "the one of eternity (*etānichī*) based on Christian philosophy" and "the other of transience and fleetingness based on Buddhist philosophy" (43). For Tōkoku in Meiji Japan, the sublime associated with Christianity embodied the idea of the eternal, and this was how he explained the immanence of timeless morality in nature.

What is notable about the Meiji discourse on Beauty of this period is that many literary critics turned to Christianity in search of the eternal. This was also the case with Ōnishi Hajime (1864-1900), who was a scholar of philosophy and aesthetics at the Tokyo School of Special Studies. Being a Christian and a scholar from the Waseda group, Ōnishi

similarly asserted the need to elevate the spirituality of Japanese subjectivity by means of art. Just like Aizan and Tōkoku, he bemoaned the lack of sublimity in Japanese literature, subsequently launching a poetic reform by rejecting the Buddhist and Shintoist sentiments that pervaded traditional poetry. In his essay "There is No Religion in *Waka*" (Waka ni shūkyō nashi, 1887), which he published for the Christian journal *Rikugō zasshi,* he argued that while English poets always express religious thoughts, Japanese *waka* fail to inspire and provide awe-provoking ideas—instead simply urging people to adore the beauty of the moon and cherry blossoms, etc. His criticism thus echoed the views of Tōkoku, who likewise discerned the Beauty of sublime power in what others interpreted simply as elegant and tranquil beauty.

What was important about Ōnishi's role as a Christian and an aesthetician, particularly in regards to his likely influence on Tōkoku, is his assertion that Christianity might be the remedy for the impoverished spirituality of Japanese literature.[15] Based on his conviction that art and religion are inseparable, Ōnishi discussed how to create new art that suits the needs of his age, pointing out the potential of Christian sublimity in supplanting the traditional Japanese religious sentiments. Recognizing that the present state of art in Japan was outdated and therefore demanded reform, he called for a new notion of Beauty to elevate the spirit of the people. In the essay "Are the Japanese Rich with Artistic Spirit?" (Nihonjin wa geijutsugokoro ni tomeru ka, 1888) published in *Jogaku zasshi*, he stressed the need to launch a proper art education in order to cultivate a sense of Beauty adequate to the age. He argued that "In order to avoid falling into the abuses of eccentricity, artistic education must be grounded in the science of aesthetics that is deemed today to be the most scientific" (quoted in Watanabe 2001, 102). Aesthetics, which Ōnishi described here as the study and the "science" of Beauty, was thus called for to nourish a correct aesthetic sensibility, which in his mind was inseparable from the idea of sublimity associated with the Christian God.

Ōnishi's argument might strike us as slightly bizarre, because on one hand, he asserts that his aesthetic inquiries are scientific in endeavor, while on the other hand, he

[15] Watanabe Kazuyasu suggests Ōnishi's Christian influence on Tōkoku's essay "The Idea on the Otherworld." See his footnote in Watanabe, Kazuyasu. 2001. "Ōnishi Hajime: Criticism and Aesthetics." In *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, edited by Michael F. Marra, 95–105. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 101.

claims to use this scientific methodology in verifying God's manifestation in the eternal Beauty. We may apply the same criticism to Tōkoku, who turned to the Christian notion of God's design, when the very account of theology has been called into question in the West since the Enlightenment. Yet, as I reiterate here, at least for Tōkoku, it did not matter whether it was in fact "God" or "the universe" or something else, which created the lasting law of nature. He did not regard literature as a vehicle to propagate the teaching of Christianity. In fact, despite being a Christian convert, Tōkoku's faith in God was quite questionable, just as many young writers in the coterie *Bungakkai* abandoned Christianity in a few years out of their distaste for its formality and rituals.[16]

What mattered the most to Tōkoku was the basic understanding that human beings are endowed with purposive morality in their very nature. His scant attention to the religious creeds is evident in the essay "The Heart, a Holy of Holies" (Kakujin shinkyūnai no hikyū, 1892), which he wrote in reference to English Romantic Thomas Carlyle's (1795-1881) phrase that man's heart is the "Holy of Holies."[17] In the essay, Tōkoku maintained that the ultimate form of religion is when man establishes faith in the self and in his own "heart (*kokoro*)," which is the final state of civilized society that comes into being "after the demise of superficial faith" (Kitamura 1950b, 2:5). This statement illustrates that God himself was least important to Tōkoku than the Christian framework of universal law that permitted the development of empirical science. This was the path of scientific awakening that the Romantic writer Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) took in his aesthetic quest for transcendence, and it is from Emerson that Tōkoku learned about the infinite laws of nature, grounded in modern science. In his final work before his death, Tōkoku refined his literary theory in consultation with Emerson's works, where religion and science were fused in accounting for the transcendental source

[16] See for example, Shimazaki Tōson's autobiographical fiction *Spring* (*Haru*, 1908) and "When the Cherries Ripen" (Sakura no mi no jukusuru toki, 1919) where he recounted how he and his fellow writers in *Bungakkai* infatuated with Christianity as it epitomized the advanced knowledge of the West and liberal ideas, but gradually lost interest because of its formality that diminished the idea of freedom they had initially expected from its philosophy. See Shimazaki, Tōson. 1949. *Shimazaki Tōson Zenshū*. Vol. 14. Tokyo: Shinchosha.

[17] For Tōkoku's influence from Carlyle, see Mathy, Francis. 1964. "Kitamura Tōkoku Essays on the Inner Life." *Monumenta Nipponica* 19 (1–2): 76.

of Beauty. As I discuss below, his encounter with Emerson's philosophy of transcendence prompted him to re-evaluate the indigenous poetic tradition from a modern enlightened perspective.

**Sublime Nature: Synthesis of Religion and Science**

In 1894, Tōkoku wrote a posthumously-published biography of Emerson, entitled, "Emerson" (Emaruson) at the request of a publisher affiliated with the Min'yūsha, that outlined Emerson's noted work *Nature* (1836). To his eyes, Emerson appeared as very unique person of faith. Describing Emerson as an atheist who did not believe in God, Tōkoku noted nonetheless that he was someone who believed God to be immanent in all things in the universe. He explained that Emerson developed his own dogma of what Tōkoku referred to as "Religion of Nature" (English original)—that is, the aspiration to commune with the heavenly forces and laws that organize the way of the universe (Kitamura 1955, 3:102). Emerson's move away from a religious God to its secularized version as "Nature" was a common pattern that was found among many of Emerson's contemporaries and especially English Romantics such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, from whom Emerson received tremendous philosophical influences.

In the West, this shift from "God" to "Nature" reflected the diffusion of Enlightenment thinking, and occurred in tandem with the development of the sciences in the eighteenth century, which posed a threat to the Creation myth in its literal version. Since the seventeenth century, the modern sciences, and particularly astronomy and geology, had played a significant role in undermining the Christian account of the eternal stability of cosmos, as the new scientific studies discovered that the universe continued to undergo ceaseless transformation on its own. The constant change of the cosmos was explained through the physical study of the activities of the matter of nature, and scientists discovered that those elements such as water, air, and heat transformed the surface of the globe organically over the infinite periods of time.[18] This paradigm shift

[18] See Chapter 4 "The Geological Dilemma" in Nicolson, Marjorie H. 1959. *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 144-183.

altered people's understanding of the universe, from a static state of permanence to a dynamic state of change. Scientists revealed that matter in nature is equipped with its own organic energy or force, and that things in the natural world perpetuate the workings of the cosmos with their own animating vitality.

As Eric Wilson illustrates, this scientific notion of organicism informed the view of nature embraced by the Romantic writers, and they blended the Kantian conception of the infinite force of nature with scientific observation (Wilson 1999, 24). Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, the new studies of electromagnetism and electrochemistry, as branches of physics, provided another layer of evidence that proved the organic relation linking man and the universe. Scientists discovered that all physical matter, from the smallest entity of atom to plants and human beings, is comprised of the common basic organic structure. Such studies succeeded in visualizing the constant flux of electrical energy that run organically and constitute the particles of all matter (44-49). These discoveries shaped the key philosophical assumption of the Romantics, who held that there is a common invisible force of energy running in oneself and in the outer world. Such objective knowledge gave scientific vindication to the poet's intuitive identification with the surrounding universe. It provided the scientific explanation of man's organic tie to, and nostalgic yearning for nature, and seemed to affirm the human ability to transcend self through immersion in the natural world.

Emerson was the epitome of those Romantic poets, who were more fascinated with the discoveries of modern science than with the wonder of God. Once a dedicated Christian and a pastor, Emerson abandoned his faith in God, believing that science accounted for the sublime infinity of nature. This represented the basis of his aesthetic inquiries into transcendence; and, as Wilson's study has shown, Emerson's profound knowledge of science underlies his literary essay *Nature*, whose main argument is that only through interaction with nature can man have a transcendental experience and attain a state of enlightenment.

It is not difficult to imagine how readily Tōkoku embraced Emerson's aesthetic theory. For Emerson's transcendental philosophy not only gave a scientific account of the natural law of organisms, but also re-affirmed, from an enlightened viewpoint, the validity of the indigenous poetic tradition in drawing analogy between humans and

various phenomena in the natural world. It is evident that Tōkoku was impressed by Emerson's accounts in *Nature*, precisely because he thought that Emerson had "synthesized the Western philosophy of god and the Eastern philosophy of god" into "oneness" (Kitamura 1955, 3:107). It can be best understood that Tōkoku realized that Emerson's aesthetic theory cast a scientific light on the animistic worldview of the East, and that it offered up a viable philosophy of transcendence.

It is worth recalling here that all the modern aesthetic theorists I have discussed—Nishi, Futabatei, Ōgai, and Tōkoku—argued that Beauty lies in the heavenly law of nature and is immanent in all the creation. But none of them was able to specify what cosmic law confirmed this, because they denied, as we saw in the context of Nishi, traditional Confucian law of physics without proffering anything specific in its place. The indigenous view of cosmology, which modern intellectuals rejected as baseless, was rooted in the physics of Confucianism and Taoism. It posited that the universe is ruled by the Great Ultimate, which identified two uniform principles at work in the universe: the material or vital force of *ki*, which creates physical dimension of all things, and the metaphysical force of *ri,* which organizes and governs the movement of *ki*. As these life-regulating principles permeated and governed creation in the universe uniformly and equally, explains Yanabu Akira, the word nature (*shizen*) in the pre-Meiji semantic context referred to the state where there existed no distinction between the nature of subject and object (e.g. humans and the natural world), as they were considered to be organically interrelated (Yanabu 1995, 58).

When Japanese literary intellectuals jettisoned the indigenous poetic convention for its lack of the sublime, and embraced Emerson's account of sublime nature grounded in modern science, they gave a fresh life to Japan's indigenous literary traditions. Tōkoku argued that Emerson saw "soul" as the "center of all creation," describing it as the "basic component and the cause of everything" and as a "whole" that was akin to the working of "god" (Kitamura 1955, 3:106). He learned from Emerson that the universe is designed organically under a uniform moral order, with all beings possessing the self-regulative energic force and perpetuating their life autonomously. All things look different in form, but are endowed with the same animating form of life, only invisible from the outside. While Emerson's philosophy bears similarity to Japan's indigenous poetic theory,

Tōkoku's encounter with Emerson's philosophy did not prompt him to resuscitate the classical poetic traditions with a set of conventional rules. His absorption and domestication of Emerson's philosophy had a deep imprint of modernity, which can be found in his emphasis on the primacy of subjectivity in judging Beauty.

As noted earlier, Tōkoku argued that Emerson's theory of transcendence is a product of the synthesis between Western and Eastern philosophies. He saw that the Emerson's theory rested on the Eastern "objective" knowledge, which posited that the universe is a manifestation of heavenly will. And Emerson integrated with it, he says, "the 'mind' of subjectivity" of the West—that is, the primacy of individual subjectivity in discerning that heavenly will (107). He suggests here that it is empirically valid to claim that god is immanent in the forces and laws of the universe. But it is mere truth of knowledge, not fact based on lived experience. Emerson brought in his theory of the primacy of subjectivity, which is the ultimate authority that ascertains the universal truth as fact. Nothing has more power than the subjectivity of one's mind, according to Emerson, and that the authority of the subject, according to Emerson, surpasses that of nature itself. Tōkoku writes that Emerson's nature lies nowhere but in his own "mind," and that "the universe is the product of the synthesis between 'nature' and one's 'mind'" (108). Tōkoku sees in Emerson a poet, who treads his own path rather than following in the footsteps of his classical ancestors. He is faithful to his own intuition in attuning himself to the rhythm of nature. The sublime nature does not exist by itself in the outer world, nor does it exist in the conventions of classical canons. It comes into being only when it is "discovered" by the poet through spiritual correspondence with the object.

Tōkoku received various influences from Western writers and their aesthetic philosophies, but he had one literary model in his own culture, whom he admired and saw as a poetic pioneer. For him, the Edo haikai poet Bashō (1644-94) was the Japanese equivalent of Emerson, who had already heralded in the primacy of subjectivity long before his time. He regarded Bashō as someone much closer to his time than other poets of olden times. For Tōkoku, Bashō stood alongside eighteenth-century Western writers, with a common philosophical continuum running between the two. Some have seen his recourse to Bashō a part of the ideological backlash called "Japanization," which surged in the 1890s as a result of the revival of Confucian ethics against Westernization

(Brownstein 1990, 286).[19] But this treatment overlooks Tōkoku's profound insights into Western aesthetics, which allowed him to discover a philosophical resonance between the West and the East over their common interest in the search for Beauty of sublime nature. Here, let me explore the ways in which his knowledge of Western aesthetics helped Tōkoku recast the Japanese aesthetic tradition in a new light, using the emergent aesthetic framework of Beauty.

First, we may recall that Tōkoku, like other critics such as Aizan and Ōnishi, denounced Japan's indigenous poetic tradition for its lack of sublimity. But Bashō was an exception, for he saw in Bashō a true engagement with nature—so sincere to the extent that, at one time, Bashō could not compose a poem because he was awestruck by the profound greatness of nature. In the essay "Reading Bashō at Matsushima" (Matsushima nioite Bashō o yomu 1892), Tōkoku discussed what it was like to experience transcendence, after having been to Matsushima in person as an interpreter for a Christian missionary. Matsushima is one of the popular scenic spots in Japan and has historically attracted many poets. Being aware that many visitors had composed songs based on the seasonal topics and by rules of association, he lamented that these habits had diverted their attention from appreciating thier first-hand experience of the actual beauty of landscape. Touching on the legend that Bashō, who was struck by its exquisite Beauty, left Matsushima without writing a poem on the spot, Tōkoku maintained in the essay that artists must first stop willing to craft a poem, and instead needs to prioritize being emotionally moved first.

Tōkoku argued that a poet must be moved by the divine spirit—by virtue of a genuine awe—as opposed to being simply inspired by customs and habits. He explained that when the great scenery moves us, "it steals our self away, or rather self is drawn to it, and will lose self in a dark unconsciousness" (Kitamura 1950c, 1:301–2). In such a state, we can become dissolved in the beauty of scenery—of mountains, rivers, trees, and plants—that has the same life (*seimei*) as a poet does. As he is swallowed up in the beauty of nature, he loses consciousness of the self, and the boundary between the two becomes blurry, leading him to wonder "if I am part of it or it is part of me" (302). He

[19] Brownstein here drew on Donald H. Shively's discussion of "The Japanization of the Middle Meiji" in Donald H. Shively, ed., *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture*.

argues that the moment of transcendence is so solemn that it is no easy task to describe it properly:

> Adrift in the immense One like an unmoored boat—who can find something to hold fast to? When we reach this point, there is no poetry, no scenery, no means to distinguish between what is self and what is other. I call this "union." The more lasting our union, the more of the Divine we receive, and the more of the Divine will be present in a poem we compose afterwards. As this union lasts, we begin to see that mountains and rivers, trees and plants, all possess the same life-force as we do. We recognize a single universal spirit that extends throughout, and the true and perfect Beauty within the One (Kitamura 1990, 306)

For Tōkoku, the point of this short essay was to show that the true transcendental experience leaves even the greatest poet like Bashō speechless. To tread a path of enlightenment, one must stop seeing nature throguh the lens and knowledge of others. He believed that the fact that Bashō could not compose a poem immediately on the spot is a crucial testimony that he followed his intuition and privileged his own subjective judgment of Beauty.

In a similar vein, Tōkoku defended Bashō's taste for Beauty, which was weak in sublimity, as Meiji intellectuals criticized. It is worth emphasizing here that the sublime, which invokes the immeasurable magnitude of eternity, is not something that should be judged based on the formal appearance of things. As we have seen, the Meiji intellectuals considered that the sublime was an aesthetic sentiment that befitted the age. They thought that the invocation of the sublime would be instrumental in uplifting national spirit. Min'yūsha critics like Aizan mocked Japanese poetry for the lack of religion and the sublime, conceiving of it as the splendor of power that one can feel in deeds and forms. To this, Tōkoku responded in the essay "What Does It Mean to Benefit Mankind," arguing in line with Emerson's theory that "the sublime is not contingent on the judgment of *form*, but is the property that belongs to the realm of *thought*" [emphasis original] (Kitamura 1950, 2:123). He opposed Aizan in arguing that the sublime is what each subject intuits and judges in his mind, and that it is not determined by the quality or the visible appearance of objects. Infinite quality is immanent in the nature of human beings, and is equally present, albeit invisibly, in the soul of the smallest organisms like ants and bees. To make his point, he cited Bashō's poem (121):

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Bright moon | *meigetsu ya* | 名月や |
| Going around the pond | *ike wo megurite* | 池をめぐりて |
| All night long | *yo mo sugara* | 夜もすがら |

He explained that in this poem, Bashō gazed at the pond, but he did not look at "the real" only just as it appeared before his eyes. Instead, he gazed at something beyond its form and reached "the Absolute thing or Idea," which in turn provoked the "Annihilation" of self [English original] (122). He wrote that this transcendence led Bashō to "leave behind the real, humanity, and its flesh" (122). Although his selfhood was annihilated, having been swallowed up in sublimity, Tōkoku explained that Bashō's soul still existed there and entered the bosom of nature. There, he argued that Bashō found a truly loyal companion, with whom he appreciated the sight of the pond all night long. For Bashō, self-annihiltion was the fundamental precondition to walking about the pond with this "companion" in pleasure, and not in the empty state of "Nothingness" [English original] (123). Tōkoku contended that the sublime refers to this invisible companion, which bears the essence of infinite soul. Bashō was able to discover it, not because he studied its exterior form, but because his own soul was attuned to the splendor quality of eternity hidden behind the form of pond.

Poetic enlightenment is similar to religious salvation. It cuts off one's attachment to self and annilitates self-consciousness. But unlike the state of nothingness idealized in Buddhism, poetic enlightenment ultimately brigns about pleasure—the delight of becoming one with the object, of casting off one's ego and instead discovering self in the other. The aesthetic contemplation of Beauty ennobles one's character, for it cultivates one's innate moral competence to sympathize with others. It brings the poet to a higher reality—to the realization that he is not an alienated being, but one element in the vastness of the cosmos. And it is the poet's own power of imagination that finds in the outer world the eternal element that corresponds with one's own. For Tōkoku, neither the Christian notion of God nor the indigenous notion of the Great Ultimate was sufficient to account for the sublime. Nature was the sublime. The sublime infinity was immanent elsewhere in the universe—in the surrounding cosmos and in one's own moral order of nature.

## Conclusion

While Tōkoku had much to argue against Aizan, it is important here to take account of Aizan's assertion that Bashō's poetry lacked the sublime. For if artists reproduce Beauty in their works based on their subjective taste, then each of us can equally justify his own aesthetic taste in judging the value of artistic works. If the cultivation of Beauty was deemed necessary to foster the civilized status of the people, it stands to reason that writers had to undertake a tremendous task to produce works of art—one that speaks to the heart of broader citizens. Furthermore, because writers use language as their primary vehicle in representing Beauty, the language form has to be carefully crafted to invoke the sublime. Being more a critic than an artist, Tōkoku was primarily concerned with broaching literary theories and produced few works of art. As I will explore in the next chapter, the task of representing Beauty in literature was left to the Christian and Romantic writer, Kunikida Doppo (1871-1908), who adopted modern colloquial language and represented the sublime Beauty through his correspondence with natural landscape.

Despite his brief literary career, Tōkoku's essays left a tremendous intellectual legacy to the Meiji literary world and beyond. His contemporary readers, such as critic Kaneko Chikusui called him the "representative of my ideal poet," writing that Tōkoku introduced the idea that "soul, or the life of nature" is the "only consistent source of equality in the present world of inequality" (Kaneko 1974, 3-4). Even his theoretical opponent, Aizan, exalted Tōkoku's posthumous work "Emerson," describing it as the "splendid prose of today's literary world" (Yamaji 1965, 35:326). At the turn of the century, Tōkoku continued to be "discovered" by the younger generation of writers. The poet Sōma Gyofū regarded him as the "inspirer" of the youth and "the most illuminating pioneer of new literature of the age," saying that his works bridged literary art and everyday life (Sōma 1967, 308). These accounts prompt us to reassess the oft-criticized "inward turn" of literature that Tōkoku is said to have been a part of. Indeed, he propagated the idea that literature is free from utilitarian concerns and insistently focused on the aesthetic contemplation of the Beauty of inner life.

Nonetheless, Tōkoku, and his audience were aware that Beauty exerted a positive influence on society. Beauty was beneficial because it presupposed a suspension of

interest, egotism, personalized identity, and hierarchy. It was a realm that existed in opposition to the secular world, where everyone was subject to various social categorization, such as by species, nationality, age, gender, occupation, and class. By orienting itself to the eternal law of nature, Beauty amended those infinite social divisions of individuals and their alienation from each other. Tōkoku was the first to lay the groundwork for the politics of aesthetics, which attempted to restore the communal source of transcendence by means of Beauty.

## CHAPTER III

## IN SEARCH OF SUBLIME BEAUTY: SUBURB AND WILDERNESS THROUGH THE EYES OF KUNIKIDA DOPPO

> Well, I do hear about how our intellectuals are going through great turmoil these days, how there are those who claim to have seen God, some who have been visited by the Buddha, others who say they are the Savior, and even others like the Divine Wind group in Kumamoto who recently staged uprisings for the sake of religion. Be that as it may, these are matters of lofty argument and research, not about these things we priests look after, these . . . idols.
>
> Izumi Kyōka (One Day in Spring, 1906)[20]

### Introduction

The writer Izumi Kyōka (1873-1939) illustrates in his work of fiction the cultural milieu of the Meiji Japan, where accounts of spiritual encounter with the divine were attracting a broad public attention. From the pre-Restoration Edo period through the mid-Meiji period and beyond, the public interest in communication with the invisible took on many different forms, from a fad for the recreational séance of table-turning (*kokkuri-san*) to the birth of religious cult groups, such as Tenrikyō (1838) and Ōmotokyō (1892).[21] While the Meiji enlightenment endeavors took issue with the public fascination with spirit possession and labeled it a symptom of mental illness, the communion with the invisible spirits was still taken seriously and was a matter of lofty academic inquiries, as Kyōka's description suggests. The belief in things supernatural was such that, for some, delivering messianic oracles they had gained through spiritual communion had become a key vehicle for confronting social problems and leading a public action in the name of social reform (*yonaoshi*).[22] This chapter demonstrates that

[20] Izumi, Kyōka. 1996. *Japanese Gothic Tales*. Translated by Charles Shirō Inouye. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 85.

[21] Table-turning was popular as early as the 1880s. For the importance of the rise of modern spiritualism and how science aided not in eliminating, but fostering the public interest in spiritual communion with the invisible, see Foster, Michael Dylan. 2009. *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yōkai*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 84-114.

[22] The new cult groups of the Meiji period were founded upon indigenous shamanic tradition. Their social reform took issues with what they saw as modern ills—such as political monopoly, labor exploitation, and

such recourse to the spiritual divine equally shaped the literary principle of Kunikida Doppo (1871-1908), a Christian who strived to enlighten his readers, not by turning to rationalist knowledge, but by illustrating how man's nature is subordinated to an instinctive desire to become emotionally agitated in fear, awe, and delight reserved for God. In highlighting Doppo's inclination for mysticism and obsession with wonder (*kyōi* 驚異), a notion that has received little scholarly attention, I situate his literary principle along the continuum of Kitamura Tōkoku's politics of literature, advocating spiritual autonomy and the use of the sublime in initiating emotional spontaneity. Doppo's literary trajectory is important, as it allows us to recognize the lingering authority of the divinity as the primary object that triggered the sublime at the turn of the century.

We may recall that in Tōkoku's literary scheme, shaped under the Christian influence, natural landscape played a pivotal role in eliciting the sublime. Based on the belief that landscape is God's Creation and the physical manifestation of the Divine magnificence, he identified landscape as the medium through which poets might attain a galvanizing inspiration. The sensory reaction brought about by inspiration is so overwhelming that the ability to reason or compose a poem, Tōkoku argued, is suspended in front of God's exquisite artwork. The suspension of intellect is a key to understanding the growing interest among writers during this period in setting foot in the wilderness, whose grandiose landscape provoked the senses of fear and awe that they deemed the essence of man's instinctive desire. As a devout Christian, we see how such landscape bearing God's imprint equally played a central role in Doppo's works, which were guided by sublime aesthetics. More often than not, his works portraying landscape have been examined from the viewpoint of an epistemological shift in the perception of landscape in the 1890s, in which the classical notion of beauty was displaced by the subjective aesthetic judgments of individuals.

My focus on landscape likewise addresses the shift in episteme, but I elucidate the importance of landscape from the viewpoint of a politics of aesthetics striving to find a means of eliciting the autonomy of emotions. The cult of emotion that the Meiji literati embraced as the hallmark of disciplinary identity necessitated something that provoked

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rural poverty. See Kawamura, Kunimitsu. 1997. *Genshi suru kindai kūkan: meishin, byōki, zashikirō, aruiha rekishi no kioku*. Tokyo: Seikyūsha. 151-55.

emotional spontaneity as their measure of truth. This chapter aruges that landscape served as the motif of the sublime in substantiating the supremacy of the autonomy of human emotion over intellect and rules of customs. In order to highlight how the sublime became identified with landscape, I illustrate the discursive space in which Christian thinkers, such as Uchimura Kanzō (1861-1930) and Tsunashima Ryōsen (1873-1907), made a vocal argument about spiritual autonomy freed from church formalities, and transposed religious awe and fear reserved for God onto God-created natural landscape.

As I will show, the impact of both Uchimura and Tsunashima on Doppo's literary quest for Beauty was immense. Being Christians, they both attempted to enlighten their readers by conveying the inspirational experiences of their communion with God. To describe the un-representable as clearly and realistically as possible in public media was the task necessary in validating their ideological claim in the truth of God. Yet, unlike Uchimura and Tsunashima, who wielded realistic depictions, I show that Doppo sidestepped realism in his portrayal of inspiration, in the belief that excessive transparency of representation diluted the aura of wonder that lies at the heart of man's emotional spontaneity. Caught up between the temptation to describe Beauty and the impossibility of it, I highlight Doppo's employment of symbolic allusion as a strategy he utilized to verbalize the indescribable and through which he could distinguish the disciplinary identity of literature vis-à-vis religion. In order to elucidate the extent to which Doppo's subjective perception of landscape was inflected in the Christian beliefs, this chapter analyzes his diary and literary criticism apart from his seminal work "Musashino"[23] (Musashino, 1898) and other short works of fiction.

**Doppo's Modern Subjectivity: Christian Perception of the World**

This section looks first at the ideological backbone of Doppo's work. While he has indeed received much critical attention in histories of modern Japanese literature, most scholarly attention has been given to his linguistic achievement of a vernacular style that helped him explore individual interiority. Doppo has been credited for breaking from literary traditions in his much-studied "Musashino" (originally entitled as Ima no

[23] The English title sometimes appears as *The Musashi Plain*, but I follow the rendering of David G. Chibbett, whose translation I refer to in his *River Mist and Other Stories by Kunikida Doppo* (1982).

musashino, 1898), which features a lyrical prose depicting the suburban landscape of Tokyo and an admiration for natural scenery foreign to the repertoire of waka poetry. His acquisition of a new aesthetic sensibility has been attributed to his mastery of *genbun itchi* (言文一致), a new writing style that repressed classical rhetoric and aspired to a written form equivalent to the vernacular speech. Karatani Kōjin (1993, 61-72) argues that what distinguished Doppo from his predecessors (e.g. Tōkoku and Mori Ōgai), who adhered to classical style, is his liberation from the rhetorical expressions that had traditionally dictated poetic association. The fact that Doppo was able to feel at ease with the *genbun itchi* style, argues Karatani, marks the birth of his interiority, because for the first time in Doppo's work, language became transparent enough to represent his own interior feelings, unfettered by the pre-existing epistemological framework. In Karatani's argument, this new language style was key both to self-discovery and to the discovery of landscape. In the end, it was Doppo's personal aesthetic taste alone that allowed him to see the surrounding world as he felt and pleased. While I agree with Karatani's assertion that *genbun itchi* jettisoned the gravity of poetic association, it is important for us to delve further into the nature of Doppo's interiority. This is because interiority (or subjectivity), as I have argued in the previous chapter, is constructed by internalizing external ideologies as the foundation of self. No single person can see the world without an epistemological filter. The blind spot in Karatani's interpretation consists in the assumption that writing in *genbun itchi* style simply enabled Doppo to see his surrounding world in tabula rasa. By way of augmenting Karatani's point, I illustrate below how a shift in episteme occurred in Doppo's case, in which his Christian-informed subjectivity superseded and shaped his perception of landscape.[24]

Born in 1872, Doppo spent his teenage years in the present-day Yamaguchi prefecture, before leaving for Tokyo at the age of eighteen to study English and politics at the Tokyo School of Special Studies, the same university that Tōkoku had attended. He began reading works by Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, and through his Christian friends, he converted to Christianity at age twenty-one and came in contact with Tokutomi Sohō of the Min'yu-sha. Doppo quit school and thereafter engaged in two

[24] Doppo converted to Christian in January 1894. For his biographical record, see Kunikida, Doppo. 1956. *Kunikida Doppo Shū*. Vol. 57. Gendai Nihon Bungaku Zenshū. Tokyo: Chikuma shobo. 426-430.

trades at the same time—one of letters and the other of journalism and business, thanks in part to the patronage of Sohō. He busied himself as a war correspondent for *Nation's Newspaper* (*Kokumin Shinbun*) during the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and continued to work for several different newspaper companies in later years. He further attempted to run for the Diet, planned to join the colonization enterprise in Hokkaido, and launched his own publishing business Doppo-sha, although none of these bloomed in success. Ambitious youth that he was, though, Doppo had clear political and commercial goals distinct from the drive for career advancement, which he criticized as materialist, self-centered, and lacking in spiritual meaning.[25] It is apparent from his high appraisal of the writings of Min'yū-sha journalists, who weaved Christian teachings of egalitarianism and sympathy into their advocacy of "commoner-ism" (*heimin shugi*), that Doppo saw self-cultivation as a stepping stone to the Christian ideal of community service. In an essay "A Min'yūsha Reporter Tokutomi Iichirō"[26] (Min'yū kisha Tokutomi iichirō shi, 1892) that he wrote for *Youth Literature (Seinen Bungaku*), Doppo showed resonance with Min'yūsha writers, who demanded from both politicians and writers a sense of responsibility to cultivate people's character with "sincerity" and "love"—at a time when the tide of self-centrism and utilitarianism had sapped the moral virtues of the upper class (Kunikida 1965a, 1:199–200).

In the literary field, Doppo's criticism of materialism turned into an attack on Western influences, which, according to Doppo, had largely achieved superficial change. In an essay "Kōyō sanjin" (Kōyō sanjin, 1902)[27] that he wrote for the anthology *One Hundred Great Men of Contemporary Times* (*Gendai hyakunin gō*), he criticized the development of Meiji literature as a change in "external form" that mirrored the tendency in Meiji society to absorb Western knowledge superficially, while neglecting the cultivation of "spirit" (*seishin* 精神) (Kunikida 1965a, 1:428). While acknowledging the

[25] "Why the Youth Today is Weak in Spiritu al Aspects" (Tōdai no seinen wa nazeni seishinteki hōmen nioite senjaku naruka, 1906) in Kunikida, Doppo. 1965. *Kunikida Doppo Zenshū*. Vol. 1. Tokyo: Gakushūkenkyūsha. 493-494.

[26] Sohō is a pen name.

[27] Kōyō sanjin 紅葉山人 is a pen name of Ozaki Kōyō (1868-1903), a leading member of coterie Friends of the Inkstone (*ken'yūsha*).

popularity of Western-style realism by referring to the popularity of Tsubouchi Shōyō and Ozaki Kōyō, he insisted that both had failed to answer the public anguish salient in the time and that this explained their fleeting fame and gradual recession from the literary forefront. Doppo took his literary undertaking seriously, hoping to use literature as a vehicle to offer a form of consolation to his anguished readers. And this, for him, required the shift of focus from absorption and refinement of technical skills of writing to cultivation of spirit in and of itself.

It needs to be reiterated, however, that Doppo's criticism of form did not necessarily lead to the expulsion of things Western, nor was spirit a synonym for Japanese essentialism. What I call his spiritualism (*seishin shugi* 精神主義) derived from the Christian ethics to which he subscribed, and it can be broadly defined as an attempt to link the individual soul to the invisible spirit of the divine. In the same essay, he argued that while writers like Kōyō narrowly regarded mankind as mere members of the society, "the demand of new era is to see mankind as 'life (*seimei* 生命)' residing between heaven and earth," and to discern from the surrounding world its "profound mystery (*gen* 玄 and *myō* 妙) and magnificence (*dai* 大)" (Kunikida 1965a, 1:431). As with his usage of the term *seimei*, what he proposed here echoes Tōkoku's thesis that one needs to align oneself with the greater law of nature lying beyond society, and to seek a correspondence between man's inner moral source (i.e. *seimei*) and that of the God-created universe. It is important to note that *seimei* in Tōkoku's usage, which meant more than what the word usually denotes, is used in Doppo's terms somewhat more clearly to convey spirit or soul (*rei* 霊).[28] Doppo's *seishin shugi* thus refers to the spiritual connection between mankind and the divine, and its ethical framework demands that man seek revelation in the God-given "Beauty (*bi* 美), the good (*zen* 善), and truth (*shin* 眞)" that inhabits landscape and serves as the ultimate source of moral adherence (151). In the context of the essay "Kōyō sanjin" mentioned above, Doppo aligned his *seishin shugi* with William Wordsworth, whose poetry concerned with "life (*jinsei* 人生), nature, and humanity," and Ivan Turgenev of Russia, who "observed mankind from the bosom of the great nature"

[28] "*Seimei no seimei wa sōru nari* (生命の生命はソールなり)."

(Kunikida 1965b, 7:432–33). As we will see in our analysis of "Musashino," Doppo's appreciation of Wordsworth and Turgenev rested on their insights into the unintelligible wonder characterizing the great nature and their depiction of man as a component of that mysterious universe at large beyond the secular society.

It goes without saying that while the *seishin shugi* of Doppo (and Tōkoku) calls our attention toward natural landscape, it is not precisely identical with the nostalgia for the bucolic landscape associated with hometown (*furusato* 故郷), a signifier of imagined authentic cultural identity of pre-industrial period. As Maeda Ai has shown, a little earlier than the rise of *seishin shugi*, there had been a popular circulation of *risshin shusse* literature from the mid-1880s through the early 1890s. In these works, the binary opposition between the country and the city was played out, wherein hometown became a signifier of traditional rural life bound by community ties and the repository of virtue representing the warm sentiment of humanity in the pre-industrial period (Maeda 1989, 141–43).

Miyazaki Koshoshi (1864-1922), the author of *Returning Home* (*Kisei*, 1890) and one of Doppo's close friends, deserves a brief mention here, for he incorporated the *risshin shusse* motif and constructed a nostalgic image of the rural, but without the religious ethics central to Doppo's *seishin shugi*, which seeks Beauty and the good, not in physical substance, but in the invisible law that poets must discern. By alluding to the classical utopian images found in *The Peach Blossom Spring* by the Chinese poet Tao Yuanming and the Christian Bible, Koshoshi constructed the image of his rural hometown in Kyūshū as a sacred paradise bountiful in natural beauty and peaceful tranquility. For Koshoshi, it is the physical beauty of nature, which is absent from the urban landscape, that adds a nostalgic overtone to the topos of hometown, further intertwining the purity of nature with the warm ancestral bonds of community in which the protagonist finds solace in upon his return from Tokyo. His romanticization of the rural was in part driven by the distance created by urban-based careerism; but as Maeda discusses, it was also a reacted to the disappearing rural lifestyles and community disintegration prominent in the 1880s and the 1890s that had been caused by increases in taxation that drove many farmers to abandon their lands.  which drove many farmers to abandon their lands. The rural disintegration had indeed spread so extensively across the

provinces by the beginning of the twentieth century that some groups of bureaucrats launched a reactionary movement (i.e. *nōhon shugi* 農本主義) to re-invent authentic cultural identity based in rural villages centered on agriculture (Hane 1982, 66).[29] But it is important to note that this strand of romanticization of the rural and the exaltation of organic community is slightly at odds with the nostalgia informing Doppo, who longed for the spiritual connection with the invisible beyond the façade of physical landscape. As we will see, the fact that Doppo was obsessed with "wonder" and gravitated toward mountains and forests must be understood as an attempt to reclaim the declining authority of religious beliefs, and by extension, to reclaim man's innate desire to be submerged in the ineffable mystery of Nature.

Nostalgia for the physical rural landscape prominent in the late nineteenth century coincided with another disparate strand of nostalgia for spiritual communion, which was equally concerned with natural landscape. In the previous chapter, I discussed how the change in the meaning of nature in the post-seventeenth-century European philosophical context came to separate spirit and matter as two distinct entities, whereby both man and the natural world became increasingly subject to materialist categorization. The late Meiji period witnessed the same epistemological shift that severed the spiritual bond between man and the natural world—to which the literary politics of Doppo (and Tōkoku) responded by restoring men as spiritual beings capable of linking themselves to the God-governing cosmological order. As such, the nostalgia that characterized Doppo's interest in landscape, unlike that of Koshoshi, was an expression of his longing for a return to religious ethics. As a matter of fact, Doppo went as far as to criticize Koshoshi,s pioneering biography of Wordsworth in the popular journal *Nation's Friend* (*Kokumin no tomo,* October 1893) for failing to address the fundamental religious creed underlying Wordsworth's admiration for nature.[30] To be fair, this subtle yet significant difference noticeable in the writers' seemingly identical recourse to nature has equally eluded

[29] Drawing on previous studies, Hane characterizes *nōhon shugi* (agrarian fundamentalism) as the ideology embracing agricultural economy and communal self-sufficiency, aided by the belief that farming contributed to the construction of a unique national identity. 66.

[30] See his criticism in "Cry of Agony" (Kumon no sakebi, 1895) in Kunikida, Doppo. 1965. *Kunikida Doppo Zenshū*. Vol. 1. Tokyo: Gakushūkenkyūsha. 271-273. Doppo does not name Koshoshi explicitly when he referred to the writer of Wordsworth's biography, but it can be surmised from the date of publication of his essay and content that he was attacking Koshoshi.

scholarly attention, with the tendency among previous studies to characterize the phenomenon of rural romanticization as a reaction to and critique of destructive capitalism.[31] If the impact of capitalism was one of the major causes that triggered idealization of the rural, it was the growing rationalism of Meiji Japan, diminishing the role of the mystical, that stimulated the counter reaction to restore the declining religious belief. To see how Doppo's *seishin shugi* was one such expression of nostalgia emerging in dialogue with a larger cultural milieu of his time, we need to step back from the literary world and situate him against the trend in spiritualism popular at the time.

**Doppo and the Spiritual Age: Universalism of Spirit**

Originally imported from the Western cultural fads for séance known as table turning, hypnosis, clairvoyance and so forth, spiritualism (*shinrei ron* 心霊論) was a popular subject in both mass culture, but also one that spurred scholarly research in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Spiritualism was premised on the assumption that all humanity possesses "an eternal undying soul, each of which is both unique and part of a universal community of souls, which it will rejoin upon the body's death" (Hardacre 2001, 133). As such, it was not unrelated to the desire to communicate with the deceased, whose response was purported to manifest in various different ways—such as spirit possession, automatic writing, and spirit photographs. Interest in spiritualism went far beyond the recreational realm commonly associated with bourgeois salons, and it also kindled academic fever to account for its psychic mechanism. From 1880s onwards, scholars such as Inoue Enryo (1858-1919), the founder of the Society for Research on the Mysterious (*fushigi kenkyūkai*) and Fukurai Tomokichi of the Tokyo Imperial University, led rigorous studies in spiritualism, going as far as to carry out experiments in public to test the psychic abilities of people with clairvoyant talents,

[31] Carol Gluck, for instance, cites Doppo's well-known poem, "Freedom is found in the mountains and forests," written in 1897 as a typical Wordsworthian expression, and interprets his longing for nature as reflection of his rural nostalgia in reaction to emptiness of modern life. In a similar line, Stephen Dodd argues that Doppo's representations of nature in *Musashino* is a successfully constructed landscape to "compensate for the fractured experience of everyday life," further noting that what Doppo learned from Wordsworth was an observation skill necessary in evoking emotional outburst. See Gluck, Carol. 1985. *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 183. And Dodd, Stephen. 2004. *Writing Home: Representations of the Native Place in Modern Japanese Literature*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 42-43.

attracting a broad attention in mass media.[32] Although not all academics were supportive of the craze for spiritualism, the vast extent of its popularity suggests a persistent belief in things supernatural that undermined the growing prestige of scientific rationalization.

With regard to this, the psychologist Nogami Toshio gives us an insightful observation as to why spiritualism became such a widespread social phenomenon. Although he himself was an anti-spiritualist, he maintained in his book *Description and Superstition* (*Jojyutsu to meishin*, 1912) that there was more to the public preoccupation with spiritualism than mere superstition. For many people, he argued, it was driven by a "strong instinct (*honnō* 本能)" that longs for feelings such as "religious sentiments, fear, and curiosity" (quoted in Mizuno and Yokoyama 2001, 299). Nogami's observation is intriguing, as he captures the phenomenon from the viewpoint of human nature and underscores the strong extent to which man craves indescribable emotional agitation. In a sense, the nineteenth-century spiritualist practice of communicating with the dead was a modern means to reinvigorate the innate human desire to be stunned in awe and fear, which had been increasingly emasculated by the intervention of science.

The contemporary literary world in general showed a great interest in spiritualism and things supernatural. For example, Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962) and Tayamata Katai (1872-1930) are better known today respectively as the forerunners of folklore studies and the Japanese Naturalism, which invested in scientific exploration of human nature. But it is worth pointing out that it was their obsession with "things mystical" that initially prompted them to explore the wonder of folklore and human nature respectively. As Katai's memoir in *My Thirty Years in Tokyo* (*Tōkyō no sanjūnen*, 1917) evinces, it was during this period in the early 1900s that Katai and Yanagita, in addition to other writers including Shimazaki Tōson from *The Literary World*, came in contact with Doppo, who was the leading member of the literary meeting *Ryūdokai* held in Tokyo (Tayama 1974a, 16:605–7). Although *ryūdokai* is generally considered as the birthplace of writers associated with Japanese Naturalism, it was also publicly well

[32] For the outline of Inoue Enryo's works, see chapter 2 "Words and Changing Things: Grasping *Fushigi* in Meiji Japan" in Figal, Gerald A. 1999. *Civilization and Monsters: Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan*. Durham: Duke University Press. 38-73. For popular occultist practices and how it received scholarly intervention, see Kurihara, Masakazu, et al. 2008. *Nihon "Reinōsha" Retsuden*. Tokyo: Takarajima sha.

known for holding discussion about ghosts and monsters (*yōkai*).[33] To see just how much these writers were concerned with "mystery" as their subject of literary investigation, we might take a brief look at the preface to *The Complete Works of Strange Tales in the Early Modern Period* (*Kinsei kidan zenshū,* 1903) Katai and Yanagita co-edited:

> Spirits, souls, and god—all these things are the subjects of those who believe in mystery (*shinpi* 神秘). It is that which enables us to see the great universe lying above the small Nature of the self, or that which makes us foresee the afterlife through the vision of the present. Those who adhere to reality and science learns nothing but to count flower petals in vain, and never get to know the unison we make with god. […] We hear that today in the twentieth-century Europe, there is a movement called modern mysticism that strives to hear that soundless voice and inaudible melody. Though we are strangers in the Far East, we likewise grew up in the desolate homeland, yearn for the noble souls, and feel the profound depth of fate. It is our wish to follow their lead, with our heart as clear as the water of pond, and reveal the mystery like the clearest reflection of the mirror (Tayama and Yanagita 1903, 1–3).

In the citation above, Katai and Yanagita announced their aspiration to document the mystery involving spirits, souls, and god by echoing the prior scholarly studies of modern mysticism by Europeans. We see here the parallel between their agenda and that of Doppo, who believed that men, universally, possessed an innate ability to correspond with the spiritual divine.[34] However, unlike Katai and Yanagita, whose interest in mystery involved more than just the correspondence with god—but also with the deceased (i.e. spiritualism) and uncanny phenomena in general—Doppo's *seishin shugi* was concerned exclusively with Divine revelation. In this regard, he was perhaps under a much greater influence of noted Christian figures, such as Uchimura Kanzō (1861-1930) and Tsunashima Ryōsen (1873-1907), who insisted on the eternal existence of the soul and attempted to prove spiritual rapport, not with the dead, but with the Divine in their writings. As we see below, both Uchimura and Tsunashima were publicly well known for

[33] *The Yomiuri Newspaper* dated on October 31th, 1908 reported that the meeting held at *ryūdokai* "witnessed a lively discussion about yōkai and such, instead of dwelling on art or society." See Mizuno, Yōshū, and Shigeo Yokoyama. 2001. *Tōno monogatari no shūhen*. Edited by Shigeo Yokoyama. Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai. 280.

[34] Both Katai and Yanagita veered away from god-centrism as they begin to establish their respective literary foundations in folklore studies and the Japanese Naturalism. I will address the factor behind this transition in the next chapter by focusing on Katai's works.

describing and publishing their personal accounts of how they came to see God's revelation. Although their version of mystery was framed in the Christian context, they equally shared the spiritualist belief in the universality of the undying soul and its communal solidarity in the afterlife, embracing the dissolution of the difference of social class and national identities.[35] As Helen Hardacre argues, the spiritualist emphasis on the universality of spirit was an expression of a "retreat from an increasingly oppressive state;" and, as such, its adherents were drawn to "liberalism and internationalism" as opposed to nationalism (Hardacre 2001, 133–34). This was certainly the case with Doppo, whose *seishin shugi* embraced autonomy of spirit in opposition to the spiritual deprivation that mechanical and socio-political laws had imposed on human nature.

In probing the formation of Doppo's *seishin shugi*, it is beneficial to examine the impact of Christian exponents, such as Uchimura and Tsunashima, with whom Doppo had correspondence. Each of them played an influential role respectively in eliciting Doppo's interest in pursuing a life in colonizing Hokkaido and providing a conceptual basis for what Doppo called "wonder"—a topic I will revisit in the later sections. For now, I want to focus on the nature of their written testimony that was fundamental in legitimizing their ideological claims about mystical revelation. Whether it be spiritualism or *seishin shugi*, what we want to interrogate is how they were able to capture what Katai and Yanagita called "that soundless voice and inaudible melody," verbally describing what was essentially invisible and cognitively private—and yet making that experience publicly accessible. Coupled with this, looking into Uchimura's and Tsunashima's works allows us to elucidate the particularity of literary politics—meaning, how Doppo distinguished his writings from those penned by a Christian missionaries and philosophers, who shared the same ideological standpoint. We saw in the previous

[35] On the afterlife of spirit, see "About the Future Life" (Shigo seimei nitsuite, Aug 1929) in Uchimura, Kanzō. 1972. *The Complete Works of Kanzō Uchimura*. Vol. 3. Tokyo: Kyōbunkan. 250-251. In an earlier work he published in 1893, Uchimura affirmed, by drawing on the writing of Tolstoy, that the idea about the eternal existence of soul is not a unique belief particular to the Christian teaching alone. See *Consolations of a Christian* (*Kirisutokyōto no nagusame*, 1893) in Uchimura, Kanzō. 1980. *Uchimura Kanzō Zenshū*. Vol. 2. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten. 71. In the similar line, Tsunashima argued that "no difference exists among peasants, academics, and politicians, or between the successful and the failing, and between heroes and ordinary men, who are the same equal spirits." See "The Meaning of Success and Calm Resignation" (Seikō no igi to anshin ritsumei, 1905) in Tsunashima, Ryōsen. 1995. *Ryōsen Zenshū*. Vol. 5. Tokyo: Ōzorasha. 133.

chapter how Tōkoku strived to intertwine Christian ethics into his literary framework and attempted to establish a distinct disciplinary identity for literature. In regards to this, Doppo gives us an insightful example, for he managed to accomplish it by employing the technique of symbolic allusion, a manner of representing mystery particular to literature, but absent from the writing of Uchimura and Tsunashima, as we see below.

Uchimura Kanzō was born to a family of the warrior class and received a Confucian education; but converted to Christianity upon his admission to the Sapporo Agricultural College in Hokkaido in 1877.[36] Founded by the Colonization Office (*kaitakushi*) of the Meiji government, the school was then led under the leadership of William Smith Clark, who was a Puritan from the United States. Under Clark's guidance, Uchimura participated in the colonization of Hokkaido and cultivated his faith, the recollection of which was published in *How I Became A Christian* (*Yo wa ikanishite kirisutokyōto to narishika*, 1895): "Rejoicing in the newly-imparted activity of my body I roamed over fields and mountains, observed the lilies of the valley and birds of the air, and sought to commune through Nature with Nature's God" (Uchimura 1971, 1:29). His depiction of a fraternal life centered on communal labor and faith captured the heart of many young readers, and the College continued to attract a number of applicants from mainland Japan. Doppo was one of those who was enchanted by Uchimura's portrayal of his productive life in the hinterland, and he began corresponding with him in 1895, as he prepared a plan to move to Hokkaido one day.[37] As the citation above shows, what was eye-catching about Uchimura's writing was his claim to have engaged in communion with God as he was surrounded by nature. We may here recall that Doppo's advocacy of spirit rejected identification with state ethics and the materialist measure of everyday values, and instead sought to adhere to the cosmological laws of the universe that transcends social boundaries. It goes without saying that Uchimura's Christian faith equally regarded materialism as the cause of social ills that fettered spiritual autonomy.

[36] I consulted his autobiographical diary, *How I Became A Christian: Out of My Diary* in Uchimura, Kanzō. 1971. *The Complete Works of Kanzō Uchimura*. Vol. 1. Tokyo: Kyōbunkan. 15-221.

[37] In "An Account Without Deceit" dated on May 22, 1895, Doppo noted that he was reading Uchimura's *How I became A Christian*. In June 16 in the same year, Doppo wrote he has started exchanging letters with Uchimura, who he admired very much. See Kunikida, Doppo. 1965. *Kunikida Doppo Zenshū*. Vol. 7. Tokyo: Gakushūkenkyūsha. 295-301.

As we see in Uchimura's description above, his advocacy of spirit was so strong that it shunned formalism and materialism of all kinds, even the building of churches and rituals that people follow mechanically by the dictate of habits. As a consequence, Uchimura gave birth to the tenet of the formless form of spiritual faith, or what is better known as "non-churchism" (*mukyōkai ron* 無教会論). In this modern Christian rendition, the correspondence must be achieved purely by virtue of the spiritual resonance between man's innermost soul and God alone. As such, it turned one's religious practice into a private and individual conduct without resorting to institutional authority and the public space.[38] In the essay "Non-Churchism" (Mukyōkai ron, 1901), Uchimura wrote:

> There is no need for a large, descent church hall for us Christians who follow the religion of "self." This is so because the original church is the God-created universe itself—the nature. […] Its ceiling is a blue sky, and the wooden boards shall be decked out with stars. The floor is a sheet of green field, and the tatami mats are flowers of various kinds. The pine trees are the music instruments, and the birds in the forest are those who play them. The high podium is the mountain peak, from which God preaches (Uchimura 1962, 18:87–88).

What is noteworthy here is Uchimura's treatment of God-created natural landscape as a substitute for the typical institutional religious setting. The tenet of "non-churchism" is such that it sought no instructional guidance from foreign missionaries and churches, and the "self" became the only authority that guided and sanctioned communion with God. Such being the case, no third-person objective viewpoint could do justice when inquiring into the validity of God's revelation, since the experience has been privatized and made subject solely to the interpretation of the self.

The reason behind Uchimura's advocacy of the self lies in his conviction that Christ, who dwells in the heaven next to God, also resides within man in the form of Spirit. In the Christian context, Son of God refers to Christ, who received the Holy Spirit to align himself with the image of God. Uchimura built on this teaching and argued that God also designed men in such a way that they possessed the Spirit of Christ within

[38] Uchimura showed great empathy with Protenstantism, which privileged spirit over forms that was closest to his advocate of formless spiritual faith. See "Protestant Churches" (Purotesutanto kyōkai, May 1922) in Uchimura, Kanzō. 1972. *The Complete Works of Kanzō Uchimura*. Vol. 3. Tokyo: Kyōbunkan. 152-55.

themselves, for God desired to recreate and fashion man to the image of his Son, Christ.[39] The logical corollary of this is that man listening to one's own inner soul speak is identical to listening to the Spirit of Christ speak, and further to God speaking within the self. In Uchimura's scheme, God thus became internalized within man's soul—the only source from which the divine reveals himself. We can surmise, however, that this scheme yields a potential cognitive problem. For man could end up confusing the perception of his own with the voice of God, especially because his creed shuns all external religious references and authority outside self. Although Uchimura nevertheless distinguished his consciousness from God's voice, as we will see shortly, his conception anticipates the reversal of power dynamics between man and the external Divine. At this historical juncture, the proponents of spiritualism were standing at a crossroads, where they retained their religious belief, but where individuals became equally responsible for constructing their own ethical criteria. This may be the reason why Uchimura called his experience of God's revelation a "religious experiment" (*shinkōteki jikken* 信仰的実験), for he could derive the Divine from within himself using the self as the primary subject of inquiry and thus impress the public with the so-called charismatic talent (Uchimura 1980, 2:74).[40]

While Uchimura's account of "experiment" recorded in *Consolation of a Christian* (*Kirisutoshinto no nagusame*, 1893) witnessed a long-run success for over three decades, Tsunashima Ryōsen, a scholar of religion and ethics, probably enjoyed a far greater public appraisal than did Uchimura with his work "My Experiment in Seeing God" (Yo ga kenshin no jikken, 1905).[41] Born in Okayama in 1873, Tsunashima converted to Christianity at age fourteen and studied philosophy and ethics at the Tokyo School of Special Studies, where Doppo also studied. While a student, he also edited the

[39] For Uchimura's understanding of relation between God, spirits, and man, see "Christ Within Me" and "Great Demands" in Uchimura, Kanzō. 1972. *The Complete Works of Kanzō Uchimura*. Vol. 3. Tokyo: Kyōbunkan. 142-145.

[40] The term appeared in his special edition (1923) commemorating the thirty-year circulation of the renowned work, *Consolation of a Christian* (*Kirisutoshinto no nagusame*, 1893).

[41] Although Tsunashima's religious foundation is based on Christianity, his belief is highly flexible and universal-oriented, calling man both children of God and Budda. See "Self-Testimony" (Nyoze gashō, 1906) and "Notes on Self-Awareness" (Jikaku syōki, 1906) in Tsunashima, Ryōsen. 1995. *Ryōsen Zenshū*. Vol. 5. Tokyo: Ōzorasha. 275-296.

literary journal *Waseda Bungaku* under the mentorship of Tsubouchi Shōyō and published novels and critical essays. But it was the work that recounted his "seeing God" (*kenshin* 見神) that won him a public fame and a followership so ardent that the phenomena came to be termed "Ryōsen fever."[42] As Itō Sei (1996) has illustrated, his charismatic talent left a deep imprint on the anguished writers of the time, such as Doppo, Tokutomi Roka, and later to be the pioneer of feminism Hiratsuka Raichō, wach of whom sought divine revelation when confronting the question of how to establish their own ways of life.[43]

For our purpose, Tsunashima's work is important for the problem it raised regarding the struggle of verbally transmitting the experience of communion. Althoguh he originally intended to offer his work as a written testimony to the like-minded revelation seekers, Tsunashima was keenly aware of the difficulty of representing the mystical when implementing his task. What he shared with Uchimura at least was his recognition that revelation was self-derivative, as shown in his usage of the term "experiment" in the title. Accordingly, he simply strove to describe "as clearly as possible and just as I saw" that which welled up within himself (Tsunashima 1995, 5:210). There is a striking difference between Uchimura and Tsunashima, however, when it comes to their understanding of what needed to be represented. For Uchimura, it was the subtle "voice" of the third person God other than his own that he heard in his mind.[44] This is where he distinguished his voice from God's voice by transcribing the latter verbatim using direct quotations as his testimony of revelation.[45] As such, his record was more like a dialogue between himself and God, although the conversation was woven purely from Uchimura's perception alone. As for Tsunashima, he was more or less rational and objective in the sense that he did not deal with the invisible referent as

[42] For the outline of Tsunashima's works and their intimate relation with the rise of confessional novels in the late Meiji period, see chapter 9 "Meiji kōki bundan ni okeru kokuhaku: ryōsen netsu kara shizen shugi he" in Kimura, Hiroshi. 2015. *Bungaku netsu no jidai*. Tokyo: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai. 205-228.

[43] See Itō, Sei. 1996. *Nihon Bundanshi: Shizen Shugi No Saiseiki*. Vol. 12. Tokyo: Kodansha bungei bunko.
[44] He argued that he transmitted "God's gracious words as I heard directly from Him." See Uchimura, Kanzō. 1980. *Uchimura Kanzō Zenshū*. Vol. 2. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten. 75.

[45] See for example a passage in Uchimura, Kanzō. 1980. *Uchimura Kanzō Zenshū*. Vol. 2. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten. 7.

Uchimura did. Despite his calling the experiment "seeing God," what Tsunashima actually grappled with was observing and transcribing his own "consciousness (*ishiki* 意識) of "astonishment and bewilderment"—a spontaneous emotional reaction he identified as the marker of his correspondence with the invisible and which he characterized as "too extraordinary and profoundly mysterious to conceptualize or put into words" (Tsunashima 1995, 5:209–15). For him, being stunned in such provocative, self-diminishing feelings was the fundamental condition in which his soul surrendered to the unknown mystery. Such being the case, he strived to parse and describe as realistically as possible what he was undergoing when his ability to think was stripped away in astonishment or bewilderment.[46]

Whether it be God's voice or individual consciousness, realistic depiction was the key instrument for both Uchimura and Tsunashima in getting their perception across. It was crucial in providing a truthful testimony of revelation that the curious public equally sought, and their insistence on candid description, I think, was a strategic statement to add credibility to their purported supernatural experiences. It is worth noting that their decision to invest in realistic depiction echoed a literary trend of the 1890s in portraying things "just as they are" (*ari no mama* or *aru ga mama*). As Van Compernolle succinctly summarizes, the trend in *ari no mama* was the Japanese appropriation of the Western ideal of objective representation salient in the post-romantic era, and it aimed at jettisoning the influence of classical literature by privileging realistic depiction over crafty rhetoric (Van Compernolle 2016, 46–47). More often than not, Doppo's works have been associated with the trend in realism, particularly in terms of his mastery of a *genbun itchi* style that repressed classical rhetoric, as discussed earlier.

But I argue differently, based on his Christian subjectivity, that what Doppo attempted to represent was fundamentally inimical to the rising tide of realism. We may here recall the spiritualists' tendency to turn their back on "reality and science," as we saw in Yanagita's and Katai's thesis, coupled with Tsunashima's assertion that what is truly mystical is beyond description. By representing the invisible realistically, the

[46] He recounted that it occurred, for example, when he was looking at the forests draped in the glow of sunset in the outskirt of the town and when he was sitting up in his bed at midnight. See Tsunashima, Ryōsen. 1995. *Ryōsen Zenshū*. Vol. 5. Tokyo: Ōzorasha. 210-11.

spiritualists would end up reducing the mystery to an object of scrutiny by constructing knowledge that rationalized and cheapened the aura of the incomprehensible. I would suggest that the writings of both Uchimura and Tsunashima took part in unveiling the mystery, for they provided a detailed explication of the particular situations or feelings associated with their revelations that helped their ardent followers build a general knowledge. With regard to this issue of realistic depiction, I argue that it is exactly the point where Doppo differed from Uchimura and Tsunashima who, though they shared the same Christian beliefs, ended up demystifying that which enthralled them. Doppo, by contrast, eschewed realism by wielding symbolic allusion in his lyrical prose, a strategy particular to the literary field, as we see in his work "Musashino."

As we will see in more detail in the later section, the poetic language of "Musashino" manages to represent what was essentially unintelligible—or rather what needed to remain verbally elusive while conveying the overflow of emotions to elucidate spiritual communion. As such, Doppo's literary strategy is reminiscent of *waka* poetry, where symbolic allusion subtly hints at particular emotions and which poets usually express by borrowing the vehicle of nature. As a matter of fact, from the classical *waka* poetry to Noh drama, such indescribable feelings have been identified with the literary quality "*yūgen*"(profound mystery), which has long been regarded as one of the important aesthetic categories of the Japanese art.[47] It could be argued that Doppo was defending *yūgen* as the very essence of art in his aesthetic politics in the Meiji historical context, suggesting that what makes human emotions vibrantly autonomous is that which transcends our knowledge or intellect. Symbolic allusion is thus an important strategy to retain the aura of mystery.

That being said, we need to keep in mind that Doppo's use of a *genbun itchi* style annihilated the culturally established poetic association codified in the classical rhetoric. What this means is that there was no commonly shared poetic rule available to decode Doppo's self-contrived allusion, and as a result, deciphering his text requires a lot

[47] For example, Kamo no Chōmei (1155-1216) of the Heian-Kamakura period defined *yūgen* as "lingering emotion not apparent in the diction, a mood not visible in the configuration of the verse," whereas Zeami (1363-1443) of the Muromachi period regarded it as "mysterious beauty in cosmic truth." For the definitions and the aesthetic role of *yūgen* in the Japanese art, see Hume, Nancy G. 1995. *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press. 251-352.

of guesswork. Unlike Uchimura's and Tsunashima's realistic depiction, the use of symbolic allusion is premised on the expectation that readers can achieve insights into Doppo's Christian core and that they have the ability to uncover his implicit meaning. In what follows, I will first discuss the notion of "wonder" to help us better understand the politics of aesthetics underlying "Musashino." I will then illustrate how Doppo's *seishin shugi* located the source of wonder in the Beauty of God-created nature in a way that echoed Uchimura's "non-churchism," and will attempt to frame his aesthetic taste using the notion of the sublime.

**Doppo and Wonder: The Aesthetic of the Sublime**

In October 1905, Doppo wrote a letter to Tsunashima to tell him how impressed he was by his renowned work *Diary on Sick Bed* (*Byōkan roku*, 1905), where essays including "My Experiment in Seeing God" were collected.[48] What made Doppo reach out to the popular celebrity was his excitement in finding a like-minded individual, who had quite eloquently described in the essay "Wonder and Religion" (Kyōi to shūkyō) the essential roles of mystery and astonishment that had equally captivated Doppo for a long time. Hoping that Tsunashima would rightly criticize and sympathize with his bizarre obsession with wonder (*kyōi* 驚異), Doppo wrote a letter to Tsunashima and enclosed his own anthology *Doppo Collection* (*Doppo shū*, 1905), asking him to take a look at one of his literary pieces, "Meat and Potatoes" (Gyūniku to bareisho, 1901). Although Doppo's work in question takes on a fictional setting, it reveals through the mouth of protagonist, Okamoto Masao, how strongly the notion of wonder constituted his ideological foundations, a feature that equally infiltrates "Musashino."[49] Although "Musashino" was written a few years prior to "Meat and Potatoes," looking into the latter work gives us insights into the aesthetic principles that guided Doppo's portrayal of the suburban landscape—a subject that has received too

[48] See his record of correspondence with Tsunashima, indexed 203 in Kunikida, Doppo. 1966. *Kunikida Doppo Zenshū*. Vol. 5. Tokyo: Gakushūkenkyūsha. 492-93.

[49] In "My Works and Facts" (Yo ga sakuhin to jujitsu, 1907), Doppo wrote that he imaginatively crafted the personality of the protagonist Okamoto, but noted that Okamoto's speech reflects Doppo's own. He further admitted that his idealism encapsulated in "Hokkaido fever" is based on the fact, along with four friends who appear in fictitious names. See Kunikida, Doppo. 1965. *Kunikida Doppo Zenshū*. Vol. 1. Tokyo: Gakushūkenkyūsha. 523-524.

little scholarly attention.

In the story, Okamoto and several friends meet in the Meiji Club in Tokyo and debate on the pros and cons of life in the ideal and life in reality, likening the former humorously to a potato party (pursuing an ideal life in Hokkaido) and the latter to a meat party (submitting to reality).[50] Unlike his friends who had pursued an ideal life in Hokkaido, but eventually gave up and sided with the meat party in supporting the urban life, Okamoto chose neither side and went on to explain what he sought out of life:

> 'Do hurry up and tell us your wish!' said Matsuki impatiently.
> 'O.K. But don't be surprised.'
> 'Come on, out with it. Quickly!'
> Okamoto was calm. 'My wish is that I should like to be surprised [*odorokitai* 驚きたい].'
> 'What's that? Absolute nonsense!'
> 'What did you say?'
> 'Is that all you were getting at?'
> They all spoke as if they were disgusted. Only Kondo said nothing, apparently waiting for Okamoto's explanation.
> 'There's a line of poetry which goes,
> "Awake, poor troubled sleeper; shake off thy torpid nightmare dream."
> My wish, in other words, is to rid myself of the demon of my dreams.'
> 'I don't understand what you're on about,' said Watanuki, as if to himself.
> 'I don't want to know the mysteries of the universe. I just want to be surprised by them' (Kunikida 1982, 149).

In the excerpt above, Okamoto insists in all seriousness that he desires to be surprised by the mysteries of the universe, and he need not know, by investigating or studying, why some aspects of the universe are indeed mysterious. It is apparent from the interaction, however, that Okamoto's reserved confession was just as unclear as a riddle, or even an absurdity, to his friends. He continues to explain more clearly in the next passage that his desire for wonder had been shunned by the power of custom, or what he called above "demon" that had numbed his sensibility to surprise. For Okamoto, it is both the

[50] Hokkaido was becoming famous for producing potatoes, thanks to the cultivation of land as a part of colonial enterprise. The members in the meeting joked that there was nothing but potatoes to eat in Hokkaido. To pursue reality in the name of meat (beef) was an implicit allusion to things Western, when one of the members Watanuki said, "Loyalty, patriotism or whatever, they are all compatible with meat." See "Meat and Potatoes" in Kunikida, Doppo. 1982. *River Mist and Other Stories by Kunikida Doppo*. Translated by David G. Chibbett. Tokyo; New York; San Francisco: Kōdansha International Ltd. 142.

knowledge and habitual customs he accumulates and practices routinely that make all phenomena disenchanting and commonplace. To be capable of surprise, he argues, one must be free from "the pressure of old worn-out customs;" he says it does not matter whether he is a meat eater or a potato eater, so long as he can be immersed in wonder (Kunikida 1982, 150).

This is an important thesis when considering that Doppo chose a suburb as the backdrop for "Musashino," a place that bears the trace of neither the wilderness of Hokkaido nor the bureaucratic center of urban Tokyo. It suggests that Doppo's aesthetic orientation did not assume a particular geographical feature as a requisite precondition to feel mystery. Rather, what mattered to him was to what mystical element in the universe spontaneously sparked his emotional radar, irrespective of the where that took place.

In this regard, Tsunashima's aforementioned essay "Wonder and Religion" gives us important insights into the particular kinds of feelings that both Tsunashima and Doppo closely associated with wonder. In the essay, Tsunashima first maintained that wonder is the "essential foundation of religion;" because susceptibility to mystery is a necessary precondition for man to believe in God or things invisible and supernatural (Tsunashima 1995, 5:201). As such, appreciating mysteries without the intervention of intellect provokes agitated feelings of "bewilderment, doubt, anxiety, fear, and loneliness" that Tsunashima characterized as the essence of wonder (201). To get oneself carried away in fear is just as terrifying as it is delightful, and it is the concurrence of these two opposing feelings that loomed large as the new aesthetic taste in Japan, known as the sublime (*sūkō* 崇高 in Tsunashima's word). It is worth noting that Tsunashima's emphasis on wonder was largely influenced by the Scottish Romantic Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), whose ideas he referred to in his essay—as had Doppo in "Meat and Potatoes" illustrated above.[51] The interest in the sublime aesthetics had become prominent in Europe several decades earlier, and the historical factors that facilitated the shift in taste in equally applied to the case of late nineteenth-century Japan.

In her discussion of the emergence of the sublime in seventeenth-century

[51] Drawing on previous studies, Ashiya Nobukazu notes that Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1836) and *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* (1841) were two important works that influenced Doppo. See Ashiya, Nobukazu. 1954. "Doppo No 'Gyūniku to Bareisho': Tokuni 'Kyōi' Nitsuite." *Ronkyū Nihon Bungaku* 2 (November): 30.

England, Marjorie Hope Nicolson argues that "awe, compounded of mingled terror and exultation, once reserved for God," were grafted on "an expanded cosmos, then from the macrocosm to the greatest objects in the geocosm—mountains, ocean, desert" (Nicolson 1959, 143). The obsession with the sublime was exemplified in the popularity of the Grand Tour among the British aristocracy who visited exotic landscapes in the Continent, as well as in a vogue for mountaineering (especially in the Alps). According to Nicolson, the transformation of aesthetic taste resulted from two interrelated factors that shifted the object of reverence and awe from God to natural landscape. The first was the development of physical science, which rewrote the classical episteme of cosmology recounted in Genesis, as I discussed in the previous chapter. The discovery of physical laws displaced the notion of a God-ruled universe and ousted mysticism from the discourse of the making of the universe. Although this was the case, the development of geology and astronomy simultaneously accompanied the ceaseless discovery of an uncharted parts of the universe, which, argues Nicolson, paradoxically contributed to the assignment of the image of the Infinite (i.e. God) to the seemingly infinite façade of the universe (Nicolson 1959, 113–43). Consequently, conceptions such as majesty, grandeur, and infinity that once belonged to God alone were thus transposed onto His artwork, particularly the landscape of wilderness, whose richness and immeasurable quality became the markers of transcendence and incomprehensibility.

One remarkable feature of sublime aesthetics is its visual preference for irregularity and asymmetry associated with jagged mountain walls or rugged coastal terrains. These stand in sharp contrast to the classical aesthetics, which cherished the artificially maneuvered beauty of linear order and peaceful calmness. Crude wildness satisfied the thirst for instinctive awe and fear traditionally reserved for God. With regard to this, Arthur O. Lovejoy has demonstrated that interest in the sublime was encapsulated in the vogue for the English-style landscape gardening, wherein a "natural" representation of landscape became favored over an "artificial" one designed in precise regularity (quoted in Nicolson 1959, 23).[52] The aesthetic shift away from the classical

[52] Scholars point out that the Western interest in the natural setting was perfected by modeling after the asymmetrical aesthetic established in the Chinese landscape. On this matter, Augustin Berque gives a comprehensive discussion of the asymmetrical aesthetic central to the landscape painting (*sansuiga* 山水画

concept of beauty thus signaled man's liberation from the traditional cosmological order, in which man's Nature was to imitate analogically—by means of intellect and studying canonical texts—the harmonious order dictated by heavenly law. The rise of the sublime challenged the rationale that informed classical aesthetics, advocating instead the emotional autonomy of individuals, as we have traced in the works of spiritualists.

As discussed earlier, sublime aesthetics is often linked with visually overwhelming objects. But this is more a matter of tendency than a definite attribute of the sublime, for it differs from one person to another as to what triggers the emotional agitation reminiscent of religious awe. As such, when landscape is liberated from the classical semiotic systems, it becomes necessary for each individual to construct his or her own system of interpretation to generate meanings. The English-style garden is designed in such a crude way that the strollers themselves must interpret the meaning of the landscape; and they do so by following their own emotional radar.

In Japan, the conceptual reception of the sublime came in accordance with the reception of the works of the English art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900).[53] For the Japanese writers, Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (1843) was an important aesthetic guidebook that addressed the definition of concepts such as the sublime and beautiful and lectured readers on how to pursue truth through the acquisition of skills to observe the surroundings properly. Combined with the notion of the sublime, Ruskin was particularly influential in drawing the Japanese readers' attention to the beauty of mountains. Ruskin's preoccupation with mountains was inseparable from his religious belief, as is evident from his assertion that the mission of mountain is "to fill the thirst of the human heart for the beauty of God's working—to startle its lethargy with the deep and pure agitation of astonishment" (Ruskin ca. 1906, 4:87).[54]

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) and tea house (*chashitsu* 茶室) in the Chinese and Japanese arts that predated the eighteenth-century European counterpart. See Berque, Augustin. 2017. *Risō no sumai: inton kara sappūkei he*. Translated by Motoki Toriumi. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press.

[53] The earliest mention of Ruskin appeared in the journal *Jyogaku shinshi* (April 1885), a precursor of *Jyogaku zasshi* run by Iwamoto Yoshiharu. But it only introduced his name, along with nine other Englishmen, who were purported to be important public figures in England. See Ishii, Masao. 1954. "Rasukin to meiji no shizen bungaku." *Bulletin of Tōyō University*, March, 123–36.

[54] The copy of the book in the Knight library at University of Oregon does not include the date of publication.

Tokutomi Sohō was quick to touch on Ruskin in his essay "Inspiration" (1888), along with Tsubouchi Shōyō, who introduced Ruskin's biography and aesthetic theory to a broader audience in 1893 in his literary journal *Waseda Bungaku*.[55] When it comes to literary production, Shimazaki Tōson eloquently expressed the new taste for the sublime by portraying the grandeur of mountainous landscape. As is well known, Tōson wrote "Clouds" (Kumo, 1901) and "Chikuma River Sketches" (Chikuma gawa no sukecchi, 1912) under the great influence of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, learning to capture the layers of colors and the details of the vicissitudes of the natural world that unfolded ceaselessly in the landscape. But it was in his fictional work *The Broken Commandment* (*Hakai,* 1906)—through the words of a character named Rentarō—that he most explicitly signaled a transformation of the aesthetic sensibility.

From a rural town near the mountain range running across Nagano, Rentarō says that mountain landscape "had meant little or nothing" until recently, for it evoked no response but "feelings of confusion and unease." But he continues that he gradually came to see, for the first time, "the grandeur (*sūkō* 崇高)" in it, and felt "exaltation" when he noticed the overwhelming intensity of beauty embodied in the dynamic contours of mountains, deep valleys, giant glaciers, and so forth (Shimazaki 1974, 91–92).

Tōson's description illuminates an important characteristic pertinent to shifts in aesthetic taste. What ultimately changed, of course, is not the appearance of landscape itself, but rather the observer's perception of nature and especially the perception that certain elements in nature were imbued with the quality of magnificence or sacred nobility. In other words, notions such as grandeur and loftiness are not necessarily the prized attributes of mountains alone, but could be associated with any element in landscape, so long as the beholder feels something sublime in the object. While it is true that the visually overpowering image of mountains was particularly instrumental in provoking awe and delight, it needs to be emphasized that the sublime, as Ruskin argues, is "any thing which elevates the mind" and that it is "another word for the effect of greatness upon the feelings" (Ruskin ca. 1906b, 1:37). It is important to recognize that no predetermined rule linking particular objects and the sentiment of sublime exists, and that

[55] "A Brief Biography of Ruskin" (Rasukin no ryakuden), "Criticism of Ruskin" (Rasukin ni kansuru hihyō), and "Ruskin's Aesthetic Theory" (Rasukin ga bi no ron).

whatever objects (i.e. small or large) that elevate individuals are, in theory, the sublime.

With regard to this, I shall touch on a geographer and renowned public promoter of the national essence, Shiga Shigetaka (1863-1927), who equally introduced the notion of the sublime in his bestseller *Theory of Japanese Landscape* (*Nihon fūkeiron*, 1894), but denied both the religious connotation reserved for God and the primacy of subjectivity in interpreting what counted as the sublime. For Shiga, aesthetics was an important ideological tool in building cohesion within and between communities; and to that end, he needed to build a common standard of value judgments by jettisoning subjective interpretation. Although Shiga is often seen as the Japanese Ruskin in setting the trend in alpinism and popularizing the notion of the sublime, it is somewhat misleading to regard him as the faithful mouthpiece of Ruskin, who not only advocated subjectivity, but also defended the authority of God behind the façade of landscape.[56]

Combining literary sources and knowledge of geophysical science, Shiga offered in the work an elaborate portrait of the Japanese geography and celebrated the rich and various natural resources that make up the topography of Japan. Although Shiga's geographical investigation covered more or less the entirety of Japan's territory, it was novel in that he brought new light to the arresting sights of remote hinterlands and wilderness, which had been unknown to the category of classical scenic beauty, as Kojima Usui, the founder of the Japanese alpine literature, explained in his commentary to the book (Shiga 1995, 371–72). Shiga's insights into the dynamic parts of nature were likely to have been fostered during his time at the Sapporo Agricultural College, where he was three years junior to Uchimura Kanzō. While Shiga's school-day diary evinces his tremendous fascination with the breath-taking views of cliffs, mountains, and swirling currents of Hokkaido, his perception of nature, unlike that of Uchimura and most of his fellow Christian students, was not filtered through Christian subjectivity. He was rather

[56] Wigmen, for example, discusses the impact of Ruskin on the writings of both Shiga and Kojima Usui, the founder of the Japanese alpine literature. She tends to highlight how the Ruskinian notion of the sublime turned their interest to studying mountainous landscapes and propelled scientific enlightenment in geography, but discusses little about the religious implication central to Ruskin's appreciation of mountains, which Shiga did not inherit for a political reason. See Wigen, Karen. 2005. "Discovering the Japanese Alps: Meiji Mountaineering and the Quest for Geographical Enlightenment." *Journal Of Japanese Studies* 31 (1): 1–26.

antagonistic to religion and even regarded Uchimura as his foe.[57] Naturally, he did not subscribe to the Christian notion of the God-created universe and embraced instead physical science as the measure of his geographical understanding.

In the *Theory of Japanese Landscape*, Shiga deplored the lack of scientific rationality among artists and criticized that "while they say they discern the subtle workings of the universe and unite with nature in glaring inspiration, they actually know little" (331). As such, he dwelled on how the mechanisms of climatic variation, humidity, heavy rainfall, and volcanic activities were the primary forces in breeding the diversity of flora and fauna and creating the stunning views of the Japanese topography. It was the physical laws of nature that were mystically appealing to him, and to study and unpack the secrets of the workings of rains, currents, and erosion—was his way to reach the truth.

Of all the scenic beauty Shiga discussed, he gave the highest credit to volcanic mountains, whose magnificent outlook, he argued, "awakens, elevates, and purifies human nature" (Shiga 1995, 92). For Shiga, volcanic mountains with symmetrical cone shapes (e.g. Mt. Fuji) are indeed beautiful, but the ones with irregularity and varying degrees of unruly features are unrivalled when it comes to their overpoweringly sublime effect. He thus set up three different aesthetic categories—elegance (*shōsha* 瀟洒), beauty (*bi* 美), and, the sublime (*tettō* 跌宕)[58] and provided numerous examples of each, linking a particular site of landscape and aesthetic sentiment in a way reminiscent of the classical tradition of poetic association. In his admiration for mountains, Shiga might seem to have aligned himself with Ruskin. But it is important to note that he used a uniform aesthetic standard to prescribe what visual elements fall in the category of the sublime, beauty, or elegance respectively. It is a strategy of stereotyping or inculcation of objective rule that suppresses the autonomy of subjective emotional reaction. Herein lies

[57] For Shiga's accounts, see his "Diary during my Stay in Sapporo" discussed in Moritani, Uichi. 2002. "Shiga Shigetaka 'Nihon Fūkeiron' Wo Yomu." *The Society for Science of Literary Art*, no. 6 (July): 34-53.

[58] Tettō originally meant "loose and unruly," but it also came to denote "magnificent," which was the closest equivalent of the English sublime. See Moritani, Uichi. 2002. "Shiga Shigetaka 'Nihon Fūkeiron' Wo Yomu." *The Society for Science of Literary Art*, no. 6 (July): 26-27.

Shiga's nationalist tenor, for his goal is to dictate and homogenize aesthetic sensibility, and to foster patriotism through the love of nature. His setting up of the sublime as one of the aesthetic categories is a strategic one, for he attempted to cultivate a sensitivity to elements of geography foreign to the traditional perception of nature.

While Shiga's introduction of the sublime aesthetic has received much scholarly attention, his interpretation is at odds with the Ruskinian strand of definition informing Doppo that I have foregrounded in the literary, spiritualist context. I would suggest that in Japan, the intellectual current of the sublime bearing the Ruskinian definition can be traced back to Kitamura Tōkoku. We may recall that he praised Bashō's poem on the pond (see Chapter 1) and commented that "the sublime is not contingent on forms, but it belongs to the realm of ideas" (Kitamura 1950, 2:123).[59] Tōkoku here recounted that the sublime is premised on the spontaneous feelings of individuals rather than on the visual quality of physical objects. To equate the sublime with the traits of wilderness would thus overshadow the politics of privileging individual subjectivity over objective realities. The dazzling features of asymmetry and irregularity engraved in landscape were visual elements that provoked, relative with ease, the instinctive awe that spiritualists claimed as the essence of man's Nature.

As a matter of fact, Doppo was indeed just as attracted to the dynamic features of the mountainous landscapes as were Tōson and Shiga. His diary, which describes his time as a teacher in the rural town of Saeki in Ōita, Kyūshū in 1893, gives us an important glimpse of his period of training, so to speak, when he learned to sharpen his susceptibility to wonder. As he recalled, it was during his time in Saeki that he appreciated Wordsworth the most, learning to stroll about nature and coming to appreciate mountains, rivers, valleys, green fields, and forests, just as his emotions guided him.[60] For Doppo, too, the gloomy, fear-provoking scenery of mountains was intensely captivating and instrumental, as he saw it, in helping him to retrieve his

[59] "*saburaimu towa katachi no handan ni arazushite sō no ryōbun nari*" (サブライムとは形の判断にあらずして想の領分なり).

[60] For Doppo's discussion of Wordsworth's influence during his time in Saeki, see "Small Spring" (Koharu, 1900) in Kunikida, Doppo. 1964. *Kunikida Doppo Zenshū*. Vol. 2. Tokyo: Gakushūkenkyūsha. 296.

essential Nature: “The noble world of truth unknown to me lies beyond the gate of terror. That forlorn world consisting of forests, valleys, starlight and moonlight, valley wind, owls, heaven and myself—how truthful that world is” (Kunikida 1965b, 7:107). Doppo recounted that entering the gate of terror and proceeding further into the darkness promised to rid himself of the secular “world of “prejudice” and to turn himself into a “child of Nature” (145).

What he means by a “child of Nature” is not that he abandons his social identity and status in order to live humbly in the natural world. To return to Nature, in this particular context, bears the romantic connotation of restoring man’s innate connection with, and ethical submission to, the Divine. To this end, Doppo aimed to invigorate what was purported to be man’s instinctive desire for fear, astonishment, and awe, which are now projected onto the God-created natural landscape. Looking from this viewpoint, he equally shared the aesthetic sensibility with his contemporaries, who likewise linked the sentiment of terror and awe with a magnificent mountainous landscape. Although this was the case, what is remarkable about Doppo, and his social intervention through literature, is his choosing a suburb in Tokyo as the center stage of the sublime, instead of choosing some rural or under-populated site in the hinterland. In what follows, I will turn to his work “Musashino” and elucidate how he strived to showcase the autonomy of subjective emotion against the backdrop of suburb, and targeted his audience to urban residents, who were physically distanced from awe-provoking nature.

**“Musashino” and Sublime Beauty: The Use of Symbolic Allusion**

Written in 1898, “Musashino” is a product of Doppo’s long-term observation of the landscape in one suburb of Tokyo. After his short stay in Kyūshū and his dispatch abroad as a war correspondent, he moved to the village of Shibuya within the area of Musashino in1896. The work begins with his account of reading the map of Musashino one day, whereby he gets struck by a sentence stating that the surviving relics of the past may be found in one of the nearby districts. Curious to see with his own eyes how much of ancient Musashino remains today, he sets about walking around the vicinity. He then becomes immediately enamored by the beauty of present day Musashino and decides to keep a record of his impressions during the seasons of autumn and winter. In analyzing

this text, I refer to his diary "An Account Without Deceit" (Azamukazaru no ki, 1893-1897) as it gives us insights into the aesthetic principles that guide the narrative. We see in the following assertion—namely, to "enlighten (*kyōka* 教化) my people through the truth of Christ"—that he aspired to make a social intervention through literature grounded in Christian ethics (Kunikida 1965b, 7:508). Two months earlier in October 1896, he had written in the same diary what can be read as his agenda for the writing of "Musashino":

> 26th of October:
> […]
> I sat in the wood and looked, listened, and contemplated. My idea for "Musashino" wells up.
> I shall be a poet of God.
> I have trained myself to be a poet up until today.
> I shall walk my own path; I am convinced that I am destined to be a poet.
> […]
> I pursue more ardently the faith in God; and I strive harder to discern a wonder.
> I'm no pastor, but I am one of those who desire to know God.
> Clerical poet—that's what I wish to be.
> […]
> The beauty of heaven and earth, God's profound will, a life of wonder, and mystery of humanity—I am to live immersed in these, struck in astonishment and admiration.
> Ah, what does life mean after all?
> Woods, forests, and vast sky—answer me!
> […]
> "Musashino." This is my poetic topic to test my observations that I had accumulated in the past few years. With this, I shall offer the great garden to people of Tokyo (Kunikida 1965b, 7:487–88).

It is evident that the aesthetic principles guiding Doppo were based in an inspirational sense of wonder (*kyōi* 驚異) and mystery (*yūgen* 幽玄). These are the feelings that derive from his awareness of God's profound will embodied in landscape that possessed him as he roamed about the suburb of Tokyo. What is especially intriguing here is his aspiration to use Musashino as a testing ground for the observational skills that he had purportedly acquired in both Kyushu and Hokkaido in years between 1893 and 1894. In the work itself, Doppo cites a letter from his friend, who offered the following geographical definition of Musashino that helps us understand his choice of

the suburb:

> To begin with, I consider that Tokyo lies at the heart of Musashino, but that we must leave out, because it is impossible to imagine what it must have been like in the days of old when, now, it is filled with busy streets and soaring government offices. […] However, though we exclude Tokyo itself from the definition of Musashino, we must be careful not to exclude the city's suburbs and outlying districts which, in my view, are part of the poetic beauty of the plain. […] In your piece you speak of the close harmony existing between life and nature and depict several scenes which have delighted you. With all you say, I wholeheartedly agree (Kunikida 1982, 109–10).

The geographical features these writers associated with Musashino do not bear the mark of urban metropolis, while still being not so forlorn and depopulated as the hinterland. This was a place where each of the elements that constituted civilization and nature mingled in harmony, or in Doppo's own words, the "society in miniature" (111). This characterization bespeaks Doppo's dual characters: as a romanticist, on the one hand, whose blood welled up when thinking about the freedom of the mountains and forests; and as a realist, on the other hand, knowing that the pursuit of the ideal in nature would severe one's tie from the real world of civilization. His unwillingness to choose one over the other echoes the protagonist Okamoto in "Meat and Potatoes," the title of which implicitly suggests that having the two together (i.e. reality and ideal) is better than just one.[61] As a matter of fact, Doppo wrote in his diary as if to convince himself that "there is nature in the cities, as well," and expressed his resolution to get "stunned by the beauty through his faith, absorb the vitality of freedom there, and make a sincere correspondence with nature there" (Kunikida 1965b, 7:235). We see in his determination the ultimate goal to discern the ubiquitous presence of God amidst everyday mundane scenes, and weave his faith into the fabric of a down-to-earth reality. In a sense, this trajectory is what distinguished him from his predecessor Tōkoku, who was more of an idealist in that he did not engage in the question of how to reconcile with a Meiji society that was hostile to religion and mystery. As such, when Doppo boldly proposed to "offer the great garden

[61] Such polarity was shaped in part by his admiration for Wordsworth, whose noted line, "On man, on nature, and on human life, Musing in solitude" from "The Recluse" was his favorite literary principle. See his essay "The Mysterious, Great Nature: the Naturalism of Wordsworth and I" (Fukashigi naru daishizen: wāzuwāsu no shizenshugi to yo, 1908) in Kunikida, Doppo. 1965. *Kunikida Doppo Zenshū*. Vol. 1. Tokyo: Gakushūkenkyūsha. 542.

to people of Tokyo," it was to prove to his audience the omnipresence of God—and by extension, the role literature can play in society in enlightening the readership. And he did so by following his subjective perception and using symbolic allusion as a means of transmission, as we see below.

"Musashino" consists of representations of the landscape and a depiction of the interaction of the narrator with people during his stroll. One remarkable textual feature is that Doppo's image of the Musashi plain is shaped by piecing together different textual sources. These include accounts from his own diary, a letter from his friend, a *waka* poem by an Edo-poet, and an extract of Ivan Turgenev's *The Rendezvous* translated into Japanese in 1888. Overall, it appears like a "collage," as Stephen Dodd had rightly characterized it, with diverse viewpoints mixed up and making up the representations of the area (Dodd 2004, 37). As such, scholars hesitate to regard the work as a novel, and see its discursive style of writing as something reminiscent of the traditional Japanese writing style known as *zuihitsu* (random jottings).[62] Doppo himself announces explicitly at the beginning of "Musashino" that his intention is not to write a coherent narrative story, but to extract from the landscape some emotionally provocative elements, or literally, what meets his poetic taste: "I have just said that modern Musashino has beauty, but perhaps, all things considered, it would be more appropriate to say that it has charm (*shishu* 詩趣)" (Kunikida 1982, 98). The term *shishu* is ambiguous on its own and does not assume any specific object or topic as a requisite of poetic theme. Rather, what is poetically alluring is all relative and is contingent on the aesthetic sensibility of the beholder.

That Doppo describes what he found in the present-day Musashino as *shishu* suggests that what he really intends to do is foreground are his own inner feelings and not to sketch the surroundings faithfully in the spirit of *ari no mama*. To this end, the elements he found appealing in the landscape constitute the instruments to embody and materialize his emotions, and the realistic depiction of physical objects was perhaps of lesser priority compared to his primary task of getting across his moment of emotional

[62] See for example, both Senuma Shigeki's "Bibliographical Introduction" in Kunikida, Doppo. 1964. *Kunikida Doppo Zenshū*. Vol. 2. Tokyo: Gakushūkenkyūsha. 546. And Davit G. Chibbett's introduction to *Musashino* in Kunikida, Doppo. 1982. *River Mist and Other Stories by Kunikida Doppo*. Translated by David G. Chibbett. Tokyo; New York; San Francisco: Kōdansha International Ltd. 97.

connection. This does not mean that his writing invests little in the objective portrayal of surroundings; rather it is to say that he selectively wields a realistic touch, or suppresses it, in such a way as to make certain that the depiction of each scene meets his criteria of taste.[63] The frequent citation of disparate secondary resources bears witness to this, as he utilizes them to substantiate his perception and sentiment.

The passage below illustrates just how much Doppo followed his own aesthetic criteria as he walked around the area. For him, the Musashi plain is like a large-scale English-style landscape garden freed from the classical semiotic system, where nothing but his own spontaneous feelings determine his interpretation of the world:

> The paths vanish constantly into woods, emerge into fields and vanish again, so that you can never keep track of anyone as he walks along. But for all that, the paths of Musashino are so much more rewarding than any others, and people should not distress themselves at getting lost, for wherever you go, there is something worthwhile to see, hear and feel. […] If you are walking along a path and come to a fork, there is no need to trouble yourself. Just go wherever your stick points the way. The path you choose may lead you into a small wood and if there it divides further, choose the smaller track for it may lead you to some delightful spot, such as the site of an old grave (Kunikida 1982, 106).

As the passage illustrates, there is no guiding aesthetic rule that he follows but his own. Just by following his intuitions and keeping on walking, he runs into many eye-opening things that will delight and satisfy him. With regard to this, Karatani argues that Doppo's "Musashino" demonstrates a disjuncture with the classical tradition, or liberation from the established epistemological constellation that had dictated the aesthetic principle that determined the association between place and emotional sentiment (Karatani 1993, 23–40). While it is true that Doppo's perception of landscape shows a break from the past when he disregards the principle of fixed poetic subjects, we cannot presume that he was free of all ideological filters. We have so far traced the intellectual underpinnings shaped by his Christian faith, and thus should be aware of his taste for wonder and mystery. Yet, the problem posed by Doppo's text poses is that while the author is certain of his literary

[63] The passages he cited from his diary offers a rather detailed description of nature, with emphasis given on the color of skies, sound of winds and rain, and reflection of lights radiating against tree leaves. See Kunikida, Doppo. 1982. *River Mist and Other Stories by Kunikida Doppo*. Translated by David G. Chibbett. Tokyo; New York; San Francisco: Kōdansha International Ltd. 98-101.

agenda, his readers (particularly Tokyoites to whom he dedicated his work) are expected to follow his random footsteps, discern a certain rule guiding his minds and texts, and build a coherent narrative on their own out of his disjointed accounts.

The problem of deciphering is multiplied when the text implies the occurrence of correspondence using symbolic allusion. Of particular relevance is Doppo's reference to Turgenev, from whom he had learned to see nature in a new light, and more importantly, to use the strategy of verbal allusion. In the work, the narrator explicitly admitted how much he owed to Turgenev for directing his eyes to the beauty in the deciduous woods long neglected in the classical aesthetic repertoire. It was "the power of his description" the narrator says, that led him to discover the beauty in them; and he cited rather extensively the passage from *The Rendezvous* Futabatei Shimei translated into Japanese (Kunikida 1982, 102):

> I just sat there, looking and listening. The leaves of the trees above my head were engaged in faint combat, and just by listening to the sound they made, I could tell the season. It was not the cheerful laughing sound of early spring; it was not the gentle wafting sound of summer nor was it the long conversational sound or the nervous chatter of late autumn. No, it was a melancholy whispering which sometimes you could catch and sometimes not. It was almost as if the gentle breeze was stealing its way into the treetops [emphasis added by myself] (101).

At first, it strikes the readers as strange that Doppo would uses Turgenev's Russian landscape to represent the Musashi plain. Doppo himself is aware of this anomaly and admits that the Russian landscape decorated with birch trees is not precisely the same as the oaks of Musashino. For him, though, such a difference is negligible as they are "all alike" in his view (102).[64] Here again, his recklessness gives us a clue that he is not intending to refine the level of faithful representations of Musashino. What interests him is the impressive power of Turgenev's writing. In the citation above, the way he characterizes inanimate objects is far from realistic, as shown in the parts that I have underlined. Doppo personifies inanimate objects and uses adjectives as if they have

[64] In the later section, Doppo takes up Turgenev's work again—this time his portrayal of bare mountains—and maintains that the scenery is applicable to Japanese fields, while acknowledging that no such mountain exists in Musashino.

autonomous lives and emotions of their own, making them somewhat equivalent to human qualities. While the writing itself is not of Doppo's invention, we see here his desire to discern and convey what Kamei Hideo called the "secret 'whispering' of nature" (Kamei 2002, 272). For some, the sounds of nature may be nothing more than the rustle of leaves and chirping of birds. But a "poet of God," as Doppo called himself, is bestowed with a talent for sensing something beyond what is actually heard. He called this mystical sound, a "*ninjō no yūon hichō* (人情の幽音悲調)"—a term that Doppo translated from Wordsworth's line "the still, sad music of humanity" found in *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* (Kunikida 1965a, 1:368). Here, he is symbolically alluding to the secret voice of nature and correspondence with God, which is by nature invisible, but real so long as he could feel it. And it was in the writing of Turgenev that Doppo found the means to verbalize his sublime moment without tarnishing its mystery.

The style of Turgenev's description of nature was so novel that its exotic aura had left a deep imprint in the hearts of the Japanese audience when they first read Futabatei's translation. For example, Kambara Ariake, who frequented *ryūdokai* wrote in *Futabatei Shimei* (1909) that Turgenev's translation was "stunning, melodic, and quite unique at the time" and that he felt as if he was reading "a tough riddle to unpack, but pleasing all the more for it" (quoted in Momiuchi 2006, 207). Likewise, Tayama Katai recalled in *My Thirty Years in Tokyo* (1917) that he was deeply moved by its "elaborate and mysterious description" foreign to his cultural upbringing trained in Chinese and Japanese learning (Tayama 1974b, 15:473). It is possible to presume from these accounts that Doppo took advantage of the exoticism of Turgenev's translation and incorporated it to achieve multiple mysterious effects. Combined with the personification of inanimate objects, the presence of Futabatei's exotic translation itself offered an allusion to the bewitching mystery and the ubiquitous presence of God. And it was absolutely necessary, of course, that Doppo foreground the mystical correspondence with God without giving them concretely transparent verbal and visual representations.

Despite Doppo's literary ingenuity, it is also worth pointing out that "Musashino" undermined Doppo's very objective to enlighten its readers through his representations of sublime Beauty, as I will touch on here. The extent to which his

aesthetic taste was not so much an appeal to others is suggested in his own text in the scene where he and his friend comes across an old woman in a teahouse during their stroll:

> The old woman asked us why we had come that way whereupon my friend and I looked at each other and laughed.
> 'We've come for a stroll. Just for pleasure,' we said. Then it was her turn to laugh, for she seemed to regard us as fools.
> 'Don't you know that cherry blooms in the spring?' she said. Of course it was quite useless for us to attempt to explain to her the pleasures of just strolling in the outlying districts of Tokyo in the summer as well as in the spring. Tokyo people just don't understand such a mentality. So we just wiped the sweat from our brows and ate the melon the old woman prepared for us" (Kunikida 1982, 108).

There is a cultural and temporal gap lying between the two men and the old woman: She adheres to a normative sense of seasonality and regards the men's stroll, which appears to her a wasteful walk, as a sign of their lack of common sense. The men, on the other hand, likewise disregard the woman somewhat disdainfully, thinking that she is a poor tasteless soul, not even worth spending the time of a nice enlightening lecture. It shows the emerging discrepancy separating the young and the old, or the middle class and the common folks, due to the increasing primacy of subjective taste. The triumph of subjectivity over objectivity informing "Musashino" hints that it becomes increasingly difficult to build sympathetic connection between people who do not share the same ideological stance. Furthermore, Doppo's interest in wonder tends to narrow his perceptional filter when looking at nature, as he remains indifferent to some aspects that do not meet his aesthetic taste for Beauty.

By the teahouse in Doppo's story was a small stream running from the Koganei water service, clean and delightful as it flowed amidst the green grass. While he was fascinated to see birds coming to the stream to take a dip and moisten their lips, he observed and described rather ruthlessly that the old woman was little interested in the pleasing view, "seeming to regard the stream as there morning and night for her convenience to wash her pots and pans in" (Kunikida 1982, 108). We see in his description a dangerous propensity to idealize nature, being impatient, paradoxically, at

the utilization of natural resources that people (including Doppo himself) could not do without. What we may call Doppo's lofty taste is intolerant of the image of nature that man soils and disenchants through daily use. Instead, he exalts the pure and rustic tranquility of nature as essential to discerning its faint, mystical whisper. It is not difficult to imagine that for the old woman and people like her, Doppo's allusion to God's presence amidst the suburbs was sheer nonsense. His appraisal of the beauty of the suburbs may equally leave no special impression on the residents there, for the place is where they toil in daily labor.

Though Doppo's motivation was to enlighten the readers through his literary undertaking, it is less likely that he could get his secret message across and emotionally communicate with as many readers as he had aspired. The downside of the primacy of subjectivity is that it becomes increasingly difficult for writers to build emotional bonds with the audience, as they may not share the same aesthetic values as their readers. The primacy of subjectivity challenges the imperialistic codification of aesthetic taste as epitomized in Shiga's work, but it does so at the cost of weakening the common aesthetic ground necessary to bridge individuals through sympathy. Doppo's Christian-informed perception of landscape is a case in point, as it reduced landscape to the visual medium instrumental in quenching his thirst for the sublime—a seemingly innocent desire that leads him all the way to Hokkaido to join the colonial development movement. Below we see how Doppo's pursuit of a life in Hokkaido was no less predicated on legitimizing colonization and oppression of the local population than Meiji imperial policy.

**The Quest for Sublime Beauty in the Colonial Landscape of Hokkaido**

As Doppo illustrates in "Meat and Potatoes," Hokkaido had a particular charm for city dwellers, as they saw their lives defiled in the urban setting and yearned to escape to the "free lands of Hokkaido" (Kunikida 1982, 138). Historically known as Ezochi (the land of barbarians), the Meiji government had placed Hokkaido under its control in 1869 and gave it an official prefectural status in 1882. Thereafter, Hokkaido became a promising land of cultivation and labor opportunities for mainland-jobseekers. The conversation between Okamoto and his friends showcases the fact that Hokkaido stirred a sense of their romantic adventure in the vast land of untouched nature, where they

believed they could start a new ideal life clearing forests and planting crops. As I have touched on, Doppo himself contracted "Hokkaido fever" through reading Uchimura's accounts of his schooldays at Sapporo Agricultural College dedicated to labor and cultivating religious faith. Uchimura noted that since the vicinity of the College was still underdeveloped and the population was fairly small, people basically lived side by side with wild animals.[65] After having exchanged multiple letters with Uchimura, Doppo headed for Hokkaido alone in September 1895 to purchase a piece of land, hoping to build the same simple life invested in land cultivation and religion with his partner Nobuko, who was still with him at the time. A short work of fiction "The Shores of the Sorachi River" (Sorachigawa no kishibe, 1902) is based on this experience, portraying the impression of Hokkaido through the gaze of the narrator "I," who journeys there to purchase a plot of land, but later gives up on the plan and heads back to Tokyo.

For an ardent Christian, there was no better place than Hokkaido in eliciting the sense of awe and fear that underpinned Doppo's religious faith. Although he had searched for the sublime in the rural mountains of Kyushu and the suburbs of Musashino, respectively, his emotional reaction was much stronger in the northern hinterland, as can be surmised from the passage below:

> I sat still for some time, watched the depth of the forest become darker, and sank into my thoughts. Where is society? Where is "history" that humans are so proud to pass on? Here people are only creatures of "survival" and feel only that they are at the mercy of one breath of nature. A Russian poet once said that having sat down in a forest, he felt the shadow of death press upon him, and this is very true. He also said, "When the last person from the human race disappears from this earth, not even one tree leaf will tremble." The death-like silence, the frigidness, the gloominess—sitting in the deep forest, there isn't a soul who would not feel this oppressive feeling (Kunikida 2012, 32).

In the citation above, Doppo mentions Turgenev, as he did in "Musashino," hinting at the mixed feelings of terror and delight in the sublime that he is undergoing amidst deep forests. Yet, the emotional intensity is highlighted in this work more explicitly than any

[65] See "How I Became A Christian: Out of My Diary in Uchimura, Kanzō. 1971. *The Complete Works of Kanzō Uchimura*. Vol. 1. Tokyo: Kyōbunkan.

previously discussed works, when he compares it to "death" and "oppressive feeling" that renders man-bred society and history powerless in front of brutal nature. The nature of Hokkaido is so hostile and merciless that it even threatens human survival. This should be the utmost "ideal" situation for Doppo to subordinate his Nature to the wonder of cosmological law.

But what we actually see here—and what we should interrogate—is the contradiction between Doppo's pursuit of the sublime and his participation in a colonial enterprise that undercuts the formidable wildness of nature. Put differently, the Christian ideology to which Doppo subscribed reveals an internal inconsistency; that is, propagating the infinity of God as mirrored in nature, on the one hand, and encouraging colonizing and transforming the land, on the other hand. For Doppo, Hokkaido was not a merely a place to take a refuge from the city, but a place to enact his Christian mission, which was to transform the God-created land according to His will. The Christian teachings were not concerned only with cultivating one's inner soul at the spiritual level, but it extended to cultivating and transforming the physical environment, as illustrated below.

The Sapporo Agricultural College shaped an important ideological background of Uchimura, whose publication propagating the Christian viewpoint of the task of colonization kindled Doppo's Hokkaido fever. The College was led by a William Clark, a Puritan American whose institutional goal was to cultivate future officials who could promote the land ownership system and agriculture.[66] His long-term plan was to transform the vast land into an agricultural site to help grow national prosperity, and he proposed his institutional agenda to the Colonization Office of the Meiji government. As Kamei Hideo writes, implicit in Clark's plan to introduce agriculture was his subjective bias that the land there was "unenlightened" and "barbaric" and that the nomadic hunting and fishing central to the subsistence of the indigenous Ainu lacked large-scale sustainability (Kamei 2002, 260). As such, the colonial enterprise aimed at transforming the land into a state of "civilization" suitable for organized production, as well as the Ainu, who were expected to drop their customs and become permanent settlers.

[66] See Kamei, Hideo. 2002. *Transformations of Sensibility: The Phenomenology of Meiji Literature*. Translated by Michael Bourdaghs. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan. 260-61.

Land reform in Hokkaido was accompanied by a massive deforestation that altered the God-created landscape that Uchimura so admired and even regarded as a substitute of a formal church. Nevertheless, he praised the accomplishment of Clark for opening up "the virgin soil of the Island of Yezo." Clark served, says Uchimura, as "God's blessed instrument," allowing "His glory to shine in the Land of the North Star" (Uchimura 1973, 7:151–52). It is obvious from what Clark and Uchimura describe that colonization was conceived not as destruction of God's handiwork, but rather as a legitimate enterprise to bring order to the land and perfect, by means of human labor, God's universe. We see here an interesting perceptional hierarchy that privileges man's manipulation of nature over the God-bred "unenlightened" or "barbaric" nature. According to this doctrine, it is manpower that ultimately harnesses nature for the sake of human prosperity, and such development is even desired. This doctrine issued from the belief that God sanctions man to alter His land for the civilizing ends—to benefit both God as well as man.

Uchimura's *Discourse on Geography* (*Chirigakukō*, 1884)[67] encapsulates the Christian mission to develop colonies in good faith, and Doppo was one of the many readers who were impressed by Uchimura's "prophetic geographical studies" that intertwined "religious and poetic" insights foreign to the scientific field (Kunikida 1965b, 7:259). The study elaborates on the correlation between geographical characteristics and development of industry and culture (i.e. art and religion) in different parts of the world. What concerns us here is Uchimura's discussion of the universal role of the land and its benefit to the development of human civilization. Uchimura first argues that the earth was created in such a way that it was not originally a comfortable place for human habitation. Some areas were covered in ocean, rugged mountains, and desert; worse yet, things such as the climate and the continental distribution remained beyond human control. But he maintains that God placed these obstacles in man's path to encourage people to toil and clear the land, pave roads, and invent means for transportation to make their lives more convenient. The so-called "unenlightened" state of the land is rather a graceful arrangement that God bestowed upon man for educational purposes and to save them from indolence and arrogance (Uchimura 1980, 2:389–91).

[67] The title was changed to *Discourse on the Man and Earth* (*Chijinron*) in 1887.

This logic transforms colonizers from oppressors—not only of nature, but also of the local population—into benefactors, who eliminate inconvenience from the environment as commissioned by God. The Christian doctrine attaches a "rewarding" meaning to the colonization, fostering the one-sided conviction that what they do in good faith would also benefit the others. Furthermore, it goes without saying that the goal of the Christian mission is equivalent to supporting the state-led empire building, as shown in the collaboration of the College with the government in their mutual effort to "civilize" the indigenous community and the land.

As such, the Christian ideology Doppo subscribed to exhibits two opposing vectors of justification for God's authority. On one hand, it exalts the magnificence of God-created nature and uses it as a means to belittle mankind before it; on the other, it encourages men to transform and develop God's land in order to empower themselves. This contradiction aside, what this scheme suggests is that man must overcome the terror associated with the formidability of nature in order to utilize its resources to human benefits. With regard to this, we may recall how Doppo compared his oppressed feeling to "the shadow of death" creeping on him when sitting amidst the thick forest of Hokkaido. As we saw, his sublime feeling was triggered by the gloomy surroundings that threw him onto a battlefield of live-or-die "survival." But interestingly, what was equally intimidating and surprising to him was the colonialist manpower that eventually defeated the sublimity of nature. In the passage below, Doppo expresses his surprise at the sight of a wide road bearing the trace of human labor as he was walking toward the shore of the Sorachi River:

> When we came out from the path of bear grass, there was a wide road that you would not expect to find penetrating the forest in one straight line. It was probably wider than thirty feet. Moreover, on both sides a dense thicket grew wherein there were many trees whose diameter ranged from over six to nine feet, and due to the ditches passing through, this expansive road seemed like a railroad track. However, seeing this road, I understood how great the difficulties were for the prefectural office's earnest plans for colonization. […] Returning to the wide road, I realized just how strange it was. They had chosen to make it in this extreme no-man's-land, destroying the thick forest that had been here for thousands of years and using human power to defeat nature (Kunikida 2012, 30–31).

This passage is important as it captures the moment when his perception of nature as invincible gives way to awe at the remarkable ability of man to wield power over nature. It conveys Doppo's mixed feelings of shocked surprise and delight in finding the imprint of fellow human labor in the middle of nowhere, the feat so daunting and unbelievable that it is nothing short of the awe one holds for the work of God. It marks the triumph of man over nature, whereby the qualities such as infinity and incomprehensibility reserved for God become materialized by the hand of man. For Doppo, Hokkaido turned out to be the battlefield between man and nature over the power that can invoke the sublime.

As Michele M. Mason criticizes, however, Doppo's colonial perception that pits man against nature in binary opposition silences the victimhood of the Ainu. This is because his text narrates a version of history that is concerned only with the battle of subjugation between the colonizer and the brutal nature (Mason 2012, 35). Doppo's goal to enlighten his people with the "truth of God" thus assumed concealment, or negligence of the oppression of the indigenous Ainu population, who stood external to his ideology, supporting the state goal of developing and unifying colonies into a part of homogenizing nation. Furthermore, while man's conquest of nature was considered not so much disrespectful as desirable in perfecting God's will, it can be presumed that such rhetoric justifying colonization in God's name was invented for the need to lessen the emotional burden or guilt that man might have felt in destroying the environment en masse. The incorrigible contradiction informing the Christian concept of man's relation to nature thus illuminates the extent to which mankind largely manipulated the authority of God to his own benefit. Doppo's conflicting attitudes toward nature are a case in point, for he exalts nature in "Musashino" because it is a physical manifestation of God's mystery to which he must succumb, and yet he does not hesitate to harm nature in Hokkaido because God desires man to alter his land as His instrument.

**Conclusion**

The genealogy of the politics of aesthetics running from Tōkoku through Doppo evidences a fight for the autonomy of emotion in which both authors made recourse to the heavenly mystery as the locus of the sublime Beauty. In this chapter, I have suggested

that the sublime Beauty was identified in the façade of landscape, as landscape was conceived as the embodiment of God's magnificence and was thus crucial in spontaneously provoking mixed feelings of awe, fear, and delight. The Christian intellectuals Uchimura and Tsunashima played important roles in advocating the primacy of subjectivity and turning the literati's attention to landscape as the medium of communication with God. Although Doppo was under their great influence and shared the same sense of mission to enlighten his readers by the pen, he employed symbolic allusion in his prose fiction to solve the issue of describing the un-representable mystery. He thus partook in constructing a methodology of representation particular to the field of literature, and successfully distinguished his works from the religious writings of Uchimura and Tsunashima, which relied on realistic depiction. The popularity of spiritualism that paralleled Doppo's literary undertaking at the turn of the century suggests the lingering authority of the religious divinity, and it satisfied people's primordial desire for awestruck experience in the secularizing world. As we saw by following the footsteps of Doppo, however, the thirst for the sublime was in part accelerated and satisfied by his joining the colonial enterprise in Hokkaido, where the landscape of wilderness provided an ideal setting to unleash his human nature.

While the recreational craze for spiritualism lasted well into the 1930s, the decline of the Christian influence was already becoming apparent in the early 1900s. That said, as I will illustrate in the next chapter, the literary interest in the sublime did not disappear altogether, but was succeeded by a new literary trend that explored the human instinct of sexual desire. It did not take long for some writers to notice that the sublime bearing the traits of infinity and incomprehensibility associated with the sublime could be discovered directly within the self. In this view, man's innate desire to be possessed by awe, fear, and, delight beyond the realm of reason resides within him as irresistible sexual desire. What follows upon the Romantic current of *seishin shugi* is a new Naturalism invested in the exploration of human instinct and notably represented in the works of Tayama Katai. In what follows, we see how the Japanese Naturalism picked up the discourse of the sublime Beauty and legitimized the wild, rampant sexual desire on the very grounds that it was dictated by mystical forces beyond human control. As we

will see next, the Naturalist discourse incorporated mysticism that echoed *seishin shugi*, helping us understand the politics of aesthetics it inherited from its predecessors.

# CHAPTER IV

# INSTINCT AS SUBLIME BEAUTY: JAPANESE NATUALISM AND THE AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY OF TRANCENDENCE

> I shall attempt to encapsulate the gist and the backbone of what critics call the new current of thought today; encouragement of absolute individualism, banishment of intellectual knowledge and morality, and advocacy of art that champions emotions and imagination as its flesh and blood. Those who apply these principles to their actual life and enter the state of Beauty are said to lead the aesthetic life (Hasegawa 1967, 138).

## Introduction

In the essay "What is the New Current of Thought" (Shin shichō towa nanzoya, 1902) published in *Taiyō,* a journalist and literary critic Hasegawa Tenkei (1876-1940) summarized the theoretical underpinnings of Japanese Naturalism that gained prominence in the early 1900s. By aligning with the common perception of the new trend illustrated by the writers and reporters from the literary journal *Teikoku Bungaku* to the newspaper *Yorozu Chōhō*, Tenkei called Japanese Naturalism the "new Romanticism." Tenkei and the intellectuals of the time identified in the Naturalist philosophy the undercurrent of Romanticism, whose advocacy of Beauty lying beyond the realm of intellect informed what was variously called the Naturalist tenet of "Aesthetic Life-ism," "Nietzscheism," or "Instinctualism" (*honnō shijōshugi*) (140). Just as the Romanticism of the previous decades had set emotions and imagination at the center of life, Naturalism, as intellectuals at the turn of the century observed, continued to call for the "free activity of ego (*jiga*)" by rejecting all formality, pursuing instead "individual pleasure" as the absolute goal of life (140). Despite the variety in terms used to describe the Naturalist movement, Tenkei's analysis suggests that it cannot be grasped without delving into Takayama Chogyū's (1871-1902) influential essay "A Debate on the Aesthetic Life" (Biteki seikatsu wo ronzu, 1901), which was credited for prompting the Naturalist movement that championed satisfaction of instinct, individualism, and Beauty. As Tenkei poignantly observes, the Naturalist pursuit of instinct was deemed a pathway to enter the realm of Beauty and to lead a self-liberating, aesthetic life.

Tenkei's illustration of Naturalism is important as it urges literary historians to

re-examine the theoretical underpinnings of Naturalism by taking into account two understudied points: its Romantic banishment of intellect and its relationship to Beauty. Tenkei's description suggests that we cannot adequately assess the Naturalist philosophy by comparing it only to the Western definition of Naturalism, the approach that prevailed in the previous studies. Standard histories of modern Japanese literature illustrate that Japanese Naturalism came to rise in the early 1900s as a derivative of its European precursor, which championed faithful description of reality by repressing the fictionality and imagination common in the Romantic literature that had preceded it.[68] The major factor that prompted the shift "from fantasy to reality," as critic Nakamura Mitsuo has put it, was the introduction of French Naturalist writers such as Zola and Maupassant (quoted in Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1996, 27). They were concerned with observing human behavior and probed determinant factors of heredity and environment to generalize human experience through objective analysis.

In Japan, Kosugi Tengai (1865-1952) and his two novels "New Year's Finery" (Hatsusugata, 1900) and *Popular Song* (*Hayariuta*, 1902) are credited for introducing the Zolaist notions of heredity and environment in works of fiction for the first time. The first work is a story about a geisha and her relationship with men of different social backgrounds, and the latter work centers on a young wife with hereditary nymphomania committing adultery with a young doctor. Tengai, who represents the first phase of Naturalism (*zenki shizenshugi*) is said to have adhered to the Zolaist approach by remaining outside the story as the detached author/observer analogous to a scientist.

A close examination of the literary discourse of the 1900s reveals, however, that this very "orthodox" Naturalist approach did not win much public appeal, as evinced in the larger influence that Chogyū's essay enjoyed during the same period. Moreover, Tengai's scientific objectivism became the target of criticism among writers such as Tayama Katai (1872-1930), who denounced Tengai's so-called "experimental novel" or "realist novel," arguing that catering to utilitarianism was a far cry from the purpose of "aesthetic writing" (*bibun*) (Tayama 1995, 26:12–21). As Katai's criticism implies, what was at stake at the turn of the century was how to secure the autonomous value of

[68] See Suzuki, Tomi. 1997. *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity*. California: Stanford University Press. 1-2.

literature without becoming a mere vehicle of known concepts of science. The concern was shared broadly in the literary world and beyond, as the socialist critic Shirayanagi Shūko's essay "Naturalism and the Idea of Nihilism" (Shizenshugi to kyomutekishisō, 1908) testifies. There, he wrote that there was a general concern among intellectuals that literature was "becoming a slave of science" and that this had spurred the call for the "independence of literature" from scientism (Shirayanagi 1908, 214). Shūko's testimony sheds an important light on the understudied discourse of the literary landscape of the 1900s, where Naturalist writers coped with the issue of how to maintain the independence of literature without being reducing it to a vehicle that propagated scientific knowledge.

Previous studies indeed agree that Japanese Naturalism took a drastic turn away from its French precursor, especially after it reached its second and full-flown stage (*kōki shizenshugi*) with the publication of *The Quilt* (*Futon*, 1907) by Katai himself. Unlike Tengai, who maintained the position of a scientific observer, Katai integrated his real-life experience by featuring a Katai-like married protagonist and revealing his sexual obsession with a young female disciple, who pursued his mentorship to be a writer in Tokyo. But this shift in methodology from objectivism to subjectivism has rarely been examined from the viewpoint of the aesthetic role for literature that Katai advocated. Instead, Katai's methodological "anomaly" has been discussed uncritically by comparing it with French Naturalism, seeing that Katai (mis)understood the notion of "objectivity" as a manner of revealing himself honestly, unanalyzed, only to speak of himself.[69] Previous studies are critical of Katai's subjectivist turn, as they argue that literature came to stay peripheral to the social issues and that the focus on the artist's subjectivity lacked the rigor to universalize human experience as French Naturalism did.

While these studies foreground how Katai's work played a major part in divorcing literature from larger public issues, this chapter argues that Katai's Naturalist approach equally explored universal truth through the first-hand experience of a subject-

[69] For the general outline and evaluations of Japanese Naturalism, see both Hijiya-Kirschnereit, Irmela. 1996. *Rituals of Self-Revelation: Shishōsetsu as Literary Genre and Socio-Cultural Phenomenon*. Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press. 35-39. and Fowler, Edward. 1998. *The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishōsetsu in Early Twentieth-Century Japanes*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 105-12.

protagonist, striving to capture and represent Nature as it manifested itself as sublime Beauty. To fully understand the aesthetic impact that Naturalism had on the society, it is crucial to understand why leading Naturalist critics and writers like Chogyū and Katai turned to Beauty. This chapter illustrates that the Naturalist advocacy of Beauty was their aesthetic means to re-unite people and society based on the hereditary of human nature, a biological property reserved in the unconscious realm of human memory. The Naturalist interest in the instinct of sexual desire is an aspect universal to mankind, whose immanence in the depth of human nature can be accessed only through the artists' own subjectivity and visceral "intuition." The invisibility of the manifestation of human instinct can be then represented through "imagination," which is the cardinal tool that artists utilized in giving the unrepresentable a visible form.

The term "new Romanticism" that Tenkei and other critics attributed to Japanese Naturalism is rich in its suggestion that the contemporaries saw Naturalism as the new substitute of Romanticism, as can be seen in its successive advocacy of Beauty and the "liberation of ego" against the intrusion of social customs and rationalism. In place of the dominant social ethics that valued utility of knowledge for the goal of rapid modernization, both Romantic and a group of Naturalist writers advocated Beauty, which was premised on the idea that the Beauty of art has no moral or practical purpose, but rather issued from the pursuit of pleasure. Despite its alleged lack of interests in everything pertaining to the public domain, however, Beauty was pregnant in and of itself with the potential for moral cultivation.

As we may recall, the newly introduced notion of Beauty in the Kantian context of aesthetics stressed the tenet of art being "purposive without purpose"—that is, the idea that pure Beauty still invokes a positive moral effect on the beholder that it does not intend. In other words, the idea that art has no purpose but pleasure was the antithesis of the rationalist ethics of modern civilization, whose focus on the utility of knowledge and careerism had caused various sources of social adversity, such as competition for survival and success, alienation, and social division based on economic, geographical, and gender hierarchy. Contrary to the state ethics, which implicitly fostered social division and individualism under the new economic liberalism, Beauty was a philosophical investigation of self-transcendence, an aesthetic means to restore the bond between

subject and object by discovering in the individual "I" something as universal and eternally immutable as human nature. The chapter argues that the Naturalist interest in heredity was intimately tied to the quest of Naturalist writers for the eternal truth of Beauty, which they championed as the source of transcendence to re-imagine self as a part of a timeless organic community now eroded by modern capitalist ethics.

My approach to Japanese Naturalism is to situate its emergence and its oft-neglected advocacy of Beauty in the context of the ongoing conflict between politics and literature. As we may recall, ever since the late 1870s when literature was institutionalized in the new modern educational system as an independent field of study, it had asserted the benefit of the "impractical" knowledge of Beauty against politics, which had in turn privileged pragmatic knowledge that had direct and materialist bearing on fulfilling national goals. My reading of the Naturalist discourse reveals that the 1900s marked the second stage of the conflict between the two, which revolved around the issue of social alienation and the existential crisis of Meiji youth. The tension between literature and politics grew much larger in scale than it had been in the 1880-90s, when literature had only begun to become a haven for young intellectuals, who were defeated in the public protest for civil rights. This time, the ongoing conflict intensified over the spread of anguished youth (*hanmon seinen*), whose pessimism and political apathy loomed large as a social phenomenon. The 1900s witnessed the struggle between politics and literature over the power to win the ideological allegiance of Meiji the youth, who were becoming increasingly skeptical of the ethics of society that promoted hard work and self-sacrifice for the country.

By ideology, I mean that Japanese Naturalism did not simply champion Beauty because it was non-confrontational and concerned only with aesthetic contemplation. Rather, it is my contention that when literature claimed independence from politics and other fields of study, it promoted the moral goodness inherent in Beauty that was internal to the realm of art. As I illustrated in Chapter II by examining Tōkoku's aesthetic theories, Beauty was defined as something that bears the sublime quality of infinity and that transcends time, space, and particularity of individual beings. As such, Beauty issued from the absolute and eternal laws of the cosmos, whose infinity, Tōkoku discovered, is immanent in all mankind under the name of Nature. To pursue Beauty was thus an

ideologically-charged act, as it established moral sense of the good in conforming to the laws of the universe. Pursuing Beauty might mean deviating from the ethics of society, but it also evidenced adherence to the universal principles of humanity as prescribed and dictated by the laws of nature. My argument is that the Naturalist writers championed instinct, not only because they fancied the latest trend in French Naturalism invested in exploring how heredity determined human nature, but because they identified in instinct the very property of Beauty, as instinct proved permanent and is regulated by the purposive Will of the universe.[70] To feel the impulse of instinct was therefore to ascertain the immanence of moral principle in individuals, which enabled them to claim their autonomy from the external ethics imposed by the society. My aesthetic reading of Japanese Naturalism suggests that its advocacy of instinct offered individuals a means to seek a moral source in self, particularly for those anguished youth who could not obey public ethics that judged the value of their existence solely in utilitarian terms.

By reading Japanese Naturalism against the backdrop of the contemporary youth issue, this chapter demonstrates how literature sparked an ideological war against politics by asserting the benefit of the knowledge of Beauty. I illustrate how the Naturalist movement was shaped in response to the existential crisis of the anguished Meiji youth, whose issues of pessimism, apathy, and suicide became the rallying point for literature to offer an alternative moral framework different from the goal-oriented ethics enforced in the political and educational arenas. By using instinct as the motif of sublime Beauty, Naturalist writers instead encouraged individuals to pursue and follow the purposive moral principle of nature. Their call to liberate ego prompted individuals to look for the sublimity of natural law immanent in their individual selves. Subjectivity thus played a crucial role in the Naturalist advocacy of Beauty, whose principle of "aesthetic judgment" privileged subject cognition over objective knowledge. The literary tenet of aesthetic judgment presupposes that it is subject's spontaneous cognition unmediated by intellect that determines what counts as truth. As a result, while Naturalist writers probed

[70] It seems to have been common to regard instinct as the law of the universe beyond human control. Writer Kajī Motojirō wrote in his diary in January 1923 that "sexual desire" is the "unconscious workings of the will of the universe (*uchū no ishi*)." See section "Sexual Desire is the Universe's Will" in Suzuki, Sadami. 1996. *"Seimei" de yomu nihonkindai: taishō seimeishugi no tanjō to tenkai*. Tokyo: Nihon hōsō Kyōkai shuppankyōkai. 13-18.

the depth of human nature, as scientists did, what mattered to the proponents of Beauty was not so much building objective knowledge as exercising individual autonomy in judging and verifying their discovery of sublimity.

My study reveals that the Naturalist slogan of "absolute individualism" was made possible by the aesthetic premise of subjectivism, which affirmed the freedom of each individual to judge the truth and make sense of the world in their own right. Therefore, this chapter suggests that the oft-noted shift in the Naturalist methodology from objectivism to subjectivism must be understood in the context of literature's continuous effort to claim the legitimacy of its form of knowledge. The Benefit of Beauty was that it encouraged individuals to cultivate the ability to discover and foster the moral virtue within themselves as a necessary precondition to disobeying the social ethics that had been thrust upon them.

While subjectivism prompted an inward turn by encouraging individuals to observe their interior impulse, this chapter argues that the quest for Beauty by no means promoted seclusion of individuals from others in the society. Rather, Beauty actually offered a pathway to discover the property of universality residing in the particularity of self, whose nature embodied the all-encompassing laws of the universe to which all mankind were equally subordinated. As a result, the pursuit of Beauty enabled one to transcend self, extinguishing the conflict-ridden difference between self and others and attaining a sort of enlightenment akin to religious salvation. By appealing to the universality of human nature as the embodiment of Beauty, the Naturalist movement gained prominence amidst the outbreak of the youth issue in the 1900s, seizing the opportunity to assert the benefit of literary knowledge by promoting an ethics resistant to alienation and ameliorative of existential crisis. To illustrate the aesthetic rigor of Japanese Naturalism, this chapter first sheds light on Chogyū's theory of Beauty behind his advocacy of Instinctualism. I will then go on to demonstrate how Naturalism's Romantic spirit, which idealized communal unity, came to underlie Katai's Naturalist philosophy and his work of fiction *The Quilt*.

**Instinct as Beauty: Takayama Chogyū and Aesthetic Life**

In delving into the theoretical underpinnings of Japanese Naturalism, no literary

historians can ignore the impact of Takayama Chogyū's influential essay, "A Debate on the Aesthetic Life" (Biteki seikatsu o ronzu, 1901) published in the journal *Taiyō*. It provoked the trend that came to be called "Instinctualism," "Nietzsche fever," or "Aesthetic life-ism," which prompted the Naturalist movement to advocate liberation of individuals and celebrate their instinctive drive of sexual desire. Previous studies have analyzed how the Naturalist motif of instinct emphasizing heredity and obscenity had a direct and indirect impact on the public moral order as French Naturalism spread in the literary world of Japan. While instinct was indeed subversive as it stood in opposition to the ethics of rationalism, I argue that literary intellectuals championed instinct not for the disruptive tenor it had, but for the quality of Beauty it embodied, which was central to the aesthetic investigation of literature. Take, for example, the threefold emphasis on instinct, Nietzschean philosophy, and Beauty that encapsulated the essence of Chogyū's theory. While the first two notions have been studied extensively, there is little discussion as to how instinct and Nietzsche's philosophy intersected with Beauty. While each element appears somewhat disparate and unrelated to the others, the interrelationship becomes clear only when we take into account the fact that they are mutually concerned with the realms of interiority and infinity of nature, which meant for all of them the absolute locus of moral principle. Before delving into Chogyū's most well-known essay, let us take a look at his earlier essay "The Man of Letters as Critic of Civilization" (Bunmei hihyōka to shite no bungakusha, 1901), which gives us a glimpse of his reception of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and how it informed the "Instinctualism" that he announced seven months later.

Chogyū saw Nietzsche not so much as a philosopher but as a great poet and critic of civilization. He observed that Nietzsche rejected science and history and sought a remedy for the ills of civilization in the so-called groundless imagination and the mystery of profound beauty (*yūgen shinpi*). By condemning History, which "annihilates subjectivity, abuses human character, and ignores inborn instinct" and "hampers individual development, makes all mankind mediocre, and curses all kinds of genius," according to Chogyū, Nietzsche, instead called on humankind to foster a man of unique talent—"a genius or superhuman (Übermensch)" free from the moralism of civilization (Takayama 1926, 2:694–95). Chogyū agreed with Nietzsche that the moral purpose of

civilization is to mass-produce and nurture men, who had been deprived of self-awareness and forced to obey uniform laws designed to propel the development of society. In opposition to a world that reinforced the purposive drive of civilization, Nietzsche instead turned to artists such as Rousseau, Goethe, Schopenhauer, and Wagner, who he called the true leaders of civilization. According to Chogyū, Nietzsche saw potential in artists because their creativity and talent represented the mainspring of the "purest individuality," which is the only source capable of resisting the moralism that turned every man into a self-less instrument of society (695). In defense of individual man, Chogyū argued that Nietzsche fought against History, objective truth, and scientism, which brandished determinist theories of environment heredity, customs, and statistics that ignored the essence of "life" (*seimei*) intrinsic to man (695).

For Chogyū, Nietzsche was first and foremost a proponent of individualism, whose meaning was close to liberation of one's natural disposition. Individualism in this particular context meant the vitality of one's life itself, untinged by intellect and rationalism. This innermost property lying inside man is not what science and its external observation could reach and study. Following Nietzsche's argument, Chogyū stressed that it was artists alone that could access and tap into the pristine vitality, which they deemed necessary in establishing independent selfhood freed from social ethics. Neither psychology nor cognitive science of his time could adequately study this realm because, he argued, they disregarded the subtle activity of human spirit and the autonomy of instinct—its cause, emotions and will that are intrinsic to life in itself. Consequently, he explained that Nietzsche the poet went on not to praise mountains or rivers, but to extol the invisible vitality veiled inside man's interiority. Chogyū called it "the indistinct mystery (*yūbi* 幽微) of life in the universe, which he [Nietzsche] himself must have been unable to explain; the word connotes Beauty, but indefinite in meaning—the force of nature, perhaps" (696). To foster this vital spirit, he stated, will bring countless allies to youth of the present day, who came to realize and confront the burden of nineteenth-century civilization.

Chogyū's reception of Nietzsche prompted him to stress the noble undertaking of art, which renounced all formality of established knowledge and could touch and bring about the true color of self. As Chogyū implied, what led him to admire Nietzsche as a

poet and critic of civilization at the beginning of the 1900s was tied to the emergence of anguished youth, who sought true meaning of self by growing doubts about self-image crafted by social ethics. Contrary to the moral education and scholarly teaching that they had received, which imposed knowledge as objective facts, Chogyū argued that art is committed to fostering and demonstrating one's natural disposition, which follows no rule, but is independent, and bears potential in exhibiting unfathomable talent. Individualism was therefore synonymous with subjectivism (*shukan shugi*), which granted authority to artist-subjects in probing and verifying the presence of autonomous moral principle lying in their interiority.[71] Consequently, it was not the ideal of individualism itself that guaranteed one's freedom from social ethics. As his recourse to nature evinces, Chogyū believed that self-dependence was premised on the ability of artists to discern and attune themselves to the moral principle of nature. He considered it the primary task of artists to observe the independent "cause, emotions, and will" intrinsic to nature, which served as art's rationale in resisting external moral enforcement.

Chogyū's encounter with Nietzsche shaped his literary direction by emphasizing subjectivity and nature, which had a strong philosophical echo of his Romantic predecessors of the 1890s. He had much sympathy for the works of *Bungakkai* members led by Kitamura Tōkoku, who had initially set the tone for literature's stance as the opponent of civilization. At the time when *Bungakkai* was at its apex, he had written in "My Letter to Friends in *Bungakkai*" (*Bungakkai* no shokunshi ni yosuru sho, 1895) published in *Taiyō* that their literary philosophy stood out conspicuously in the Meiji literary world. They regarded "nature as their company and Ideal [of Beauty] as their master" and "appreciated the worlds of transcendence and mystic spirits and extolled artistic inspiration" while opposing the dominant scholarly tides of scientism and materialism (Takayama 1926, 2:167–68). It is noticeable that Chogyū basically aligned with the literary framework set by his predecessors and continued to advocate subjectivism and nature in his aesthetic exploration. In so doing, however, he also renounced the undercurrent of Christianity prominent in the Romantic writing, just as

[71] He established a clear equation between individualism and subjectivism in the essay "Letter to Anesaki Chōfū" (Anesaki Chōfū ni atafuru sho, 1901) he published subsequently in *Taiyō*. See Takayama, Chogyū. 1926. *Chogyū Zenshū*. Vol. 2. Tokyo: Hakubunkan. 730.

Nietzsche denied Christianity as one instance of formalism. Christianity had been influential in shaping the Romantics' notions of nature and spirit by providing the framework of its theology, but it had lost much credibility by the beginning of the twentieth century. Despite this, for Chogyū nature was still the unfathomable embodiment of Beauty that exhibited its own purposive will and autonomous moral principle, if not designed by God. The pursuit of Beauty was therefore closely intertwined with the purposive laws of nature and the unexplainable effects that they exerted on man, which made literature a purveyor of noble knowledge vis-à-vis the ethics of human society, which were invented to facilitate the purposive drive for progress.

The clear ideological orientation that Chogyū wove into his conception of literary enterprise reinforced the existing conflict between literature and politics. While his essay "A Debate on the Aesthetic Life" is generally recognized as a milestone that radicalized the Naturalist movement, he did not advocate instinct with the intent of subverting social ethics and its rationalism. What he intertwined in his justification of instinct was a larger question about the purpose of life, which reflected his awareness of the contemporary social debate about the issue of youth's pessimism and their doubt about a meaning of self. To advocate instinct or human nature was not a mere expression of social criticism, but was also an implicit manifesto to stress literature's autonomous value and particularly the value of Beauty in providing meaning to life. It is worth recalling here that literature had been struggling to win public recognition ever since it had been institutionalized in the modern academic system in the late 1870s. Decryign the fact that writers in Japan were still far from critics of civilization and that poetry and novels bore the insignificant tone of *gesaku*, or playful writing, Chogyū strove to elevate the status of literature along the same lines as the European model that Nietzsche exalted (Takayama 1926, 2:697). For him, the eruption of youth's pessimism was an opportunity to criticize the failure of official ethics education and to promote am ideology of literature oriented toward nature. I will reserve my discussion of how he intervened in the youth issue and prompted the Naturalist movement until a later section; for now, I emphasize that Chogyū's advocacy of Instinctualism was essentially an aesthetic enterprise that centered on the quest for Beauty, which reflected his intention to promote literature and to elicit a wider ideological consensus from the public. This is evinced in

the following passage from “A Debate on the Aesthetic Life” cited below.

> None of us know for what purpose we are born into this world. But it goes without saying that after we were given life, we live for the purpose of becoming happy. When I ask what happiness is, I am convinced that it is nothing but satisfaction of our instinct. What is instinct—it is the demand of human nature. To satisfy the demand of human nature is what shall be called aesthetic life (*biteki seikatsu*) (Takayama 1927, 4:766–67).

This oft-cited passage clearly suggests the amoral character of Chogyū’s proposal. While it is the notion of instinct that commonly receives attention, it is equally important to take note of the context in which he idealized instinct and that he called “satisfaction of instinct” the “beautiful.” Broadly speaking, the theme of the essay revolves around the value and meaning of life, where people think and behave according to their sense of purpose. He saw this purposefulness as a social construct shaped by morality, which sets up goals, distinguished between good and the evil, and disciplined people’s minds and behavior to guide their lives in the direction of happiness. Yet, he argues that not all morality is there to help people gain happiness. Some kinds of morality are fabricated only to curtail or entirely banish what individuals seek for themselves. By criticizing the orthodox ethical views that held loyalty to the superiors and self-sacrifice as the highest virtues of life, he argued that such a narrow enforcement of definition disregards how relative value is to each individual.

Chogyū’s distrust in morality was based on his observation that morality is essentially a social construct and that it is the society that fabricates and adds the weight of value to it. In other words, value itself is not intrinsic to people’s deeds and things and is rather determined by external factors tied to the paradigm of the society. Morality is thus in complicity in utilitarianism (*hōben shugi*), which standardizes the virtues that people use as a measure in setting and judging their behavior and goals. Because the value people ascribe to things is extrinsic and arbitrary, he argued that it is “hardly easy to seek a safe haven in the realms of morality and intellect,” where one must eternally perform duties by conforming to the ever-changing standard of morality (Takayama 1927, 4:771). His target of criticism was the hypocrisy of moralism, which prescribed models of virtue and purposes of life only to exploit individual autonomy for utilitarian

ends. Under the reign of moralism, people are mere instruments to act on the purposive goals set by and reinforced by educational administrators (*dōgaku sensei*). However, no matter how dominant its effect on people is, he pointed out that the definition of moral virtue at a given time does not have a lasting validity across history of civilization. He therefore turned to instinct, whose morality he called as the "absolute, intrinsic, independent, autonomous, and harmonious"—i.e., that which "transcends the boundary of reason" (771).

In an attempt to liberate people from the utilitarian mandates of society, Chogyū proposed what came to be called Instinctualism, an idea that set pursuit and satisfaction of instinct as the purpose and ultimate happiness of life. He advocated for instinct on the grounds that the law of nature is permanent and valid across human history, whose eternality of purposive drive is absent in the morality people invent for given purposes. Calling instinct "hereditary property" passed down from ancestors, he maintained that the purpose of aesthetic life is to "perpetuate this precious heritage" bestowed by the "boundless grace of ancestors" and to strive "not to waste in vain the happiness it grants to people" (770). Contrary to the unstable value of morality that promises no permanent security, the aesthetic life, he argued, is where one finds "relief, peace, and the vital force of the cosmic growth" (771-72). For him, instinct was important not merely because it symbolized the anti-rationalism that subverted the moral order he so resisted; rather, as his rhetoric of heritage and blood testifies, he advocated instinct because it embodied permanence and the autonomous purposive drive of morality immanent in human nature. Unlike the value of social ethics that exerts its effect on people only temporarily, the laws of nature had permanency, transcending history and the boundaries set by society. To discover the cosmic source of infinity bestowed by the laws of nature on the self was a means to empower oneself, and to resist the enforcement of external values of life that turned them into the mechanical instruments for the goals of society. Calling the pursuit of instinct "aesthetic life," Chogyū's Instinctualim was an aesthetic enterprise that aimed at exploring Beauty, the source of eternality and the true virtue of morality. He identified sublime infinity in the hereditary permanence of human nature, which turned instinct into the principal object of aesthetic exploration.

What mattered most to Chogyū was to cognize the impulse of instinct triggered

by nature by itself. To perceive the purposive drive of nature is what brought him the utmost pleasure and what made it possible to transcend the confinement of self. Instinctualism was thus different from the hedonistic pleasures of the flesh. Chogyū testified to this in a series of short essays he subsequently published in *Taiyo*. For example, in the essay "Sublimation of Sexual Desire" (Seiyoku no junka, 1901), he maintained that one could never be free from or fully satisfy the desire for carnal lust, among many other things. This being the case, he explained, the "Beauty of sexual desire [*seiyoku no bi*] lies not in satisfying its demand; instead Beauty lies in adoring it" (Takayama 1927, 4:844). For him, instinct was important because it provoked aesthetic contemplation to admire the eternality of the purposive drive of nature. Being aware that satisfaction of desire itself is momentary and fuels desire further, he conceived that Beauty rests not in the insecure state of unrest, and can be found only in the absolute realm of permanence.

Instinct embodied absolute morality with a lasting validity of truth, and Chogyū advocated it not because he romanticized the uncivilized man of nature indifferent to the ethics of civilization. He saw in instinct the universal law of humanity that bonds all discrete individuals together, past and present—the vulgar as well as the noble. Such quality of infinity that transcended the boundaries of time, material form, and particularity of individuals was what Beauty stood for. Chogyū, who was versed in Western aesthetics, was fully aware of the benefits that Beauty introduced. Accordingly, he championed the autonomous value of literature as a means of transcending the interest-driven ethics of society, which prompted conflict, inequality, and alienation.[72] Furthermore, by calling the pursuit of instinct "aesthetic life," he clearly indicated how his approach to probing the sublimity of nature differed from the objectivism of science. Subjectivity allowed individuals to prioritize first-person cognitive judgment, according them the authority to ascertain the truth of moral virtue immanent in self. Individualism in his aesthetic enterprise was therefore far from self-seclusion, and was a prerequisite

[72] Chogyū was deeply influenced by Ōnishi Hajime (1864-1900), one of the pioneers of aesthetics in Japan, and was immersed in the study of aesthetics since middle school. Known as "Kant of Japan," Ōnishi taught aesthetics at Tokyo School of Special Studies (present Waseda Unievrsity). Chogyū succeeded his position in 1898 and taught and published numerous essays on Beauty. See Marra, Michael F. 2001. *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 12-14.

form of methodology to dissolve self and meld into one with nature. The path that led from individualism to universalism was what the knowledge of literature could pave, and it was literature's moral orientation toward all-encompassing nature that offered a remedy for the issues of social alienation that the youth of the time were confronting. To understand why Chogyu's proposal of instinct inflamed a fever for Nietzsche and aesthetic life-ism in the 1900s, it is crucial to read his politics of Beauty against the backdrop of conflict that broke out between writers and government leaders over winning the ideological allegiance of the youth.

**Anguished Youth and the Purpose of Life: Instinctualism vs. Utilitarianism**

> People say we live in the age of skepticism. They call it the world of anguish. […] I have heard it said recently that our elder statesmen are worried about the agony of youth, whose issue they say has become so conspicuous today. We normally need not worry about and be surprised by such agony common to youth. But when we take into account all those situations like the death of a man named Fujimura Misao and the shock it spread among students, and the way education has been carried out in Japan, it is nothing surprising that something guilty occurs to the mind of those anxious statesmen, not like they got startled by invisible monsters (Anesaki 1934, 465).

In the essay "On Agonies of Today's Youth" (Genji seinen no kumon nitsuite, 1903) published in *Taiyō*, literary critic and religious scholar Anesaki Masaharu recounted the emergence of what was coined as "anguished youth" (*hanmon seinen*). Their strong pessimism and their sense of alienation from society were brought to public attention in 1903 following the news of the sensational suicide of Fujimura Misao, an eighteen-years-old student at the First Higher School. Leaving a suicide note "Thoughts upon the Precipice" at Kegon Falls in Nikko, Fujimura's death was reported widely across the country, and many youths started to emulate his suicide out of an inability to find meaning of life. The shocking phenomenon prompted scholars to conduct the first statistical studies on suicide in Japan, and it sparked debates on the issues of an educational system that had apparently failed to foster youth for the future of the

country.[73] For intellectuals of the time, Fujimura's suicide became a landmark incident that made them realize the gaping split between the public and the private, where the citizens turned out to be little interested in cooperating with the public goals nor espousing the ethics of hard work in the interest of the nation. Historians have analyzed the emergence of anguished youth from by examining shifting economic condition in the late nineteenth century. For Example, Earl Kinmonth has discussed the link between the spread of pessimism and employment stagnation that became prevalent in the 1890s and the early 1990s, curtailing the social advancement of educated youth including elites like Fujimura (Kinmonth 1981, 206–43).

Marked by rejection in the struggle for success, many youths of this period retreated from the public arenas and sought alternative outlets for self-realization. In a society where the public realm forbade self-expression that did not align with the image of the hard-working modern man prescribed by social ethics, it was the private realm alone that promised youth the opportunity to inquire into the true nature of selfhood. For youth like Fujimura, it was literature and philosophy that offered a safe haven to interrogate the purpose of life. Fujimura became the epitome of the anguished youth, who sought the higher meanings of life in philosophical contemplation rather than elitism, career success, or patriotism. It is deeply imprinted in his poem "Thoughts on the Precipice," which he carved on the trunk of a tree by the Kegon Falls before taking his life:

> How immense the universe is.
> How eternal history is.
> I wanted to measure the immensity with this tiny five-foot body.
> What authority has Horatio's philosophy?
> The true nature of the whole creation is in one word, "unfathomable."
> With this regret, I have decided to die.
> To end my anguish (quoted in Isoda 1987, 26).

Fujimura' contemplative suicide note, which questioned the meaning of life, brought him the name of "the first philosopher" in Japan—a title given to him by the newspaper editor

[73] On Fujimura and the emergence of anguished youth, see Kinmonth, Earl H. 1981. *The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought: From Samurai to Salary Man*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 206-245.

Kuroiwa Ruikō in the article "Begrudging the Death of a Young Philosopher" (Shōnen tetsugakusha wo chōsu, 1903) published in the newspaper *Yorozu Chōhō* (quoted in Isoda 1987, 28). The suicide note shocked the public, as it revealed an unforeseen phenomenon that characterized the educated youth of the time. Fujimura carried in his heart the oft-derided "unpractical" thoughts of literature until the very last moment of his life. Not even shedding a drop of blood on a battlefield, he willingly killed himself out of the agony he felt for not being able to understand what the universe stood for. The government leaders did not remain silent to his sensational suicide, which they saw as a symptomatic of the potential subversion of politics. Youth of the time, they believed, were becoming increasingly unproductive and politically apathetic, turning into unpatriotic citizens by indulging in philosophical contemplation.

Youth's recourse to literature intensified the rivalry between literature and politics. The allegiance established between literature and youth prompted national leaders to regard literature as the breeding ground of harmful thoughts—the source of political apathy. On top of the existing conflict between literature and politics that had ensued since the 1880s, the issues faced by anguished youth further fueled the separation of literature from the public realms of politics and education. The government's attack on literature became severe and extensive after the Fujimura incident, as his suicide publicly revealed the ineptitude of official ethical education to mobilize youth for national goals. This is most evident in the measures taken by the Minister of Education, Makino Nobuaki, who issued several related public orders indicating law enforcements. Starting with a public lecture he gave in April 1906 where he outlined the new educational guidelines aligned with the new national goals that Japan set after the Russo-Japanese War, he attacked literature and philosophy for distracting youth from national engagement. Pointing out that youth are "indulging in impractical theories of philosophy and nurturing pessimist view of life," he treated literature as an ill caused by society that "sucked the healthy energy of youth" and "hindered their constructive development" (quoted in Kimura 2015, 188). In two months, Makino took practical measures—announced in the *Official Gazette* (*Kanpō,* 1906), which was then released broadly in various newspapers—that focused on banning of books bearing "dangerous thoughts," "obscenity," and "pessimist thoughts" from school libraries and beyond (189).

It is noticeable that Makino was critical of the fact that many youths were absorbed in "impractical theories" that bore no material result. At a time when the moral virtue was measured by deeds of hard work, accomplishment, or self-sacrifice that accrued some form of private or public interest, youth's idle philosophical contemplation seemed sheer nonsense. In the eyes of the government educators like Makino, the intellect of youth that did not cater to the goals of the country was equivalent to committing subversion, and to die a useless death like Fujimura without partaking in national affairs was more the action of a rebel than a patriot. Makino's criticism reveals that he and the government officials in general justified the utilitarian exploitation of Japan's citizens, teaching ethics that encouraged youth to set purposes in life aligned with the national goal of progress.

It was literary intellectuals especially, who severely criticized this dehumanizing mobilization of citizens. As illustrated in Anesaki's criticism of senior politicians cited earlier, the literati blamed the ethics of school education for youth's pessimism and the tragic cases of suicide like Fujimura. Being a close friend of Chogyū, Anesaki was one of the many intellectuals that expressed deep sympathy with Japan's anguished youth. While the public media generously showed compassion youth, Anesaki supported youth for another important reason. Being a religious scholar, he was aware that it was an opportunity for both religion and art to promote the benefit of their respective fields of knowledge to help the youth get over their spiritual crisis. His essay reveals an important dynamic to capitalize on the incompetence of the official education, now revealed broadly to the public eyes, and to promote the value of literature and religion that had been stigmatized for its very lack of practicality. By pointing out the failure of ethical education, which promoted the national values of loyalty and patriotism, he insisted that "there is no other means but to expect the influences of religion and art (*bijutsu*)" (Anesaki 1934, 479).[74] He criticized poignantly that education of his time only aimed at producing bread and money-breeding machines and left no room for humans to live life according to their nature. By the time students had survived their educational training and

[74] As for Anesaki, he argued in "On Agonies of Today's Youth" that religion strives to "discover mystery of the Great universe [*daiuchū no shinpi*] immanent in 'I' [*ware*]." 474. This reminds us of Tsunashima Ryōsen (discussed in Chapter 2), who preached that god is immanent in self and is synonymous with "I."

graduated from school, they had become "crippled, knowing neither what 'I' stands for nor the meaning of their existence" (472). It was a bold appeal to readers to re-evaluate the roles of literature and religion, and to supplant the ethics of official education in favor of better moral guidance to the youth of the country.

Anesaki argued that the pessimist turn of youth was not something to lament, for it revealed that youth were not robots without the ability to think on their own, but rather were thoughtful individuals ready to confront the question of the meaning of life as it sprang out of their gut. He identified anguished youth as increasingly self-awareness, and declared their interrogation of "I" as evidence of their burgeoning subjectivity. Youth's pessimism signaled the budding birth of ego, which, he contended, must be protected and nurtured. In arguing so, he explained that man's ego is not a pure tabula rasa that awaits cultivation from scratch. Rather, he treated the ego of "I" as a manifestation of the laws of nature, arguing that youth started to seek "I" by the "guidance of the demand of instinct" (466). Anesaki held that instinct is what makes youth autonomous individuals, and it is the laws of nature that defined the core essence of self.

Anesaki's recourse to instinct is an apparent homage to Chogyū, who had raised the same criticism against utilitarianism in the essay "Alas, Reform of the Vulgar" (Aa, bonzoku kaikaku, 1901) published in *Taiyō*. There, Chogyū had criticized the purpose of moral education in Japan, which had prioritized the cultivation of men serviceable to the countery, reducing tehm to mere tools to produce food, money, and labor. Arguing that educational reformers knew nothing about the worlds of Ideal and taste of Beauty, he condemned these leaders for "disregarding literature, art, and religion" as if "they have nothing to do with life" (Takayama 1927, 4:806). There is a noticeable pattern in the way critics like Chogyū and Anesaki asserted the legitimacy of art and religion by pitting their oft-stigmatized impracticality against the malady of utilitarianism. Criticizing how social ethics valued the world of utility over the healthy growth of human nature, they both advocated human instinct as the absolute locus of moral virtue.

In contrast to government officials who strove to re-educate youth by law enforcement, proponents of Beauty like Chogyū took a different approach to elicit ideological support from youth. As evidenced by the suicide note of Fujimura, youth were undergoing an existential crisis, as they refused the validity of moral virtue and the

purposes of life set out by the society. Fujimura's brief poem reveals the precarious dilemma that anguished youth like himself faced; because, after he sidestepped the ideological mandates and obtained freedom, he lost his sense of purpose and the meaning of life altogether. Not being able to understand the "true nature" of self and all things between heaven and earth by itself, Fujimura chose to seek peace by killing himself, to be free from his increasing anxiety. Given that the youth issue revolved around the question of the meaning of self, it was only natural that the literary pursuit of Beauty resonated with anguished youth. Chogyū, who addressed the questions of the purpose and the happiness of life, was clearly aware that literature could help youth discover the "true nature" of self by stressing the benefit of Beauty.

In fact, Chogyū's concern about pessimism dated back to the early 1890s, before his essay on the "aesthetic life" spurred a literary movement in the 1900s. One of the essays, "On Pessimism" (Enseiron, 1892) which he published in *Bungakkai zasshi*, deserves our attention, as it gives a clearer window onto the paradoxical "use" or effect of the impractical knowledge of Beauty. The essay reveals how Chogyū conceived of Beauty as beyond the utilitarian realm of politics, and yet something that could mitigate that agony and conflict that inevitably arose in human society. In the essay, he explained to readers that poets and philosophers across human history were all entrapped in pessimism in various degrees. He then illustrated how poets and philosophers, past and present, and the Eastern and the Western, tackled world-weariness, as they faced the question of the purpose of life. While he cited and appropriated arguments of many thinkers he cited, he was particularly influenced by the views of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). According to him, Schopenhauer probed the issue of pessimism and attempted to explain the purpose of life from the teleology (purpose) of the universe. Schopenhauer posited that "everything in the universe is the manifestation of its Will" (Takayama 1927, 4:4).[75] In opposing the fabrication of purpose by human society, he maintained that Schopenhauer argued that the absolute purpose of life is that which is dictated by the cosmic Will beyond human control. Chogyu's proposal of

[75] Telos is a Greek word that refers to the purpose of the universe. As for Schopenhauer's thesis, Chogyū gave a footnote on the same page and referred to Anesaki's translation of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* (*Ishi to genshiki toshiteno sekai*, 1819). His translation later culminated in book and was published from Hakubunkan in 1910.

Instinctualism had a strong influence from this teleological thinking, which posits that the purposive life of mankind is by nature designed and determined by the cosmic law.

Chogyū's belief in the telos of the universe was shaped by his views on life and death. The fate of death is the law of nature that no one can escape. He stated that the present human life is "a mere passing moment" that occurs only temporarily amid the "eternal stream of time" (7). From the vantage point of the permanent laws of nature, the anxiety one suffers in the present world from the competition over power is trivial, for what one gains materially in the world has no lasting value. Instead of being tormented by world-weariness, he argued that one could seek "happiness" and obtain "religious enlightenment" during the present lifetime, but only if they came to "acknowledge impermanence of all worldly things and to yearn for the absolute permanence veiled behind the things of finitude we see" (8). He cautioned, however, that to discover and enter the world of infinity is not what all man can do with ease. He argued that "while man is attached to the notion of gains and losses of interests—or rather while man is too self-conscious, they can on no account enjoy the noblest and the absolute Beauty and its pleasure" (11). He suggests here that the literary pursuit of Beauty is lofty and comforting, because it essentially forbids and precludes concerns over interest, which is the very cause of the pessimism that people suffer in the human society. Arguing that one can seize the moment to perceive "Beauty" only in the selfless state of unconsciousness, he explained that "annihilation of self (*jimetsu*) simultaneously provokes the "reemergence of self as the revelation of the whole universe (*zen uchū no saigen*)," eliminating the difference between self and others (11).

For Chogyū, the literary pursuit of Beauty was no doubt impractical as it was essentially concerned with attaining spiritual empowerment by discovering the cosmic infinity in self. But to align one's purpose of life to the purposive drive of the universe took on moral weight, as it banished the conflict-ridden desire for interest that was unavoidable in the social sphere. The ideology of literature therefore provided a different kind of happiness that was fundamentally non-confrontational. The notion of instinct was crucial as it defined self and others in equal terms at the universal level of nature, offering a remedy for youth's existential crisis. The popularity of Chogyū's "aesthetic life" in the early 1900s was a result of the contemporary youth issue it responded to, which sparked

the debate to question the utilitarianist ethics that the government leaders enforced. Although Chogyū himself passed away in 1902, the Fujimura incident became a turning point for the literary world to seize the opportunity to promote the value and the benefit of the literary knowledge of Beauty against politics.

**Spokesmen of Youth—Chogyū and Tōkoku**

The sequence of events that occurred at the beginning of the 1900s, from Tengai's first launch of Zolaist Naturalism to Chogyū's proposal of Instinctualism and Fujimura's suicide, decisively shaped the literary current that made Tayama Katai a star of the literary world. This section sheds light on the Meiji literati's general response to the youth issue during the years before 1907 when Katai's *The Quilt* came out. I do so to elucidate how the oft-noted shift in the Naturalist approach from Zolaist objectivism to subjectivism was more a result of the historical momentum of the time than Katai's solo misunderstanding of French Naturalism. My argument is that reading his work against the backdrop of the youth issue illuminates how his exploration of instinct through the story's protagonist epitomized Chogyū's call for "individualism," the self-motivated pursuit to follow the purposive Will of the universe. As I will discuss later, Katai took full advantage of the principle of aesthetic judgment, which allowed him to be the judge and the verifier of what counted as truth. To fully understand the theoretical turn taken by Katai, it is crucial to see the rise of the new intellectual current that gained impetus from the conflict between literature and politics during these earlier years.

The outbreak of the youth issue was an important turning point for literature to receive public attention for its intellectual rigor. As Fujimura's poem alluding to the work of Shakespeare testified, it impressed the public that literature engaged in deep philosophical questions that were, for some people, more valuable than career success. It was a significant milestone for literature to elevate its reputation, especially given the historical context in which literature had been striving to rid itself of the stigma that it consisted alternately in works of frivolity and tools of propaganda associated with playful writings (*gesaku*) and political novels (*seiji shōsetsu*). The shift in the public perception of literature can be seen most explicitly in the fact that people came to see Chogyū as a spokesman of youth—in place of the young political leader Tokutomi Sohō, who had

previously occupied this role. As Waseda-school writer and critic Nakashima Kotō wrote in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* in February 1903, Chogyū was celebrated as the "representative of youth or their leader," whose "passion and literary talent recalled those reminiscent of Sohō's *Kokumin no tomo* and Tōkoku's *Bungakkai*" (quoted in Kimura 2015, 164). Although Kotō treated Chogyū here on a par with Sohō along with Kitamura Tōkoku, Chogyū's rise to prominence did not simply indicate a generation shift that had occurred at the turn of the century. Rather, it indicated how Chogyū's aesthetic philosophy had come to win a larger public support vis-à-vis Sohō's advocacy of politics following the Fujimura's incident. Sohō had been indeed a leader of youth at the time when his criticism of the state's monopoly of power had fueled public movement for civil rights in the earlier decades. But he turned out to be a man of politics from head to toe, not being able to sympathize with youth's issue of pessimism and political apathy that became salient in the 1900s. For him, pessimism was a deplorable symptom that revealed youth's incompetence in devoting their soul and body to the country.[76]

With regard to this, Kimura Hiroshi's (2015) thorough examination of the public discourse at the time demonstrates how literature during this period gained ascendancy over politics for its severe criticism of the official education of ethics. His study reveals that many intellectuals of the time supported Chogyū's efforts to attack politics for its inability to respond to youth's anguish and alienation from society. As the literati to endorsed the "impractical" knowledge of literature, their views stood at the opposite ends of the spectrum from the idealized doctrine of utilitarianism. From critics like Masamune Hakuchō to Katai, they expressed in various degrees antagonism against the utilitarian thinkers of the Min'yūsha school, who called literature useless and judged the value of art solely in terms of its utility (Kimura 2015, 261–63). In excavating those voices of dissent in the literary world of the time, Kimura's study reveals that the public appraisal of Chogyū accompanied the positive evaluation of the late writer Tōkoku, who equally came to be popularized as the representative of youth, as Kotō's newspaper article

[76] In the article to *Kokumin Shimbun* (April, 1904) where Sohō discussed the noble death of the Commander Hirose Takeo in the battle against Russia, he brought up Fujimura's suicide and stressed that he is eager to see in youth the spirit of patriotism and self-sacrifice Hirose demonstrated. See Kimura (2015). 184-5.

evinced.[77] Kimura suggests that such deification of Tōkoku resulted from the fact that Tōkoku had set a precedent for Chogyū in the early 1890s when he advocated literature against utilitarianists. Having sparked a debate with Yamaji Aizan of the Min'yūsha, who called literature an empty enterprise concerned with crafting flowery words, critics and writers in the 1900s referred back to Tōkoku and recognized him as one of the first intellectuals to give a comprehensive rationale for the value of literary exploration of Beauty.

In light of the argument of this chapter, Kimura's observation is important because placing Tōkoku's endeavor alongside Chogyū's, as writers and critics of the time did, suggests how intellectuals in the 1900s supported the ideology of Beauty that these two figures mutually proposed. It is important to take into account the understudied literary climate in which Katai's work emerged. As I have illustrated in my analysis of Tōkoku and Chogyū, they both set Beauty as the primary object of literary exploration. By treating the eternally consistent laws of nature as the embodiment of Beauty, they dissociated Beauty from the social realm of politics and encouraged individuals to discover the trace of cosmic sublimity hidden behind the guise of form. [78]

As we may recall, however, Tōkoku was by no means the only intellectual to champion Beauty in his time in the early 1890s. Other major intellectuals who took part in the aesthetic debate in the late nineteenth century, such as Tsubouchi Shōyō, Futabatei Shimei, and Mori Ōgai, all advocated Beauty as the essence of art and set its autonomous value separately from the realms of politics. Despite this, none of these mainstream aestheticians were given credit by intellectuals in the early 1900s, when the tension between politics and literature was aggravated. What emerged out of literature's conflict with politics over the issue of youth was a movement within the literary world to firmly set the ideological orientation of literature. It is worth recalling here that toward the end

[77] The data Kimura cited in his study is too immense to detail all here. One example is that Tōkoku and Chogyū were the only two Japanese writers nominated in the special article "The 36 Great Writers of Modern Times" (Kindai sanjūroku bungō) published in the journal *Bunshō sekai* (May, 1908) edited by Katai. See Kimura 257.

[78] It is worth recalling that unlike the time when Tōkoku and Doppo contextualized the infinity of the universe using the framework of Christian cosmology, the Naturalist writers replaced God with the notion of the law of nature, changing "God's Will" to the "Will of the universe."

of the nineteenth century, the moral ideology of literature remained ambiguous or completely absent in the mainstream aesthetic debates. As a result, writers and critics in the 1900s took issue not only with politics, but also with those literary proponents of Beauty, who had failed to provide a viable moral framework for literature.

A notable target of criticism was Shōyō, who called for the autonomous value of literature and stressed Beauty's lack of any utilitarian purpose, but pleasure. In an attempt to divorce literature from the Confucian ethics, he had proposed in *The Essence of the Novel* (*Shōsetsushinzui*, 1885-6) that the goal of literature was to portray human emotions and customs with psychological realism. For his contemporaries, however, the obvious issue of Shōyō's theory was that he failed to address what Beauty actually stood for and neglected to build a crucial rationale regarding the role that literature should play in society. For writers and critics in the 1900s, what was at stake for literature was its autonomous value and the knowledge that Beauty was meaningful and morally beneficial to people, despite its disinterest in socio-political issues. In order to elevate the status of literature, the symbol of Beauty must be first discovered and theoretically framed so that writers could argue that the invocation of Beauty in literature promised to produce a positive influence on the broader audience for its relevancy.

Before his death, Chogyū was critical of Shōyō for his naïve assertion that the autonomy of literature meant the total expulsion of moral concerns from the literary realm. For example, in the essay "The Time for the Renovation of Novel" (Shōsetsu kakushi no jiki) which he published in *Jidai kanken* (*My View on the Present Time*, 1898), Chogyū first gave credit to Shōyō for initiating to reform in literature by encouraging realism and rejecting the convention of didacticism. But he saw Shōyō's understanding of what he called the "absolute independence of literature" (*bungaku no zettaiteki dokuritsu*) as ill-defined, for it appeared to him that Shōyō's objective was to disconnect literature from the rest of the world altogether (Takayama 1926, 2:439).[79] For Chogyū, Shōyō gave little thought as to how literature related to society and why people

[79] Chogyū was in fact aware that Shōyō was not totally indifferent to moral concerns when he argued that literature has moral dimension. He citied a sentence from *The Essence of the Novel*; "realist novels naturally exhibit moral effects and educate people, albeit implicitly." Yet, Chogyū was critical of how Shōyō treated morality more as a chance product than the absolute necessity of literature, criticizing that he took it lightly by seeing independence of literature as the end in itself. 439.

sought access to it, if it was practically useless. To take little account of these questions, he argued, is equivalent to ignoring how literature engages in nurturing "people's natural disposition" and would merely strengthens the existing stigma that discredits literature as "unpatriotic" (440).

Chogyū transposed the bias that the government official associated with literature onto Shōyō's theory of Beauty, which lacked clear moral orientation and interrelation to the society. For Chogyū, Shōyō's theory was not so much an epochal origin of modern literature as the cause of its adversity, as it reinforced the stereotype of literature as socially subversive and contributing little to the well-being of people. By keeping a clear distance from Shōyō's advocacy of Beauty, Chogyū himself strove to clear the dishonor imprinted in the status of literature by stressing that literature had as large a moral effect as politics in fostering people's happiness. At a time when literature was becoming a clear enemy of politics, it was crucial that literature's own moral definition of the good could win as much ideological consensus from the readership. The literati "discovered" and deified Tōkoku during this period of ideological reinforcement, because he had previously established the firm link between the aesthetic pursuit of Beauty and the exploration of human nature as the guiding principle in seeking the moral goodness in Beauty.[80] To follow nature was to observe one's spontaneity of internal sensation, because interiority is where Beauty resides. The equation established between Beauty and human nature inevitably fostered the primacy of subjectivity, which is evident from the fact that intellectuals started to praise Tōkoku for advocating autonomy of inner life (*seimei*) or liberation of ego (*jiga*).

For example, Waseda-school critic Kaneko Chikusui (1870-1937) was one of the earliest intellectuals to set the tone of evaluation of Tōkoku in "My Reflections on the *Collected Essays of Tōkoku*" (*Tōkokushū* wo yomite, 1894). As the title of his essay suggests, writers and critics encountered Tōkoku's intellectual legacy through the anthology published after his death. In the year Tōkoku passed away in 1894, the coterie members of *Bungakkai* published his selected essays, followed by Hakubunkan, which

[80] See my analyses on his essays "What Does It Mean to Benefit Mankind" (Jinsei ni aiwataru towa nan'no ii zo, 1893) and "On the Inner Life" (Naibuseimeiron, 1893), among others, discussed in Chapter II.

published his complete anthology in 1902.[81] In addition to literary journals, the *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* featured Shimazaki Tōson's semi-autobiographical fiction *Spring* (*Haru*, 1908) from August to October, which recounted Tōson's memoir during his time at *Bungakkai* with Tōkoku. These subtle movements that gave attention to Tōkoku's literary quest fueled the fever for Chogyū's "aesthetic life-ism," which strongly echoed Tōkoku's advocacy of Beauty, nature, and subjectivism. Impressed by how Tōkoku's essays embodied his soul and voice, Chikusui argued that Tōkoku demonstrated how to "express what he himself experienced, felt, and thought out," which is why "the power of his pen is so invigorating contrary to those who list knowledge of others" (Kaneko 1974, 3). What struck him as most remarkable about Tōkoku's writing was his voice of "I," which was inseparable from the notion of "inner life" that posited that all creations in the universe are endowed with their own "life" (*seimei*) and "providence" (*setsuri*) of nature (4). According to him, Tōkoku was capable of pronouncing his subjectivity because he observed and followed his own nature-given *seimei* by resisting the restriction of customs. Describing Tōkoku as the embodiment of an ideal poet, he explained that Tōkoku received the "consolation from the god of Beauty" by entering the bosom of nature, a place where the "infinite power" resided (4). He highlighted how Tōkoku's tenet of *seimei* spoke for the benefit of all individuals, in that it identified nature as the only common property of man that promised "equality in the present world dominated by inequality" (4).

Chikusui's observation demonstrates how critics saw the political potential of Beauty that Tōkoku had proposed, which gave primacy to subjective voices curtailed by society and the scholarly world, while contextualizing individual ego using the universal concept of nature. The discovery of Tōkoku suggests how critics at the turn of the century solidified the view that the primacy of subjectivity and its moral orientation toward nature were the two key concepts that comprised the literary ideology of Beauty vis-à-vis politics. This inevitably led writers and critics to re-assess the trajectory of

[81] I shall note that Yamaji Aizan also called Tōkoku a "poetic genius" after reading his anthology. He described how he took a fancy to confessing that it was Tōkoku who taught him that there is something more than materials, forms, and fame that he could not resist pursuing in life and made him wish not to get content with reality at all times. See "Reading the Complete Works of Tōkoku" (Tōkoku zenshū wo yomu, 1902) published in *Shinano Mainichi Shimbun* in Yamaji, Aizan. 1965. *Yamaji Aizan Shū*. Vol. 35. Meiji Bungaku Zenshū. Tokyo: Chikuma shobo. 327-329.

modern Japanese literature, whose politics of Beauty originated not from Shōyō's *The Essence of Novel*, but from Tōkoku and Chogyū. The essay "My View on Kitamura Tōkoku" (Kitamura Tōkoku shikan, 1908) written by an editor of *Waseda Bungaku* Sōma Gyofū (1883-1950), bears witness to this. Gyofū was one of the critics who encountered Tōkoku through Hakubunkan's anthology and Tōson's *Spring,* which was featured in a newspaper at the height of Chogyū's popularity in the 1900s.[82] In his essay, Gyofū described Tōkoku as an inspirer of youth similar to Chogyū, although he admitted that he had known little about him previously. Despite this, just like Chikusui, he was struck by Tōkoku's aesthetic philosophy that sought morality in the "mystic power of the Great universe" (*shinpi naru daiuchū ryoku*)," where the vital force of "life (*seimei*) coursed through nature and human beings" (Sōma 1967, 308). Having learned Tōkoku's initiative in defending the value of literature against politics prior to Chogyū's, he gave credit to Tōkoku for raising a "rebellious voice against utilitarianists" while at the same time "urging those proponents of literature for literature's sake to turn attention to *seimei*" (308). By indicating that literature explores the solemn realm of the universe, Tōkoku, he argued, offered a crucial rationale for why religion and literature play a noble role in engaging with society.

As these voices of the time reveal, Tōkoku and Chogyū were regarded as the leading proponents of Beauty, whose prescription of the moral orientation of literature gave impetus for writers to advance their advocacy of nature and subjectivism against social ethics.[83] Consequently, the subjectivism central to the aesthetic approach

[82] In Tōson's *Spring*, Aoki (Tōkoku) is depicted as an aspirant leader eager to make a new epoch of literature. There is one scene where the protagonist described how Aoki always insisted that literature must give consolation to people as religion do, arguing that all great poets in history, from Homer and Shakespeare to Saigyō and Bashō, showed deep sympathy to humanity. See Shimazaki, Tōson. 1949. *Shimazaki Tōson Zenshū*. Vol. 14. Tokyo: Shinchosha. 23.

[83] Due to the page limit, I cannot fully integrate another important strand that relates to my study involving Kunikida Doppo, who also received public attention in the 1900s. In the essay "Myself and Naturalism" (Yo to shizenshugi, 1907) published in the newspaper *Nippon*, Doppo recounted how he "suddenly became famous and witnessed many admirers" after he published *Doppo shū* and *Unmei* collecting his old works in 1905 and 1906 (Kunikida 1965, 1:529). With regard to this, critic Uchida Roan wrote in the memorial essay "Works by Doppo and the Public Taste" (Dopposhi no sakubutsu to seken no kōsh, 1908) published in *Shinchō* that only after the 1900s did public came to fully understand the value of Doppo's works. It implies how intellectuals found an echo of Fujimura's anguish in Doppo, who had often confessed in his diary and the fiction "Beef and Potatoes" the desire to get struck by the "wonder of the universe" (*uchū no fukashigi*), as discussed in Chapter 2. For how Meiji literary circles discovered Doppo in the 1900s and took note of his profound interest in the mystery of the universe, see general criticism and memorial

encouraged writers to raise their own voices when embarking on the quest for Beauty. As Gyofū's observation on Tōkoku's essays evinced, replicating the knowledge of others did not constitute true literature. In the principle of aesthetic writing, the so-called Will of the universe was a mere hypothesis that needed to be discovered and tested individually. For the proponents of Beauty, the knowledge of science was important insofar as it helped explain by means of rationalism that human beings in fact bore sublime infinity inside in their nature.

In regards to this, Hasegawa Tenkei's essay "What is the New Current of Thought," which is cited at the very beginning of this chapter, argued that "science and art are not hostile with each other, but rather complementary" (Hasegawa 1967, 141). Tenkei argued that it is reasonable to study the development of individual character by taking into account man's common traits, because all mankind is subject to the purposive principle of instinct. To ignore the basic research into the science and instead propose to explore "absolute individualism," "pure emotion" (*jun kanjō*), or "pure imagination" (*jun sōzō*), he argued, is to "hamper the development of literature" (141).

Though Tenkei did not criticize Shōyō's aesthetic theory in particular, his argument suggested that intellectuals of the time were becoming increasingly aware that Beauty was politically-charged knowledge grounded in a scientific framework. By integrating scientific facts into the conception of Beauty, writers and critics solidified the view that literature probes the infinite realm of nature designed by the Will of universe and that subjectivism allowed individuals to explore the manifestation of Nature located in one's interiority. Although scientific knowledge was important, the orthodox Naturalist doctrine of objectivism was anathema to the proponents of Beauty. Objectivism was enforcement of truth. It prohibited individuals from engaging in self-exploration and precluded the path to self-transcendence.

Critic Shimamura Hōgetsu, for example, was vocal about how scientism turned literature into a mere vehicle that reproduced its knowledge. In "Literature in Shackles" (Torawaretaru bungeki, 1906), which was published in *Waseda Bungaku*, Hōgetsu lamented that the Naturalist advocacy of Zolaist "realism" was just another name for

writings critics devoted to Doppo collected in Kunikida, Doppo. 1967. *Kunikida Doppo Zenshū*. Vol. 10. Tokyo: Gakushūkenkyūsha. 105-431.

scientism, for it encouraged writers to copy nature externally in line with the theories of psychology, genetics, and social issues (Shimamura 1958c, 131). He condemned scientific objectivism because it ignores distinct individual experience in favor of generalization of knowledge. Individualism, as conceived in aesthetics, is not predicated on any standardized ideas. Contrary to the "limitedness" of knowledge, Hōgetsu argued that the realm of emotions is characterized by its "boundless infinity" that transcends the parameter of intellect (134). Calling the property of infinity hidden in the finitude of human body "mysticism" (*shinpi*), Hōgetsu and like-minded proponents of Beauty supported the presence and exploration of the unfathomable aspect of human behavior and creativity by resorting to the first-person cognitive power (134).

To observe and depict external behaviors of persons other than oneself—as scientists did and for which Kosugi Tengai's Naturalist works were known—no longer had much currency. What was at stake for literature at the turn of the century was to maintain and promote the value of its own aesthetic knowledge by opposing the ethics of politics and the objectivism of scientism. Politically speaking, it was literature's aesthetic principle of subjectivism that made it possible for individuals to resist established facts or meaning of "self" enforced by the models of moralism and scientism. The Naturalist shift of approach from objectivism to subjectivism therefore reflected literature's aspiration to engage with larger social issues, and it specifically advocated moral virtue of nature and endorsed individual freedom in judging and speaking about truth as seen through the lens of the individual. For literary intellectuals, to commit oneself into building knowledge about Beauty along this ideological line was a "patriotic" undertaking, an enterprise that they deemed necessary in fostering the well-being of people and improving the academic rigor of literary knowledge. As I examine below, Tayama Katai was largely influenced by the dominant literary currents of the time, and he defended Beauty in support of the autonomy of literature.

**In Opposition to Scientific Realism: "The Quilt" and Aesthetic Writing**

Tayama Katai caused a public sensation in the public audience with his publication of "The Quilt" (1907), which revealed the author-like protagonist's secret sexual obsession with a young female pupil. Despite the confession of amoral desire that

the married educated man kept to himself, literary critics generally received his work positively for the unsullied power of nature they felt from the work. Shimamura Hōgetsu was one of the literary critics to give credit to Katai for making a theoretical breakthrough in Japanese Naturalism. In the essay "Comment on 'The Quilt'" (Futon wo hyōsu, 1907), published in *Waseda Bungaku*, Hōgetsu declared that Katai's work demonstrated a "bold confession by a man of flesh and frankness" and portrayed "ugliness" reminiscent of the "roar of the primitive wildness of mankind" (Shimamura 1958b, 149). Katai himself explained later in "The Manners in Novels" (Shōsetsu sahō, 1909) that sexual desire was both a "blind power of nature" that he "pursued earnestly driven by carnal desire" and also a "formidable force" that he had to fight off (Tayama 1995, 26:238–39). For Katai, instinct was the main target of his literary exploration—that is, the locus of Beauty.

Katai's intent to represent the sublime magnitude of nature is reflected in his oft-discussed essay "Raw Depiction" (Rokotsunaru byōsha, 1904), where he had stressed the need for linguistic reform. Written three years before "The Quilt," the essay already prefigured the autobiographical character of that story, which emphasized the revelation of man's internal sublimity to nature. In the essay, he stressed the importance of employing plain language to represent everything just as is, and he argued so by denouncing writers of previous generation, such as Ozaki Kōyō, Kōda Rohan, Tsuboushi Shōyō, and Mori Ōgai, who, according to Katai, employed technical skills that distorted reality. By pointing out that Western writers such as Ibsen, Tolstoy, Zola, and Dostoevsky infused their own blood and sweat into their writing, Katai argued that the new literary current should champion "bold, raw depiction" of reality that conceals nothing, and that resists "pretty style and gilded ideas" (Tayama 2017, 331).

The essay reveals how Katai's endeavor to represent the sublime power of nature demanded literary reform, which entailed jettisoning indigenous linguistic convention and instead emulating European writing. This essay, which literary historians often examine somewhat exclusively alongside analyses of "The Quilt," forged the impression that Katai had formed Japanese Naturalism in confrontation with the shifting dynamics between Japan's indigenous literary traditions and more advanced forms of Western literature. While this is undoubtedly a part of the picture, as Katai certainly pitted his

literary philosophy against the past tradition or against the West, critics have tended to ignore his engagement with the aesthetic discourse that the Meiji literati undertook, prompted by literature's conflict against politics. This oversight has led literary historians to assess Katai's Naturalism narrowly, treating it as a unique derivative of Western literature that is not yet quite identical to its European precedents. This is most apparent in the way that critics have cast Katai's notion of "nature," defining it exclusively by comparing it to its Western counterpart.

Literary historians generally agree that Katai's notion of nature was equivalent to the hereditary law of nature as conceived in French Naturalism. But they also point that Katai deviated from the "orthodox" European conception of nature.

For example, Yanabu Akira undertook an etymological analysis and argued that Katai's nature, where subject unifies with object, indicates that he subscribed to the traditional understanding of nature (*shizen*) that prevailed before scientific objectivism became a new standard in the post-enlightenment period (Yanabu 1995, 118). While Zola's *Le Roman Expérimental* (1880) takes a positivist stance and detaches the subject-artist from the object of observation, Yanabu points out that Katai's nature lacked analytical distance between subject and object. From another perspective, Indra Levy has suggested that Katai equated the notion of nature with a particular image of modern Western literature, not with an objective fact. Levy examined Katai's nature from the viewpoint of his manner of description, arguing that language style played a pivotal role in constructing a form of knowledge. In opposition to popular rhetorical writing style of Ken'yūsha school, Katai adopted a vernacular style and its alleged neutrality freed from the dictates of linguistic convention. Levy suggests that Katai privileged transparency of meaning over artistry, and in so doing, he identified the subject-artist with Western literary models, emulating them as the model of nature (Levy 2006, 112–13).

While my analysis of Katai's characteristics of nature does not largely disagree with these observations, I would argue that previous critics have taken little account of his advocacy of nature from aesthetic standpoint of Beauty. In my view, the features of subject-object unification and its likeness to models of Western novels, as Yanabu and Levy have pointed out respectively, resulted neither from Katai's lack of awareness to positivist approach nor from his intention to copy the West. I argue that these

characteristics of nature pertinent to Katai's Naturalism derived from his advocacy of Beauty, which stressed subjectivity and the elevation of the particularity of individual experience into a universal fact. The oft-discussed essay "Raw Depiction" does not touch on Katai's concerns for the autonomy of literature and his willingness to support the ideology of Beauty. The overemphasis on this essay has reinforced the binarism between Japanese literary tradition and Western literature, reinforcing an essentialism that actually runs counter to Katai's conception of nature, which embraced the universality of human nature. To fully grasp Katai's prominence in the literary landscape, it is crucial to examine his oeuvre more broadly, and to take into account the aesthetic backbone of his work, which opposed both scientism and moralism.

Katai's theoretical exploration of nature dates back to the early 1900s. One of the earlier instances can be found in the preface to his fiction "Wild Flower" (No no hana, 1901) and the follow-up essay, "Author's Subjectivity" (Sakusha no shukan, 1901) that he wrote in response to the criticism he received from literary critic Masamune Hakuchō.[84] Written less than a year after Kosugi Tengai's works came out, these essays reveal Katai's firm stance to oppose the Zolaist approach that Tengai adopted and set the tone of Naturalism in Japan. Contrary to objective realism, he proposed to capture and portray a vestige of "Great nature" (*dai shizen no omokage*), a term that became associated with the latter phase of Naturalism invested in exploring the transcendental aspect of human nature. In the latter essay, he wrote:

> It is my belief that art without the subjectivity of Great nature is not art. What I call Great nature is something of serene quality that reminds us of white snow in Mount Fuji. It is lurking in the author's innermost part of self. It develops infinitely and astonishingly and prompts the author to meditate, to be moved, and to be immersed in inspiration (Tayama 1995, 26:561).

In "Author's Subjectivity," Katai elaborated on the notion of Great nature by explaining that it is not something that lay objectivism could reach and grasp. He maintained that while the earlier brand of Naturalism championed dry analyses of superficial

[84] Masamune Hakuchō, "Katai's 'Wild Flower'" (Katai saku 'No no hana', 1901) published in *Yomiuri Shimbun* in July.

phenomenon and fancied scholarly attitude, the later period of Naturalism had resuscitated subjectivity and its faculty of mystic imagination (*kūsō shinpi*). He observed that the new literary current aimed to "step into the Great nature" inside the subject and to probe the "unfathomable depth and secret of humanity" lying in there (563-64). Katai argued that while some artists excercized narrow-sighted subjectivity, great poets exhibited subjectivity that touched on the Great nature. For him, this nature was not a unique property tainted in a personal color, but is something that lies beyond the confinement of self. In the present age of chaos, he argued, poets must "attune themselves to the spirit of the times, study dominant ideas of society, and engage in criticizing civilization by wielding subjectivity of Great nature" (561-562). In this essay, he echoed Chogyū's argument that poets are critics of civilization, who could condemn the malady of intellectualism that suppressed individuality and development of fundamental ego. In Katai's Naturalist scheme, subjectivity is the tool that poets alone could employ in probing the universal property of nature located internally in all individuals. Therefore, when artists observe the so-called Great nature using their subjective lens, he was convinced that they were actually studying universal human experience that transcended private experience.

As Katai's description above indicates, he regarded Great nature as an inscrutable territory veiled in mystery, a small cosmos imparted by the universe that has no boundary of limit. This characterization is important, because it is essentially different from what Tengai's Naturalism aimed to explore by observing and sketching visible phenomena. While Katai wrote in "Raw Depiction" that he rejected linguistic artistry in order to convey reality as it is, this reality for him existed in one's interior and was verified by the subject's judgment alone. Consequently, Katai's line of Naturalism did not rule out mysticism, which was inimical to science, but rather set the unfathomable depth of human nature as the target of realistic observation.

Exploration of nature therefore centered on representing the indescribable that was hidden in the guise of form. Nature, which bears an infinite quality, was invisible and was only cognitively discernable. Furthermore, even though one might have intuited the visceral impulse of nature, no artist could measure its boundary in its totality. Therefore, what Katai denounced when he rejected artistry in "Raw Depiction" was not

the past literary tradition by itself that hindered transparency of meaning. Precisely speaking, there was no way to provide a transparent window onto the boundless realm of Great nature even by means of a modern vernacular language. Consequently, what he opposed was rather the rationalist drive inherent in all forms of knowledge—including artistic convention, common rhetoric and scientific objectivism—that inevitably undermined infinity and set the boundary to nature when turning it into a representable form. As a writer devoted to exploring the mystic realm of nature, Katai did not champion objective realism that undercut the power of infinity immanent in human nature. Instead, he advocated "aesthetic writing," which was concerned little with dissecting nature figuratively and turning it into a definite knowledge.

In the essay "Manners of Aesthetic Writing*"* (Bibun sahō, 1906), Katai clearly identified himself as a proponent of Beauty, distancing himself from those writers, who turned literature into a slave of Intellectualism. Written as a part of the series for the *Complete Books on Popular Composition* (*Tsūzoku sakubun zensho*) published from Hakubunkan, he discussed in the essay some prominent characteristics of literary writing by dwelling on the manners of description. In it, he argued that there are two styles of writing that people must adopt appropriately according to the purpose of the work. One is practical writing (*jitsuyōbun*) and the other is aesthetic writing (*bibun*). He explained that practical writing focuses on reporting and conveying information and that it should be straight to the point and legible. It is suitable for scholarly writing and it helps cultivate knowledge. Aesthetic writing (*bibun*), on the other hand, is concerned less with conveying any definite meanings. Its primary purpose, according to Katai, is to delight and entertain readers. Aesthetic writing is an artistic activity and deals primarily with imagination and emotion, involving little interest in building intellectual knowledge (Tayama 1995, 26:8–11). Because it does not aim at reproducing any preconceived knowledge, he described that aesthetic writing is ultimately as a form of writing that relies on one's own subjectivity and aesthetic taste. According to him, in order for aesthetic writing to function properly, writers' emotions (*jōcho*) and anguish (*hanmon*) must play leading roles. He described the characteristics of emotion as follows:

> It is the natural property that develops both psychologically and biologically. Some people are naturally sensitive while others are not. The effect of emotion also changes tremendously based on the factor of age. For example, blood-tinging youth are generally under the great influence of emotion, but its power wanes as people age. It is the barometer of how susceptible you are to all things in this universe, such as natural landscape and various phenomena pertinent to human life. The more easily you are governed by emotions, the more easily you lose yourself and build yearning sympathy with what you are facing. For instance, suppose that people of low susceptibility encountered a beautiful girl. They won't be moved by her appearance, her eyes, and her beautiful composure. They instead look through her weakness and shortcomings or treat her indifferently by judging benefits and losses of interest. Contrary to this, people with excess emotions are driven by the yearning for sympathy, losing themselves and their minds and assimilate with her in rapture. Biologically speaking, too, it is the same. When instinct is fully unleashed, people tend to lose rationality when they are out to satisfy their desire (Tayama 1995, 26:24–25).

For aesthetic writing, emotion is crucial as it emerges spontaneously from the gut and fills one's mind, precluding the intervention of intellectual knowledge. The explosion of emotion incurs excessive sensibility both psychologically and physically. Beauty, Katai argued, emerges at the moment of one's capitulation to this formidable power of nature. While emotion is spontaneous, he argued that "anguish" is the catalyst that elicits emotion, enabling it to take over one's mind and body. Aside from emotion, he enlisted anguish as an integral component of aesthetic writing. Acknowledging that adolescents are most prone to suffer from various kinds of anguish, including that of love, he maintained that aesthetic writing flourishes during the time of youth, when young people are driven by yearning, unconscious impulse, and blindness prompted by inner nature. As a result, he explained that when the elements of "anguish, imagination, and excessive sensibility" come together, it leads to "hyperbole" (*kochō*), a manner of description that represents the outburst of emotion (27).

According to Katai, hyperbole was a style of description used in the works of Symbolism, which was gaining literary prominence in Europe at the time. Unlike practical writing that privileged clarity of meaning, hyperbole was used to emphasize excess of emotion and foregrounds the state of one's rapture, when being carried away by the impulse of nature. The essay reveals that as a proponent of aesthetic writing, Katai was far more inclined toward the decadence and mysticism of Symbolist writers, such as

Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, and Charles P. Baudelaire, who employed symbols to represent extreme human conditions such as "excess of carnal desire" and inundation of "pessimism and depressive lethargy" (27).[85] Not aiming to give a definite contour to the inscrutability of emotion, Katai suggested that aesthetic writing champions the rhetoric of exaggeration as a means to represent the unfathomable magnitude of nature.

Katai explained that Japanese literature had yet to catch up with the literary trends of Europe and that hyperbole deserved further research and development domestically. In describing the latest literary movement in Europe, however, he was not attempting to propel a hasty literary shift from Naturalism to Symbolism. At the time when Naturalism had just started to take root in Japan by introducing the ideas of heredity, faithful description, and objectivism, Katai was concerned with how to integrate the aesthetic tenet of Beauty into the Naturalist demand for facts grounded in science. Being aware of the paradigm shift, he pointed out that the Naturalist emphasis on "fact and analysis" is becoming increasingly important in modern literature, while "ideals and imagination" are still valid and essential to artists' quest for Beauty (30). As a proponent of Beauty, he therefore argued that one must "maintain the principle of art" while "jettisoning conventional ideas upon depicting life and fact." He intended thus to "give warning to the literary world" by "casting an incipient light on the promise of aesthetic writing" (30). Katai's argument in this essay reveals that from the outset, he advocated imagination and exaggeration, which was necessary in representing one's perception of instinct that was fundamentally formless and dependent on the subject's cognitive experience. Read in this light, his landmark fiction "The Quilt" was an experiment that unified science and aesthetics, which is evident in the way he employed in his Naturalist work the symbolist trope of hyperbole, as I discuss below.

"The Quilt" depicts the established writer Tokio's unrewarded love and sexual desire toward a young educated student, Yoshiko, who sought Tokio's mentorship in Tokyo in her quest to become a writer. While putting on the stern air of a guardian in front of her, Tokio gradually loses control of himself and becomes obsessive about her, especially after he learns about Yoshiko's secret relationship with a student named

[85] For details on his influence from European Symbolist writers, See "Katai's Literary Essays" (Katai bunwa, 1911) in Tayama, Katai. 1974. *Tayama Katai Zenshū*. Vol. 15. Tokyo: Bunsendō shoten. 232-33.

Tanaka. By gathering various pieces of information about Yoshiko's intimate affair with Tanaka—at one point, going as far as to read their letters secretly—Tokio keeps on sinking into misery, anger, and sexual obsession. From the beginning to the end, the story puts a spotlight on Tokio's emotional fluctuation, which he conceals when facing Yoshiko to maintain his face as a mentor. Despite all the overwhelming impulses that torture him, Tokio's story ends with no significant event or drama: he never crosses the line to fulfill his desire and its development prompted by Yoshiko's sudden appearance into his monotonous life. The guiding theme of the work is not so much an illicit love affair as the strength of human nature that persists and destroys the rational mind of an educated, middle-aged adult.

Interestingly, as critic Masamune Hakuchō observed, many writers at this time wrote about middle-aged love affairs, where male protagonists suddenly awoke from the slumber of their mundane lives through extramarital relationships. While adultery was a crime, there was a general tendency among writers to justify the offence in the name of human nature, seeing the pursuit of desire favorably by calling it "self-indulgence" (Masamune 1965, 389). The term gained currency after Iwano Hōmei's *Self-Indulgence* (*Tandeki,* 1909) came out, which depicted a story about a married, middle-aged male school teacher's obsession with a geisha, whom he patronized to turn into an actress in Tokyo. Much like the storyline of "The Quilt," it revolved around the return of youth's passion that brought about both an overwhelming pain and pleasure to life. While these Naturalist works leave an impression that they celebrated amoral desire, I suggest that the main message of "The Quilt" is to criticize the dehumanizing impulse of social customs, and to foreground the enduring power of nature that brings back vitality to life. A passage from "The Quilt" below bears witness to this:

> Tokio thought over various things as he walked along the embankment. It was the loneliness of his own home that upset him so, rather than Yoshiko's affair [with Tanaka]. His unhappiness with a life that a man in his mid-thirties should expect rather to enjoy, his unhealthy thoughts about his job, his sexual frustration. . . .He felt terribly depressed by such things. Yoshiko had been the flower and the substance of his banal experience. Her beautiful power had made flowers bloom again in the wilderness of his heart, had made rusty bells peal forth again. Thanks to Yoshiko he had been filled with a new zest for life, been resurrected (Tayama 1981, 76–77).

The frustration he has come to feel in the mid-thirties is an expected one, when happy marriage fades into memory and all he has left is his duty to make a living for the family. The monotonous life and his boring wife, who exemplified an old-fashioned woman in terms of appearance, education, and character all dragged him into the abyss of sadness. Yet, at the same time, he could not believe how changeable his heart was, given the strong passion he used to have for his wife before their marriage. "Paradox it may be, but there's nothing I can do about it. That paradox, that inconstancy, is a fact, and facts are facts. Fact!" (56). His loyalty to the wife and children fell apart in the face of the "unendurable force of nature," which was much stronger than his sense of moral obligation and the years of commitment to the family (56). Despite his awareness of this betrayal of his wife and family, he nonetheless felt neither shame nor pang of conscience over his feeling for Yoshiko, rather accepting it positively as a catalyst that had energized his life. It is the forgotten power of nature that helped Tokio overcome his midlife crisis, when he realized that what he had pursued earnestly during his youth—namely, marriage, family, and social status—had in fact come to shackle him to a social formalism devoid of happiness.

The popularity of works such as "The Quilt," which thematized midlife affairs, revealed the fallacy of social morality and established customs that did not guarantee enduring happiness. For Tokio, obtaining Yoshiko was not his ultimate goal. What thrilled him more than Yoshiko herself was the impulse of nature that awoke from the slumber, whose rampant power remained intact and alive despite the infliction of customs and the emasculating force of time. The highlight of the story lies in giving attention to the manifestation of the sublimity of nature, the moment when Tokio comes to realize that before everything, he is a child of nature and that he cannot escape the fate.

The passage cited below is a noticeable case in point. Tokio became enraged after receiving Yoshiko's letter, in which she revealed that her boyfriend Tanaka had abandoned his study in Kyoto and come to Tokyo to seek her. Having learned that she was meeting him more frequently than ever and indulging in secret affairs, Tokio lost himself in anger, threw a tantrum to his wife, and dashed out of his house.

> His mind was excited, his wild feelings and the pleasure of his sadness mustered all their force, and while on the one hand he was carried away by a burning jealousy, on the other he was coolly and objectively considering his own situation. Of course his feelings were not the passionate feelings of a first love. Rather than blindly following his fate, he was coolly appraising that fate. Burning feelings and ice-cold objective appraisal fused firmly together like entwinned threads, and produced in him an extraordinary state of mind. He was sad, truly deeply sad. His sadness was not the sadness of florid youth, nor simply the sadness of lovers. It was a more profound and greater sadness, a sadness inherent in the innermost reaches of human life. The flowing of moving waters, the withering of blossoming flowers—when encountering that irresistible force which is deep within nature, there is nothing as wretched nor as transient as man (Tayama 1981, 55)

This scene captures Katai's Naturalist exploration of the sublime moment, where he employed a combination of scientific observation and aesthetic writing in describing what is happening internally in Tokio's mind and body. It is noteworthy that he used hyperbole to foreground the explosion of so-called "emotion" (*jōcho*), the state in which one's power to think rationally is suspended by the overflow of various conflicting feelings. Immediately before the scene cited above, Katai had described how Tokio's burning jealousy toward Tanaka caused a rupture that was both emotional and physical. By the time he left his house, Tokio was already torn apart from drinking sake excessively in an attempt to tame his painful anguish and was in "the state of disorder by his agitated feelings and drunken body" (54). With the help of alcohol, he accelerated his own decadence to the point that he lost grip of self and let his nature take over his consciousness. Then came the moment when he cognized the impulse of nature, so formidable yet as consistent and inevitable as a universal fate of mankind that he could pleasantly let himself float on the tide of nature.

In the passage above, Tokio distantly observes his internal turmoil in a detached manner akin to the third-person viewpoint. The way Katai represented the surge of emotion is candid and colloquial, but it does not mean that he described things just as they unfolded. It is worth noting that his description of nature is the product of his power to objectify the invisible and render it verbally by means of imagination. This is evident in the way he used the non-literal rhetoric of exaggeration, such as "burning feelings," "extraordinary state of mind" "flowing of moving waters" and "withering of blossoms of

flowers" that are *not realistic* in the sense of scientific objectivism. Rather, these are the symbolic tropes of hyperbole that are used to underscore the intensity of natural impulse and its quality of infinity, whose effect Tokio could intuit only subjectively through his cognitive senses.

While maintaining the analytical lens of Naturalism, Katai employed an aesthetic methodology in describing what was essentially un-representable. The passage cited above depicts the moment when Tokio is no more conscious of the particularity of self. As his detached observation illustrates, when Tokio is carried away and dominated by the overflow of conflicted emotions, he entered the bosom of what Katai called "Great nature" and discovered in his internal territory the universal properties of mankind, allowing him to transcend the boundary of individualized body and soul. Tokio's consolation is that it is nature alone that remains permanent and unequivocally common to all human beings, therefore turning it into a legitimate excuse to nurture his visceral desire despite its alleged immorality. By the same token, Katai openly disclosed his private life without hesitation, as he was certain that he was merely revealing an aspect of universal human experience that any person could relate to. As evidence for this, in the essay "The Record of Confession and Novel" (Zangeroku to shōsetsu, 1909), Katai recalled that he did not "purposefully choose to write the ugly truth," but "simply presented to the eyes of the readers a certain truth" that he had discovered in his own life (Tayama 1995, 26:228).

Starting with "The Quilt," the confessional character of Naturalism turned a private life into the platform of what Fujimori Kiyoshi called the "spectacle," which provokes in readers a dramatic sensation of the "sublime" (Fujimori 2003, 168). Unlike his Romantic predecessors, who had turned to natural landscape as the primary stage of the spectacular, Katai's Naturalism shifted attention from the exterior world to the subject's interior, where the infinity of Beauty presided in the name of Nature. Bold confession was a symbolic performance to set individual interiority as the stage of spectacle, stirring the public sensationally by revealing the enduring and staggering vitality of nature. As a proponent of Beauty, Katai set a powerful example in probing the infinite depth of nature hidden in the guise of form. Contrary to one common misconception about his writing, he employed the symbolic trope of exaggeration to

verbally render the immensity of nature, thereby differentiating his aesthetic writing from a scientific realism that prohibited imagination. Instead of promoting self-secluded individuals, he illustrated that the sorrow of loneliness and anguish leads one to turn to one's innermost interiority, where individuals discover the common root of humanity and can thus transcend the confinement of self, letting oneself follow the current of Nature.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have argued that Japanese Naturalism was not a mere replica of scientific knowledge nor of Western literary models, but was also firmly founded upon aesthetic agendas. It set exploration of Beauty as the primary goal of literature and advocated subjectivity as the only tool that could intuit Beauty's formless, infinite sublimity. Beauty, which by definition lacks any concrete referent but pleasure, therefore existed in the subjective domain rather than in exterior phenomena. Rather than treating "instinct" as an idea imported from Western science, the Japanese literati examined it as the very embodiment of Beauty, making it into a testing ground to discover the manifestation of infinity imparted in nature by the purposive Will of the universe. Though the subjectivism of literature prompted an inward turn, the exploration of Beauty by writers such as Katai did not foster escapist seclusion from the rest of the world. As seen in the prominence of the Naturalist movement in answer to the widespread issue of youth's pessimism and alienation, Beauty was a means for individuals to discover a transcendental realm, where the distinction between self and other could be annihilated. Though advocacy of Beauty did not have a direct bearing on politics and evaded social confrontation, its aversion to the utilitarian concern of gains and losses of interest is what made literature a rallying point to resist the purposive drive of self-centrism and social division. Contrary to socio-economic ethics that propelled interpersonal competition and existential crisis, the pursuit of Beauty was premised on the idea that Beauty is the native place of all human beings.

# CHAPTER V

# SUBLIME BEAUTY AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF TRANSCENDENCE IN LITERARY MODERNISM

> By "modernity" I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable.
>
> Charles Baudelaire (The Painter of Modern Life, 1863)[86]

## Introduction

The devastation of the cities of Tokyo and Kanagawa by the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 was a turning point for many Japanese writers of the time, who witnessed the onset of the new era through the rapid transformation of old cities into modern urban space. Yokomitsu Riichi (1898-1947), who founded the journal *The Age of Literary Art* (*Bungei jidai*) in 1924 with other members including Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972), was one of them, ushering in new aesthetic sensibilities that came to be invariably cited as the birth of a Modernist consciousness in Japan. In 1941, Yokomitsu revisited the literary undertaking that he had launched at this historical moment, recalling a juncture that marked the destruction of the past and a new beginning:

> Amid the great city now burned down to the unbelievably vast stretch of ashes, a speed monster known as the automobile began running around for the first time. Then a voice-streaming device called radio appeared, as well as a bird-shaped object called airplane flying in the skies for utilitarian service. These were materialization of modern science that developed for the first time in our country shortly after the earthquake. It is only natural that the sensibilities of the youth growing up exposed to a number of such cutting-edge manifestations of modern science would be affected by them one way or another. I recall that the mind of the youth at that time was still vacantly fixated to the vanishing "city beneath the surface." But I could no longer bear with the obsolete style of Naturalism with its worn-out emotional lyricism. Hence, I began my revolt. This simultaneously necessitated me to embark on cultivating morality and Beauty attuned to this new era (Yokomitsu 1982, 584).

Motivated by a sense of rebellion against the literary establishment, *The Age of Literary*

[86] Baudelaire, Charles. 1995. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. Edited by Jonathan Mayne. London: Phaidon Press. 13.

*Art* took off with the ambition to establish new artistic expression that adequately reflected the emergent realities of urban life, and especially the materiality of technology. The group's attention to the new human sensory experience evoked by the animating phenomena of metropolises—speed, light, sound, automated machines, and novel recreational and commercial sites—led the critic Chiba Kameo to name them *shinkankakuha* or the New Sensationalist School. While it is evident that Yokomitsu and his fellow members identified urban modernity as the birthplace of their artistic undertaking, their ultimate purpose was not to mimetically reproduce their perception of this dazzling spectacle in works of fiction, or to document the latest fashion of urban life. Their agenda was first and foremost to reformulate the essence of "Beauty" appropriate to the age. More specifically, Yokomitsu contended that one can neither find Beauty nor expect the moral effect it invokes, if all one does is to chase after the external appearance of those material realities as the locus of knowledge. As the continuation of his recollection revealed, he enunciated Beauty and its "idealism" (*seishin shugi*) as the cardinal weapons of his school in opposition to their new rival—namely, the proletarian writers, who espoused materialist realism as their basic approach to art:

> At this time [when I began my revolt against Naturalism], materialistic views of history became the very first positivist theory to bloom in our country and started its assault on the spiritual realm. Its intrusion intensified by the day and its popular influence engulfed the whole country like a cloud overshadowing the sun. We the artistic group could not help but shift our target from formidable Naturalism to this unexpected, powerful foe (584-85).

Self-identifying his group as the "artistic" faction, Yokomitsu opposed proletarian literature and its underlying Marxist view of social reality, one that saw economic infrastructure as the determinant factor of all social and cultural phenomena, including the issues of egotism and class conflict. Just as he rejected Naturalism, which had sought in human biological nature something determinant and eternal, he denied the epistemological foundation of Marxist doctrine in favor of that of "Art." For Yokomitsu, eternal and absolute truth was located in the inscrutable realm of Beauty, which remained untouched by materialist realities and could be found and rendered only by means of the "realistic depiction of symbols" (*shajitsuteki shōchō*) (585). Calling such pursuit of

Beauty the "ultimate purpose of literature," he launched the aesthetic revolt with the ambition to enlighten the new denizens living in the industrially advanced age with his view of truth.

The goal of this chapter is to reconsider literary Modernism from the perspective of art's autonomy by focusing on the discourse of Beauty. The chapter's aesthetic approach to Modernism has a larger implication in light of my current research, which has so far examined the pervasion of the cult of Beauty throughout the major literary movements of the modern period. The chapter reveals that there is more philosophical resonance between Modernism and its literary predecessors, Naturalism and Romanticism, than is generally understood. The commonality derives from the doctrine of art's autonomy, which was embodied in the air of aestheticism that permeated these mainstream literary movements.

As Yokomitsu's essay shows, Modernism is generally defined by the rejection of Naturalism, which centered narrowly on, as the criticism often goes, writers' contemplation of inner nature and confession of sexual impulses. This individualistic attitude on the part of the established writers, which entirely avoided the issue social confrontation, came under severe attack in the 1920s, as attested by the prominence of proletarian literature. Yokomitsu was critical of Naturalism for its lack of relevancy in the new era and aspired to re-establish a literature that could match the social influence that proletarian literature had. He was joined by Kawabata, who attempted to rejuvenate the role of literature in society, as we will see shortly. Yet, many Modernists presented themselves as apolitical aesthetes, preserving the semblance of poetic reclusion for which the Naturalist writers were criticized. Despite the alleged rejection of Naturalism, what linked Modernist writers to their literary predecessors, I argue, is their unrelenting devotion to Beauty, which can be seen in their continuous struggle for art's autonomy and the attitude to search for truth from an artistic standpoint.

It is useful to recall here that the view of art as an autonomous activity was by no means new to this period. It had been standardized in Japan since the 1870s through the introduction of the Kantian concept of art's "purposiveness without a purpose," which established the doctrine that art has no purpose but the pleasure of Beauty. Despite its alleged lack of utilitarian and moral purposes, however, the pure pleasure of Beauty was

defended on the grounds that it naturally evoked the effect of elevation to a lofty realm. Far from seeing art as useless, the modern aesthetic theory characterized the pursuit of Beauty as a philosophical investigation of self-transcendence. From Romanticism to Naturalism, writers used pleasure as the principal means of their judgment of Beauty, exalting the sublime moment of self-annihilation that it evoked. The dogma is that Beauty bears a sublime power—so magnificent that one loses self in awe, dissolving the boundary between self and object. The philosophy behind the pleasure of self-effacement is the view that the self is fundamentally a non-essential being, and that one could discard the self that is tied down to the present by intuiting the eternal immanent in self.

Known for its slogan of art for art's sake, I consider Modernism as the heir of literary aestheticism devoted to the pleasure of self-transcendence. This chapter demonstrates that such an artistic "tradition," fused with the new aesthetic sensibilities cultivated in the Modernist period and the age-old aesthetic dogma of subject and object unification, continued to be re-worked in the Modernist literary theory. I examine how their aesthetic philosophy of self-transcendence competed with other factions of literary Modernism, such as proletarian writers and nationalist writers of the Japan Romantic School (1935-38), which came to embody fascist totalitarianism. These factions similarly espoused the dogma of self-transcendence, rejecting the idea of personalized individual identity in preference for communal identity based on class and ethnicity respectively. The chapter illustrates how writers of the apolitical factions, such as the New Sensationalists and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō competed against these openly-political literary groups over the locus of the communal home—the essence that glued disparate individuals under the transcendental notion of human nature. Although apolitical writers excluded public political discourses from their literary world of aestheticism, this chapter demonstrates that their literary texts were invested in exploring the lasting essence of nature in the name of Beauty and attempting to invoke in readers the illusion that they are a part of the cosmic community. Far from being morally or practically useless, I argue that the Modernist cult of Beauty continued to enact a "politics of aesthetics" intended to unify readers through the invocation of the universal and lasting essence of human nature.

As evidence of this, Yokomitsu's advocacy of Beauty, and the way he pitted it

against proletarian literature, can be best understood as his awareness of the moral benefit that the pursuit of pure aestheticism invokes. He thought the quest for Beauty exerts as much social influence as the moral propaganda of proletarian literature. It was not that Yokomitsu thought that art's prime interest in Beauty had little impact on social affairs or that he saw it as the polar opposite of proletarian literature, which vigorously utilized art as a medium of moral indoctrination to propel social reform. For him, Beauty was by no means just an experience of aesthetic contemplation that had no broad social merit beyond the satisfaction of pleasure. As he used the terms "Beauty" and "morality" almost identically, he believed that the invocation of the pleasure of Beauty naturally cultivated one's inner moral disposition. The morality immanent in Beauty is what he defended against the competing set of moral virtues and truth advocated by people of different epistemological factions, such as by the proletarian writers.

It was Yokomitsu's confidence in the enlightening potential of Beauty that prompted the coterie members to launch *The Age of Literary Art*, the name of which reflected the group's ambition to expand the influence of literature in society. Kawabata, who named the journal, wrote in the first issue that the world has now passed from a "religious age to a literary age," and that "literature would supplant the role religion had played in the past" (Kawabata 1982a, 32:413–14). More specifically, what he considered literature took over from religion was its cosmological account of the eternal:

> Just as our ancestors felt solace at the thought of their eternal life in the Western Paradise after being buried under the gravestone, our offspring will seek in the palace of literature the solution for the immortality of human life, and will find a means to transcend death. This journal is one piece of stone that paves the path leading to such a palace in the far distance. Just as our ancestors had paid homage to temples and learned from holy man the way of life, our offspring will turn to the temple of literature and seek the way of life (414).

For Kawabata, the prime role of religion, now succeeded by literature, was to offer spiritual salvation from the primordial human anxiety over the impermanence of worldly things. Its ultimate value lies in offering a sense of relief by invoking an illusion that there is timeless space in the universe—in the very nature of human life—that is immutable and eternal. The demise of religion in his age signaled the decline of its

traditional cosmological narrative, one that had accounted for the immortality of souls beyond the present life based on the law of transmigration. For Kawabata, literature aimed to invoke the memory of the transcendental essence inherent in the human species—that is, the realization that the self is not a separate entity from the entire cosmos. Consequently, the guiding philosophical principle of *The Age of Literary Art* was to search for the new source of Beauty—the universal element of life and its lasting morality intrinsic to humanity, which transcended the temporal boundary of the present with all of its transitory phenomena. Therefore, while the New Sensationalists made clear that they were more concerned with the immediacy of experience in the present moment, their aesthetic undertaking focused not so much on capturing the newest facets of urban modernity as finding the immutable essence of nature that resisted the erosion of time.

Importantly, their aesthetic means of re-enchanting the world was both modern and anti-rational, as evinced by Kawabata's own identification of literature as the successor of religion in the post-enlightenment age. Yokomitsu was keenly aware of the fundamental paradox underlying the goal of the New Sensationalist School, when he remarked that what they had discovered, after "having fought the way through the besieging enemies of historical materialism and Naturalism" was the "unexpected subterranean stream called tradition" (Yokomitsu 1982, 585). This seeming ideological regression pertinent to Modernism can be said to have derived from their staunch adhesion to aestheticism, which was the principal doctrine of the "artistic" group devoted to the pursuit of Beauty. In other words, Modernism as a category of art history cannot be fully grasped without taking into account the ideological autonomy of "Art." It is Art's search for eternal Beauty, the timeless realm of permanence, that informed the Modernist movement against the modernity's erosion of time and change.

As we look into the Modernist period in this chapter, I continue to use the cult of Beauty as the framework in examining the guiding philosophy of Modernist movement. The chapter's focus on the understudied discourse of Beauty intersects with several inquiries that are commonly explored in studies of literary Modernism. These revolve around the definition of Modernism as an artistic category, and its relation to then literary establishment of Naturalism, whose dominant influence it quashed. Numerous previous studies have provided varying answers to these fundamental questions in an attempt to

demarcate the boundary of literary Modernism.[87] However, there is a general tendency in existing scholarship to cite external factors, such as the growth of cities and industrial advancement, as both the cause of the birth and the mainspring of artistic inspiration for Modernist works. The oversight resulting from the neglect of art's autonomy, one that is defended in the manifesto of the New Sensationalist School, has not only overshadowed the Modernist ambition for aesthetic rebellion, but also engendered tremendous inconsistency in the scholarly accounts of what literary Modernism stood for.

For example, while the rubrics used to define the boundary of literary Modernism are diverse, Willian Tyler has summarized that Modernism can be characterized broadly by its noted features of "anti-naturalism," "internationalization," and the philosophy of "non-essential-self," or by its distinct formalistic techniques (Tyler 2009, 202). Roy Starrs has substantiated this view by taking a historical approach and argued that Modernism is a range of artistic phenomena that appeared in the 1920s, prompted by the emergence of the modern metropolis and urban culture fostered by scientific and technological development (Starrs 2012, 14). Modernism is understood as a global phenomenon that emerged elsewhere during this period as a result of interrelated of factors, such as explosive urban growth, commercial industrialization, and internationalization. With Modernism, the time gap that had always existed between modern Japanese literature and its Western counterparts eventually disappeared, as the movement unfolded simultaneously and cross-culturally with its international counterparts. In terms of its aesthetic characteristics, Modernism is characterized by its exploration of the spectacles of speed and light, reflecting the transformation of an urban landscape furnished with new sights of modern technology. Hence, the argument generally follows that the major ambition of 1920s Modernist writers was to capture and represent the sensory experience of a new, urbanized, culturally-hybrid mode of life. Formalistically speaking, Tyler has summarized that techniques such as montage, flashbacks, superimposition, epiphanic visions, and fractured narratives are frequently

[87] See for example, Lippit, Seiji M. 2002. *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*. New York: Columbia University Press., Tyler, William J., ed. 2008. *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan, 1913–1938*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press., and Starrs, Roy. 2012. "Japanese Modernism Reconsidered." In *Rewriting the Literary History of Japanese Modernism*, edited by Starrs Roy, 3–36. Leiden; Boston: Global Oriental.

used to render writers' cognition of the fast-paced, multivalent realities and their awareness of their equally hybrid identities (Tyler 2009, 202).

While the New Sensationalist School bears the range of characteristics enumerated above, not all works discussed under the banner of literary Modernism neatly fit into its picture. This is in large part due to the fact that the Modernist period encompasses diverse genres and themes that emerged during the period of historical upheaval that spanned between the 1910s and the 1940s. Because the breadth of works loosely categorized as literary Modernism is broad, the question that first confronts us is how to pin down a common artistic denominator for Modernist works across a broad temporal divide, from the cosmopolitan years of 1920s to the rise of cultural essentialism of the 1930 and 40s.

For example, while literary Modernism formally took off in the post-earthquake period, there is general agreement that Modernist fiction was already in an early phase of development in the 1910s. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's (1886-1965) "The Tattooer" (Shisei, 1910) is often cited as the first instance of Modernist fiction in Japan, predating the onset of the official Modernist movement after 1923. His work, which explored the art of tattooing and its power to transform a reserved geisha into a sexually dominating femme fatale, already embodied the new aesthetic of artificial beauty, which replaced the beauty of crude nature that had been exalted during the periods of Romanticism and Naturalism. Literary Modernism in Japan then came to its full-fledged stage in the 1920s, when the New Sensationalists rose to prominence to explore the new mode of lifestyle using writers' lived experience in metropolises. From the early 1930s onwards, however, it is well noted that these urban Modernists became the leading proponents of cultural traditionalism, coming to jettison the cosmopolitan liberalism they espoused in the earlier phase. During this latter phase of "cultural revival" (*bungei fukkō*), they receded from the forefront of urban modernity and began exploring the native aesthetic tradition, often situated in nostalgic surroundings. Exemplified by works such as Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows* (*In'ei raisan*, 1933) and Kawabata's *Snow Country* (*Yukiguni*, 1935-47), they came to admire traditional Japanese beauty over the decadent beauty of the modern artificial life. Characterized by the worship of ruralism and a vague religious mysticism rooted in the depth of nature, a group of works representing the latter phase retained few

Modernist qualifications—namely themes and social settings based on the aesthetic of urban modernity—that scholars discussed as essential.

Despite this, the rationale used to categorize these seemingly conservative works as Modernist, as Roy Starrs does, for instance, in his examination of Kawabata's oeuvre—lies in the distinct Modernist formalistic techniques they continued to use in their reactionary period (Starrs 2011, 152–58). Finding evidence of Kawabata's continuous use of surrealistic imagery and Joycean stream-of-consciousness narrative he developed in the 1920s, Starrs finds as much fusion as fission between those works written in the two historically divided periods. Furthermore, he points out some formalistic proximity between native artistic traditions, such as linked-verse poetry *renga* and superimposition of haiku, and those equivalents found in Modernist fiction. These observations are important as they suggest that there is some unchanging artistic undercurrent that penetrated the dramatic decades of historical transformation, even bearing the imprint of a subtle tie with the past. However, it remains unclear as to how those formalistic characteristics relate to the guiding "agenda" of literary Modernism, which has received surprisingly little scrutiny.

The drawback of these standard accounts of literary Modernism lies in their lack of attention to art's autonomy. In explaining the defining characteristics of Modernism using extra-literary factors and formalistic characteristics, they downplay art's own stake in the social inquiry into truth. As evidence of this, the historical approach has failed to give a consistent, overarching definition of literary Modernism as an artistic movement, which bifurcated into broadly two contrastive directions in line with the changes in socio-political conditions. As a result, what scholars considered quintessentially Modernist in character in the 1920s is time-bound and is not necessarily carried over into the reactionary period of the 1930s-40s. Likewise, the focus on the formalistic characteristics may have been the solution for this methodological impasse, but it does not sufficiently explain why Modernist writers continued to use the same stylistic techniques across different time periods. What needs to be explored here, in my opinion, is the underlying philosophical backbone of literary Modernism that led writers to see those particular forms of expression as suitable for visualizing their perception of reality.

All in all, the standard definitions of literary Modernism are far from consistent.

They are rather an amalgamation of the notable characteristics taken selectively from works representing two different time periods. These historical and formalistic approaches to literature in fact facilitates art's subjugation to history, reinforcing the assumption that art imitates social phenomena as a derivative activity. Whether consciously or unconsciously, these approaches place art's subjectivity and its epistemic truth secondary to the materialist view of reality, showing the tendency to interpret literary texts as the embodiment of given historical conditions and dominant discourses, such as cosmopolitanism and fascism. By this, I do no mean to invalidate historical approaches or deny the influences that historical conditions had on the boundary of art and on the Modernist understanding of Beauty. Rather, the point at issue is that Modernist writers resisted art's subordination to history—that is, to modern materialist conditions and the progress of time and change—asserting their own epistemological truth regarding the immutable the permanent, as evinced in Yokomitsu's and Kawabata's statements cited earlier.

By framing literary Modernism using the aesthetic discourse of Beauty, this chapter re-assesses the Modernist movement from the viewpoint of art's autonomous philosophy. The chapter demonstrates that the quest for the eternal Beauty remained the unchanged principle of literary Modernism throughout its relatively long period of movement, which attempted to offer a cure for ephemerality of modern society. In doing so, the chapter also explores diverse visions of eternal Beauty that emerged and co-existed from the 1910s to the 1940s, which are reflected in the multifaceted trajectory of the Modernist movements, which encompassed diverse genres with great thematic variety. My argument is that this multivalent nature of literary Modernism derived from the wide breadth of intellectual knowledge, both scientific and anti-rational, that flourished during this period, which allowed writers to envision the permanent realm in many possible ways. That is, eternal Beauty was no more imagined by associating it solely with the transcendental nature of human souls or of biological organisms, as was the case with Romanticism and Naturalism, but could be brought forth, for example, by invoking the power of artificiality through bodily transformation or by turning to the modern rendition of religious myth. As we will see in detail, the Modernist perception of Beauty was by no means singular or fixed. Each Modernist writers used their individual

epistemological lens, grounded in different forms of knowledge that ranged from modern science to modern spiritualism in probing the veiled realm of the permanent.

The chapter calls attention to the individual epistemological freedom writers exercised in their pursuit of the eternal Beauty. An awareness of this helps us to offer more careful and diversified accounts of the Modernist aesthetic, particularly for works written in the "back-to-nature" period of the 1930 and 1940s that do not necessarily fit into the aesthetic of fascism, the critical lens commonly used in previous studies. Indeed, there is no doubt that the fascist aesthetic is one strand of Modernist expressions that paralleled the ideology of pure aestheticism. Fascism strives to reconstruct the timeless, organic community—an attempt it makes by invoking in the present the myth of an unbroken imperial lineage and a lasting ethnic bloodline. But my analysis shows that such political vision of the permanent realm was just one example among many other possibilities explored by Modernist writers, whose varied visions of Beauty provide more a complex picture that resists a single interpretation.

In what follows, I will first establish a definition of literary Modernism by attending to its close relation to aestheticism. I will then move on to examine aesthetic theories and works of fiction by canonical writers, dividing Modernist works broadly into two separate groups based on the shift in historical backdrops. The first section examines Modernist visions of Beauty that developed against the backdrop of urban modernity. The analysis focuses on theories of the New Sensationalist School, and will further extends them to Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's aesthetic philosophies found in the works "The Tattooer" (Shisei, 1910) and *The Mermaid* (*Kōjin*, 1920). The latter section shifts attention to the reactionary period, marked by its noticeable recourse to the nostalgic past. I focus mainly on Kawabata's aesthetic theory and his various works of fiction including the renowned *Snow Country* (*Yukiguni*, 1935-47), which is often cited as the quintessence of the traditional Japanese aesthetic in alignment with the political climate of cultural essentialism.

**Rethinking Modernism: The Moral Implication of "Art for Art's Sake"**

This section first establishes the ideological boundaries of literary Modernism and elucidates its fundamentally anti-modern attributes. To begin with, I separate

modernity and Modernism as two separate categories that are ontologically interdependent, but not necessarily identical in terms of their ideological operations. Starting with modernity, there is a general agreement that it refers to a point of new origin in social institutions and cultural practices. More specifically, it refers broadly to the development of a socioeconomic system based on the development of factors such as post-enlightenment secularism, positivist thinking, industrialization, and capitalism, which fostered notions of individualism and liberal ideas towards economy and identity. In Japan, it was during the 1920s that the various constituent elements of modernity culminated in a radical social and cultural transformation, altering the human perception of the material reality. The shift in human sensibility to the surroundings resulted from factors including urbanization, internationalization, and mass culture, accompanied by the introduction of radio broadcasting and the circulation of mass-produced publications, as well as the rise of a new cityscape of subways, cafes, dance halls, and theaters. In contrast, Modernism as a category of art history is often associated with the urban growth of the 1920s as the birthplace of its artistic inspiration. Known for its remarkable interest in the aesthetic of urban energy of light, sound, and speed, Modernism asserts its distinct identity by building a foothold in the newly normalized social conditions. As such, Modernism marks the breakdown of traditional modes of expression and aesthetic taste in search of the new, entailing a noted phenomenon that has been called the "crisis of representation" (Lippit 2002, 5). Modernism overlaps with modernity in that it bears the mark of new artistic origin, relying on the modern conditions and the ceaseless invention of the "newness" as the sources of its artistic inspiration and identity.

While awareness of the new is one of the fundamental features of Modernism, this does not mean that Modernism wholeheartedly embraced novelty in rejection of tradition. As an artistic means of social engagement, Modernism assumes more of a critical stance and a creative reaction towards given realities than simply affirming and faithfully reproducing them. As evidence of this, Roy Starrs has implied that the Modernist movement operated under its own ideological agenda, when he observes that Modernism in Japan and elsewhere took the form of both a celebration of and a revolt against the modern condition, assuming the double-edged character that he called "anti-modern modernism" (Starrs 2012, 6). My reconsideration of the definition of Modernism

builds on this critical observation, and will argue that the paradox inherent in Modernist works derived from the philosophy of art devoted to the discovery and perpetuation of the eternal Beauty.

In light of art's autonomy, Roger Griffin's definition of "modernism" is most relevant here.[88] He sees the mainspring of modernism not so much in a historical condition as in a human condition, in "the primordial human need for transcendental meaning" of their existence (Griffin 2011, xvii). He argues that with the progress of positivist thinking, humanity loses a means to imagine the self as a transcendental being belonging to the greater cosmic community. In both the West and the East, modern science has denied the religious cosmological narrative that recounted the wonder of human existence in relation to the infinity of ties that bound people both to the surrounding natural world and to their ultimate creator. The loss of such a totalizing narrative breeds modern spiritual orphans, who are left on their own to find meaning in their existence—a higher meaning other than those ephemeral moral criteria endorsed in the secular world. Griffin argues that modernism is consequent on the demise of such an all-encompassing worldview along the line of the Nietzschean notion of "the death of God." He thus argues that the philosophical force underlying modernism can be best characterized by the inevitable human needs "to find a new home, a new community, and a new source of transcendence" in the increasingly alienated, disenchanted world (xvii).

Griffin's definition underscores an important psychological mechanism that drives the fundamentally "anti-modern" undertaking of Modernism. Modernism can be understood as an attempt to re-sacralize the self as a transcendental being, whose identity encompasses that of the whole community rather than a personalized identity of an atomized individual. In other words, its search for transcendence poses objection to the oft-celebrated birth of a modern individual, whose identity is liberated from the communal myth and gets personalized through the integration of various social, cultural, and economic frameworks. Modernism rather strives to restore the illusion of cosmic totality by turning to a variety of sources, ranging from modern accounts of nature in

[88] Griffin uses lower-case "modernism" as opposed to "Modernism," implying that his definition applies far more broadly to other literary and artistic movements outside of the "official" Modernist period of the 1920s. My analyses align with his treatment in that I see both Romanticism and Naturalism equally manifest the philosophy of "modernism" that he elaborates here.

biology and astronomy to occultism, attempting to find a new means to rebuild the bond of the human species and its tie to the external world.

Importantly, if we follow Griffin's definition, such artistic reaction to restore the communal memory is not a new movement that surfaced in the Modernist period alone. We might well argue that the Meiji enlightenment project had already demolished that traditional cosmological narrative long before the 1920s, when the Romantic movement to launched its rebellion against modernity. At its initial stage in the late nineteenth century, the development of modern physics eroded the pre-enlightenment cosmological worldview, where human beings were believed to have organic and spiritual ties to the various natural creation of the universe. The destruction of this worldview paralleled the paradigm shift in the literary field, where traditional aesthetic taste and technical conventions—particularly those of poetry linking human emotions and various phenomenal in the natural world through the rule of analogy—lost contemporary relevance, causing what we might call the early precedent of "crisis of representation."

The point I am making here is that Modernism is not the sole literary movement that responded to the spiritual crisis caused by the erosion of the eternal home: it shared deep philosophical concerns with Romanticism and Naturalism over the sense of spiritual displacement, despite its fascination with the newest modes of life. We may well argue that prior to the onset of Modernism in the 1920s, the late nineteenth witnessed a similar case of spiritual crisis that prompted the rise of cultural revolt, here termed modernism, to restore the primordial home of the cosmic community. As Romantic writer Kunikida Doppo recalled in the essay "How I Became a Writer" (Ware wa ikanishite shōsetsuka ni narishi ka, 1906) decades earlier, the paradigm shifts his generation underwent plagued them with existential anxiety over the meaning of self (*jiga*). The motive that turned him to literature was inseparable from his confrontation with the questions of "Where I came from? Where I'm headed to? and What am I?," just as many of his contemporaries turned variously to the newly imported Western knowledge of the Christian theology, natural science, and spiritualism to reorganize their understanding of the eternal home of the human soul (Kunikida 1965, 1:496). This is the very psychological condition in which so-called "anti-modern" sentiment burgeons, which in Japan paralleled the emergence of the discourse of art's role and the cult of Beauty in the 1870s, as I have illustrated in the

previous chapters. It can be said that Modernism is rather the latest artistic response to the issue of spiritual homelessness that reached a new phase in the 1920s, succeeding from its literary predecessors the task to search for a new viable source of transcendence in the new historical condition.

The cardinal weapon that aesthetes used in their revolt against modernity is their epiphanic vision of Beauty they intuited from the spontaneous experience of pleasure. Writers representing each school justified the pursuit of Beauty as the ultimate purpose of their artistic enterprise, placing social realities as the background from which they distilled and foregrounded the eternal. My argument is that the anti-modern character of Modernism was in fact shaped by its identity as an "artistic" phenomenon, whose ultimate doctrine was founded in its veneration of Beauty as a philosophical pathway to self-transcendence.

The inseparable intimacy between Modernism and aestheticism can be also examined from the perspective of the noted slogan "Art for Art's Sake." Often associated with the stoic aesthetic principle of a group of Modernists, it literally asserts art's autonomy and its highest value above everything else, denying art's utilitarian purpose for moral instruction. While the dogma remains indifferent or even injurious to the public moral order, we cannot dismiss the hidden moral implication it bears and operates independently from socially sanctioned ethics. For example, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's (1892-1927) "Hell Screen" (Jigokuhen, 1918) furthered this dogma to the extreme, pursuing the perfect vision of Beauty at all moral costs. Despite this, the story tells otherwise that the artist's representation of sublime Beauty still invoked some spiritual benefit to the beholders. It depicts a talented painter Yoshihide, who was commissioned by the Grand Lord to paint a screen representing the hell. Yoshihide demands that a beautiful woman be burnt in a carriage to bring his art to perfection, to which the Grand Lord grants his wish by setting fire to Yoshihide's own beloved daughter. Struck by the sublime spectacle, Yoshihide completes the screen, which came out so breathtakingly magnificent that it evoked in all who saw it "strangely solemn feelings" (Akutagawa 2006, 73). Yoshihide however commits suicide shortly after, paying the highest human price for the true art he gave an eternal life to.

Notorious for its immorality and decadent aesthetic, the narrator of the story

nevertheless exalts the formidable power of Beauty that enlightened people's mind in awe. As such, in the proper context of its meaning, works discussed under the rubrics of "art for art's sake" *do* encompass the effect of moral development in its own right. Akutagawa's story exemplifies that the sublime Beauty invokes awe and elevate people's spirit—thus, effecting moral cultivation. I emphasize this not only to clear the misunderstanding surrounding the notion of art for art's sake, but to underscore how such an aesthetic dogma emphasizing the internal value of art has been passed down from Meiji aesthetic theories to the Modernist theory—the connection that deserves critical attention. For example, we can name Tsubouchi Shōyō's *The Essence of the Novel* (*Shōsetsu shinzui*, 1885-86) as one of the principal examples that introduced the idea of art as an end in itself. It denied art's utilitarian concerns and argued that its sole "aims" are to "give pleasure and to achieve a transcendent Beauty" (Tsubouchi 1885). Yet, he continued to discuss the benefits of novel in the sub-sections entitled "The Ennoblement of Character" and "Moral Instruction," suggesting that art still engages in developing human character by itself, despite its alleged lack of a moral frameworks. The same goes with Kitamura Tōkoku's essay "What Does it Mean to Benefit Mankind?" (Jinsei ni aiwataru towa nanno iizo, 1893). There he defended art's autonomy freed from the value of practical utility and argued that the moral sources are rather immanent in individuals in their human interiority. These Meiji critics argued that art and morality are closely allied, and that what was beautiful was morally right. Subsequently, these arguments found an echo in the aesthetic theories of the leading spokesmen of Romanticism and Naturalism, such as Takayama Chogyū and Tayama Katai, who identified the eternal Beauty in the depth of human nature in the heredity of instinct. They equally considered that art and morality are one and the same, and that it was to the moral part immanent in each of us that Beauty must address itself.

Some scholars, such as Yoshiichirō Hashimoto (Hashimoto 1967, 25) and Atsuko Ueda (Ueda 2007, 53) find in these Meiji literary theories a tenet of aestheticism akin to the spirit of art for art's sake. But they are hesitant to categorize these theories under the slogan of Modernism, offering the rationale that the Meiji literary theories are premised on art's internal capacity for moral cultivation, while art for art's sake, in the strict sense of meaning, is characterized by the absence of such moralistic ambition. Contrary to this,

my reading suggests that the assumption they have in judging the nature of art for art's sake overlooks the moral rigor of Modernist aestheticism, and further overshadows the genealogy of artistic rebellion that was carried over from the past to the Modernist period. In my view, the aesthetic school of Modernism was by no means unaware of the moral implication of the cult of Beauty; it equally recognized the effect of spiritual ennoblement art brings by itself, no matter how immorally decadent and ugly the sources of eternal Beauty might have become in its age. My assertion is that the cult of Beauty exploring the means of self-enlightenment through transcendence was the fundamental philosophy behind all major literary movements in the modern period, with the only difference found in the change in the historical conditions that prompted the search for new sources of Beauty adequate to the age. Hence, if there is anything distinctively Modernist about the notion of "art for art's sake," it can be found not so much in its lack of moral concerns as in the new historical context in which artists had to discover new Beauty and re-assert the legitimacy of the value of art.

In fact, the discourse of art's autonomy in the Modernist period has a deep imprint of local historical color. In the Modernist period, the school of aestheticism emerged against the backdrop of the spread of social unevenness and class division, a phenomenon of industrial capitalism that was new to this period. In the original context in France, when the phrase "art for art's sake" was coined by the French poet Théophile Gautier at the dawn of the Modernist movement in the 1830s, he rejuvenated the notion of Beauty by approximating it to the new phase of the civilization. The idea of Beauty that he and his fellow artists proposed is grounded in the noted spirit of "*épater le bourgeois*" (scandalize the middle class), and that they initiated what Matei Călinescu has described as the first movement of modern art's "rebellion against the modernity of the philistine" (Călinescu 1987, 45). Gautier presented his literary manifesto in the preface to his novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835), which is credited for prompting the transition from Romanticism to two extreme schools of aestheticism, Decadentism and later Symbolism. His aesthetic ideal was founded on a distaste for all existing humanitarian theories that preached the importance of utility, which he saw as rooted in the moral values of the bourgeois class. His criticism of utilitarian virtue extended to his attack against Romanticism, especially its Rousseauian concept of nature and its humanitarian attitude

to literature that strove to teach edifying lessons through art. Heralding in the anti-naturalist stance, he fully accepted the ugliness of modern life as the social reality of his time. In the article "Civilization and the Plastic Arts" (1848), he argued that the new aesthetic ideal "accepts civilization as it is, with its railroads, steamboats, English scientific research, central heating, factory chimneys and all its technical equipment…" (quoted in Călinescu 1987, 46). Denying the organic concept of art, he instead came to value of consciousness in the process of artistic creation, stressing the importance of deliberate selection, construction, and precision of language to represent Beauty in perfection.

Despite his acceptance of modernity, however, Gautier did not fully embrace the urban reality that embodied the materialist values of the bourgeoisie. For him, Beauty was first and foremost a means to shock and astonish the corrupt bourgeois, who pandered to the economic system of capitalism and fostered the cult of materialism. Hence, the new movement Gautier pushed forward under the banner of art for art's sake was premised on the expansion of social stratification accelerated by the development of industrial capitalism. Implicit in the slogan of art for art's sake was criticism of the new bourgeoisie, whose well-ordered life and the worship of the fleeting materialistic value became the object of Modernist mockery. Aesthetes, by contrast, were meant to galvanize and enlighten them through the lasting idealism of Beauty.

Modernism in Japan paralleled this pattern. A series of economic movements had taken place since the 1890s, but it was the industrial growth during the interwar period that set the background for Modernism to rise. The wave of post-WWI industrialization gave birth to the development of urban and suburban areas, which accompanied the proliferation of educational institutions, entertainment industry, and new economic opportunities in metropolises. Coinciding with these trends was the emergence of a new "urban-based middle class" made up of white-collar workers, who had the privilege to experience the latest fashion and various social services. (Young 2013, 189). This urban population was a vital source of energy that fostered the advanced, internationally hybrid mode of modern cultural life, and they enriched the quality of their daily experience by accessing a wide variety of institutional and recreational facilities. That being said, the rise of the bourgeois class brought with it a dark side of the narrative as well. It marked

the onset of political conflict over the issues of class division, which comprised one of the major social backdrops against which writers of all factions directly and indirectly addressed their positions of how art confronts the social reality.

In the literary field, the emergent class consciousness propelled the proletarian literary movement, first led by socialistically inclined writers in the 1900s and the 1910s. It acquired a rigor of collective movement in the 1920s, with the establishment of the leftist journal *The Sower* (*Tanemaku hito*, 1921-23) after the formation of the Japan Socialist League in 1920, later replaced by another magazine *Literary Art Front* (Bungei sensen, 1924-29). Proletarian literature allied art and politics, intending to work for the liberation of the proletariats from the bourgeois exploitation. The movement was guided by a leading theoretician Aono Suekichi and his essay "Natural Development and Conscious Purpose" (Shizen seichō to mokuteki ishiki, 1926). The gist of his theory amounted to the formation of a literary genre that demonstrated a class viewpoint: he argued that "only when one is led by class consciousness does one's art become art for art's sake of class" (quoted in Iwamoto 1974, 165). Within a few years, Aono's theory was substantiated by another leftist theoretician Kurahara Korehito in the essay "The Road to Proletarian Realism" (Puroretaria riarizumu heno michi, 1928). Kurahara condemned the literary establishment for taking the position of Bourgeois realism, by which he meant the narrow scope of Naturalism centered on writers' private lives and the reduction of all human issues to man's fundamental nature. Kurahara proposed instead to see humans as social beings constructed by various external factors, stressing the importance of representing "proletarian class subjectivity" to foreground a new kind of realism (166). Coinciding with the establishment of *The Age of Literary Art* led by a group of aesthetes, these two organs representing Marxist and aesthetic writings respectively were the main constituents of the origin of what is now known as "Shōwa literature."

While these two groups were rivals and stood at the opposite ends of the spectrum, they shared one common critical stance against the issues surrounding their age. They both criticized the egotism of individuals and their pursuit of self-interest, which were the main causes of economic competition and social unevenness that issued from the capitalist structure of society. Consequently, the rejection of individual ego was

the rallying point for both schools, which can be evinced in the literary theories each group formulated. The aesthetic group, on one hand, aspired to resuscitate the eternal home of the organic community—one that was premised on the transcendence of self; while the leftist group, on the other hand, focused on representing the collective identity of the proletarian class through repressing individuals, envisioning communal well-being as the ultimate goal.

Whether leftists or aesthetes, the Modernist movements of the 1920s emerged in response to various aspects of social, historical, and geographical rupture, sharing mutually relatable goals to restore some form of totalitarian unity. This came with the caveat, however, that such orientation toward totalism was a not a phenomenon new to this period, as far as the aesthetic school was concerned. The aesthetic philosophy of transcendence is in essence fraught with the ideal of totalitarianism, as it required self-effacement to obtain the status of transcendental being. Such an ideology, which privileged communal over individual identity, had been firmly established and was around well before the Modernist period, as demonstrated in the permeation of the cult of Beauty in the earlier literary movements we have discussed. I stress this to emphasize that this aesthetic line of revolt against modernity had a prehistory, and that it needs to be separated genealogically from the rise of the fascist school, which was another dominant Modernist faction that joined the literary movements shortly after. The Modernist tenet of art for art's sake was thus inextricably tied to the historical conditions of the 1920s, and writers of the aesthetic faction explored a new methodology of representing their sensory cognition of eternal Beauty to re-animate the organic ties between humans and the surrounding world, as I will discuss below.

**The New Sensationalist School and the Multiple Theories of Beauty**

This section outlines the aesthetic methodology of the New Sensationalist School, underscoring the "modern" inflection they placed on the existing literary theories. I will then further demonstrate how their aesthetic creed, which was founded on the tenet of subject-object unification essential for transcendence, was shared broadly outside of the School, taking up Tanizaki's notion of Beauty centered on the eternal as the focus of scrutiny.

A year after Kawabata produced his aesthetic manifesto for the journal *The Age of Literary Age*, he wrote an essay discussing the new methodology of the New-Sensationalists in "Explanation of the New Trend of the Up-and-Coming Writers" (Shinsin sakka no shin keikō kaisetsu, 1925). His discussion centered around the topic of epistemology (*ninshiki ron),* arguing that the rising movement reconsiders the role that human sensation plays in life, and that it seeks to apply the new method of perception to the literary field. Comparing it with the rising rival Proletarian literature, which encouraged the examination of human life and nature exclusively from the perspective of the sensibility of the Proletarian class, Kawabata focused on an intuitive mode of cognitive experience that was freed from the constraints of class consciousness and rationalized knowledge.

Drawing from the theory of German Expressionism, he stressed the primacy of the artist's subjectivity as the basis of all human cognition and the absolute. The logic is that the whole universe is contingent on artists who perceive it, and that the world does not exist but in the subjectivity of the individual artists, just as there is no subjectivity of artists without the objective world that surrounds them. He then continued that the theory leads to the worldview "where all the creation in the universe loses boundaries and comes to form a monistic world (*ichigen no sekai*) in a single spiritual harmony," reaching the state of unification between the subject and the object (Kawabata 1982b, 30:177). He argued that this epistemological process—where the surroundings are accorded life and come into being by bypassing the artist's subjectivity and vice versa—is a modern incarnation of the "ancient Eastern subjectivism," linking it to the philosophy of animism (*banyū reikon setsu*), where all things in the universe possess souls. Arguing that this would be the "new salvation," he stressed the subject and the object unification as the fundamental principle guiding the attitude of the emergent writers (177).

This philosophy extended to the change in formalistic representation. Kawabata argued that while traditional literature separated the observing subject and the observed object as two separate entities, the new writers conflate the two. Whereas it was common to write "my eyes caught a red rose," the new writers do not discriminate between the two and write: "my eyes are the red rose" (175). In other words, the New Sensationalists uses the intuitive mode of cognition, one that enters into all things at the unconscious

level and "animate" them (*seimei-ka*), and then represents their momentary sensation through deliberate linguistic crafting (178). The intellectual operation involved in this process of representation was the distinct element that set them apart from Naturalism, which championed unembellished language by emphasizing the transparency of meaning. The artist's internal sensation is rendered in such a way that it evades an analytical interpretation, which is the strategy of representation that was deemed adequate to embody the infinite realm of Beauty, as Yokomitsu elaborated subsequently.

Kawabata's view was further substantiated by Yokomitsu in an essay he published the same year, "The Sensationalist Movement: The Sensationalist Movement and the Paradox of Criticizing Works Addressing Sensation" (Kankaku katsudō—Kankaku katsudō to kankakuteki sakubutsu nitaisuru hinan eno gyakusetsu, 1925). Yokomitsu echoed Kawabata that sensation is intuitive and is not something that can be demonstrated logically, and that each person has an individual sensibility that reacts differently to artistic phenomena. For both of them, the primacy of subjectivity and intuition was the necessary precondition for liberating artists from established knowledge, enabling them to enter into the unknown realm left unconquered by positivist scrutiny. Yokomitsu named writers with exquisite cognitive talent, such as the Swedish writer August Strindberg, Nietzsche, Bashō, and Shiga Naoya, whose works he thought touched that realm and demonstrated it in a distinctly sense-stimulating manner.

Yokomitsu then defined sensation as the "symbol" of the "intuitive reaction of one's subjectivity," which occurs when the subject "strips off the external form of nature and leaps into the object" (Yokomitsu 1982, 76). He added however that this explanation alone does not highlight anything new in terms of the methodology. The modern element in the New Sensationalists, he argued, lies in its privileging the function of the intellectual faculty called the understanding (*gosei*), which translates one's intuitive cognition into an adequate form of representation. He stressed the role of intellectual creativity artists exercise in *symbolizing* their internal sensation, hence equating the Sensationalist works produced along the line of this methodology as one kind of "symbolist literature" (80). He then argued that artistic expressions of European avant-gardism, such as Futurism, Cubism, Expressionism, Dadaism, Symbolism, and Constructivism all belong to the methods of the New Sensationalist School,

revolutionizing technical skills in their use of vocabulary, poetic effect, rhythm and others.

Evidently, Yokomitsu advocated this methodology purely from an artistic standpoint, informed by the distinct epistemological boundaries of art. This can be seen in his essay "Genius and Symbol" (Tensai to shōchō, 1927) published in the journal *Bungei Kōron*, where he elaborated on the notion of symbol. There, Yokomitsu explained that symbol is something that keeps away critical analysis and people's ability to comprehend; and it is in this incomprehensibility of symbol that lies the unique world of the mystic art. He argued that all the studies of aesthetics have attempted to explain the nature of symbol, but the farthest they could do was to provide the prospective "steps into the infinite Beauty," for "Beauty is nothing but irony that reveals that intellect is finite" (Yokomitsu 1982, 47). Despite this, Yokomitsu asserted that there are still extraordinary people who are naturally disposed to feeling many things that logic cannot explain, and exalted them as gifted geniuses. When those artists get enthralled by the wonder of Beauty, he maintained, their poetry and the symbol "turn to the god of unification of subject and object; and those who could enter this absolute realm are the true cosmopolitans and the man of aristocratism in the realm of no hierarchy, with all the codes of universe coming to revolve in harmony by itself" (47).

Yokomitsu's aesthetic theories clarified that the methodology of the New Sensationalist School was not entirely new, except for its invention of the new symbolic representations demonstrating the moment of one's unification with object here he termed Beauty. In other words, it is the new technical skills, one that is carefully crafted in symbolic representation, that enlivened and perpetuated the indescribable pleasure that the great artists of all ages had experienced and strove to communicate. For his contemporaries, such as philosopher Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945) and art critic Yanagi Sōetsu (1889-1961), the penetration of the traditional aesthetic is rooted in the philosophy of Zen Buddhism. Framing it using the indigenous artistic tradition, Nishida for example stated that the desire for "negating the self and becoming the thing itself" is the state "we Japanese strongly yearn for" (quoted in Carter 2019, 6). While Yokomitsu did not specifically tie his notion of Beauty to this indigenous aesthetic philosophy, the rationale he used to justify such artistic enterprise inimical to positivist theory lies in the

humanitarian effect it brings. The pure pleasure of Beauty brings about the instantaneous effect of ennobling human character and dissolving consciousness of social identities, evoking the moment of self-transcendence that he compared to the political ideal of "anarchists" (48).

In fact, there was certain argumentation in the literary circle of this time that linked this particular sensation to the traditional notion of *mono no aware*. The contemporary discourse surrounding Beauty reveals that there was general consensus among literati of the notion that "sensation=symbol=Beauty" represented the essence of art and that it remained unchanged over time. For example, in the essay "Discourse on Elegance" (Fūryū ron, 1924), Satō Haruo (1892-1964) referred to what Yokomitsu termed sensation as "that" (*are*), obviously for the lack of proper name, or as "*fūryū*" (elegance). He regarded it as the feelings equivalent to the pathos or *mono no aware* of the ancients, "which arose when the worldly matter gradually faded away and led one to lose attachment to self" (Satō 1963, 18). He maintained that it is a feeling universal to all mankind, and that the great artists of all ages had dedicated their lives to capturing and eternalizing in their works this very fleeting moment of unification with nature. It is characterized by the "emotional apex mixed with sorrow and delight" and that it is the moment when one senses the "truth in a flash that they are permanently connected to the universe" (18). He cited Bashō as the epitome of the artist who lived for *fūryū*, comparing him to Baudelaire, whose decadent works equally pursued sensory rapture and still demonstrated in them "religious implication" (26). Similarly, Akutagawa argued that the renovation of sensation is all that matters to the development of literary art. In the essay "Literary, All-To-Literary" (Bungeitekina amarini bungeitekina, 1927) published in *Kaizō*, he maintained that "there may be nothing other than so-called 'new sensation,' if we were to seek something genuinely 'new' in literary art" (Akutagawa 1978, 9:66). Recognizing how modern Bashō was back in time, he named modernists of his own age devoted to the cultivation of sensation, such as poet Kitahara Hakushū and Tanizaki, as well as the New Sensationalists, who lavished intellectual operation to mark their modern imprint, as he noted.

These critical essays written at the dawn of the Modernist movement reveal the common understanding that writers shared over the aesthetic legacy running through the

present. But what was at stake in the literary field, as they witnessed the turning point in social conditions, was more than just a matter of formalistic reform. What Modernists faced was their inability to accept the established loci of Beauty passed down from the past, and hence they had to also set out to find a new communal source of transcendence that was adequate to their time. To borrow Satō's description of the aesthetic sensation pertinent to the subject-object unification, Beauty must invoke the instantaneous illusion that humans are part of nature, stripping humans bare and turn them into mere "one being of the universe" (*uchūteki ichi sonzai*) (Satō 1963, 43). Evidently, in the age of artificial technology and machines, the traditional aesthetic of *fūryū* based on the correspondence between humans and the natural world was less sublime and outdated, as was the Naturalist aesthetic based on the universality of genetic heredity of all organisms.

As evidence of this, Yokomitsu, for example, was keenly aware of the inadequacy of the existing aesthetic taste, when the external world itself underwent a radical transformation. In the essay "Erosion of the Objective Nature by Science" (Kyakutai toshiteno shizen eno kagaku no shinshoku, 1925), published in *The Age of Literary Art*, he wrote that literature had become estranged from *fūryū*, due to the development of science that subjugated the objective world of nature to physical laws. As a result, it posed another new task to writers as to "how to strengthen the literary effect using the new 'scientific *furyū,'"* which needed to replace the old one and serve as the "artificial Beauty," reflecting the dominance of artificiality over nature in the formation of reality (Yokomitsu 1982, 83). He therefore stressed that Beauty and the subjectivity of the artist must be inevitably filtered through the scientific knowledge of his age, lamenting that aesthetics would go extinct altogether in the near future. Consequently, he explored what can be called the quintessence of the urban aesthetic, interrogating the vital source of urban energy that animated human lives with its boundless sensory stimuli. As Seiji Lippit has characterized this, his approach is based on the "projection of human agency and sense perception onto a machine,"—that is, an aesthetic principle that emphasized the transposition of one's subjectivity onto the object (Lippit 2002, 78). As the leading theoretician of the New Sensationalist School, Yokomitsu broached an aesthetic theory accommodated to the era of mechanization, where the means of self-transcendence was contingent on unification with the materialized surroundings.

That being said, Yokomitsu's perception of Beauty by no means epitomized the aesthetic sensibility of the New Sensationalist School as a whole. As noted earlier, Kawabata had a particular understanding of Beauty that was radically different from Yokomitsu's. As a staunch advocate of the animistic myth, he envisioned self-transcendence through the unification with the organic world of nature, much along the lines of traditional *fūryū* that Yokomitsu denied. Coupled with these internal theoretical varieties, there existed Modernists of various factions outside the school, such as Akutagawa, Tanizaki, and Edogawa Rampo among many others, whose visions of Beauty were different still. Their attitude toward Beauty is often projected onto the fictional figures of lunatic artists and mad scientists, who set out to artificially "invent" sublime settings and indulge in vice in private laboratories removed from the urban center.[89] Hence, it is not proper to define literary Modernism solely by looking at the literary theories of the New Sensationalists, nor by privileging one theory over another that coexisted within the school. If there is any criterion necessary in explaining the multiple thematic and aesthetic orientations that burgeoned in the course of Modernist period, it was each author's own aesthetic taste for Beauty that contributed to the complex trajectories of the movement.

The ramification of taste was in fact a natural outgrowth of the artistic principle that Modernists adhered to, one that precluded any guided instruction of taste from an external authority. To reiterate, it stressed the primacy of subjectivity and the autonomy of pleasure triggered by the intuitive cognition of Beauty, which operated differently from one person to another. The emergence of multivalent views of Beauty is unprecedented and is distinctly Modernist in character, as the past literary movements

[89] For example, while Tanizaki's "The Tattooer" (1910) and *Naomi* (1925) takes place in Edo and Tokyo respectively, the male protagonists' fascination is not so much the burgeoning cityscape as physical and spiritual transformation of female figures, and the pleasure of aesthetic exploration occurs not only outdoors in the city but also in the secluded places. The former story takes place exclusively in the tattooer's artistic studio, whereas the latter portray many scenes situated in a hybrid-style home called "Culture House" (*bunka jūtaku*), a place that the male protagonist describes its interior arrangement of rooms "*impractical*" for living, but takes a great fancy to it in order to live "playfully" with Naomi there. He refers to the house as something that resembles an "illustration for a fairy tale" (Tanizaki 1985, 17). The same holds true for Akutagawa's "Hell Screen" (1918), which features a talented, but lunatic artist set in his artistic studio, as well as Edogawa Rampo's "Hell of Mirrors" (1926), where an eccentric protagonist who is in love of physics and have a craze for mirrors and lenses isolates himself in an "weird laboratory" to explore the mysteries of the planet using telescopes and microscopes (Edogawa 1956, 111).

revolved around a relatively uniform referent of Beauty, centered on the immortality of souls and the heredity of instinct. This characteristic itself has important implications regarding the aesthetic politics of Beauty of this age. Namely, it was becoming increasingly difficult to give an illusion of communal unity at the national level under any single or monolithic vision of Beauty, for individual authors (not to mention the audience) came to follow their own aesthetic disposition in locating the communal home that they thought they belonged to. The taste for Beauty was inextricably tied to how individual subjects identified who they are, using the spontaneity of pleasure as the only criterion in judging and discovering the transcendental community that struck home to them. The complexity of literary Modernism, which encompassed writers of various ideological backgrounds, including proletarian writers and nationalist writers of the Japan Romantic School (1935-38), clearly mirrors the level of social rupture during this period. It is reflected in the ramification of aesthetic taste and genres of Modernist works, coupled with the sources of transcendence that multiplied in the popular cultural imagination as a result of it. It can be said that Modernist writers representing various ideological factions rather strove to build a cultural home ground for the imaginary community they stood for, and they did so by demarcating the boundary of transcendental Beauty using their individual epistemological authority.

In what follows, I explore Tanizaki's works to demonstrate how he cultivated one of these communal sources for self-transcendence, which he based on one of the universal aspects of human nature as the locus of Beauty. I illustrate how his notion of Beauty was informed by his insight into the human psychological need for sublime experience, onto which he artificially crafted a modern substitute of god to satisfy that primordial human desire.

**Tanizaki and the Beauty of Eternal Woman**

Tanizaki Jun'ichirō is inarguably one of those Modernist writers whose aesthetic sensibility manifested in many different directions and transformed freely over the course of the Modernist period. Versed in both indigenous artistic traditions and Western literary trends, he derived artistic inspiration from a rich cultural reservoir and from the immediate social surroundings, and never ceased to explore and refine aesthetic pleasure

throughout his career. His versatile sense of taste is evinced in the various rubrics under which his works are often discussed. These include the aestheticism, diabolism, and masochism of "The Tattooer" (Shisei, 1910), *Naomi* (*Chijin no ai*, 1925), and *The Quicksand* (*Manji*, 1931), and the traditionalism and orientalism of *Some Prefer Nettles* (*Tadekuu mushi*, 1928-29) and *In Praise of Shadows* (*In'ei raisan*, 1933), to name a few. It is often noted that starting with the publication of *Some Prefer Nettles*, his aesthetic taste, which had been nourished in urban hybrid culture, swung in a nationalist direction, restoring the native aesthetic traditions that had been eroded by the cosmopolitan air of the earlier decade. While the breadth of his aesthetic and thematic interests is too wide to discuss uniformly under any single theme, the section first sheds light on his aesthetic credo as an artist in order to identify the guiding principle of his artistic activities.

Known as the first writer to author a Modernist work in Japan, Tanizaki's discussion of aesthetic theories preceded those of the New Sensationalists, prefiguring what the New Sensationalists later formulated in detail in their introduction of their artistic methodologies. This can be seen in the short essay entitled "Random Thoughts in Early Spring" (Sōshun zakkan, 1919), published in the journal *The Eloquence* (*Yūben*). Here he argued that the mainspring of art lies in the artist's power of imagination; that the world of imagination has an equal value as the physical world of natural phenomena; and that the so-called Romantic writers are those who believe in the potential of imagination and give it precedence over the real world. He justified the validity of imagination on the grounds that while it is the product of the artist's illusion, stimulated by sensation, the real world of natural phenomena itself is equally the product of artistic sensation, not even present in existence without their cognitive mediation.[90] He then summed up the essence of art with the argument that the intuition of artists "jumps over the world of natural phenomena and faces up the world of the eternal," comparing this to the Platonic concept of the Idea (Tanizaki 1983, 22:69).

[90] Tanizaki subsequently cited an example from the philosopher Nishida Kitarō's essay, "Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consiousness" (Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei, 1919) to make his point. The Modernist discussion on the primacy of subjective experience was informed by various intellectual discourse on epistemology, such as the psychologist William James and his notion of "direct experience" and Nishida's notion of "pure experience," which was influenced by the studies of French philosopher Henri Bergson and a group of Neo-Kantian philosophers. See Suzuki, Sadami. 2012. "Rewriting the Literary History of Japanese Modernism." In *Rethinking Japanese Modernism*, edited by Roy Starrs, 37–61. Leiden; Boston: Global Oriental.

The idea that art engages in the exploration of the eternal is further elaborated in his incomplete long novel entitled *The Mermaid* (*Kōjin*, 1920), which was serialized in the magazine *Central Review* (*Chūō kōron*). In one of the chapters, he dwelled on the notion of Beauty by touching on the difference between Eastern art and Western art, featuring two young artists named Minami and Hattori, who respectively stood for each position. Minami, who plans to become a *nanga* (Southern school of Chinese painting) artist, explains to his dilettante friend his understanding of Beauty, comparing it to the moon. He argues that it is what all human beings ultimately long for—not just artists, but also men of religion and philosophers, who seek the eternal life:

> As he spoke, Minami took out a sketch book from his inside pocket and drew a round moon with a pencil in one of the pages. Beneath the moon, he drew a long horizontal line and added a number of arrows pointing toward the moon from there. Then, he put a note next to each arrow, writing the names such as "artists," "priests," "Goethe," and "Li Bai." The arrows were meant to indicate man's "longing for the infinite." He carefully spelled "the moon" under the round circle. Feeling that something was still missing, he also added "the eternal life" there (Tanizaki 1981, 7:70–71).

Hattori pointed out that such treatment ends up obscuring the boundary between artists and priests. But Minami answered that there is no fundamental difference between the two; they are both meant to give spiritual salvation in the end. He explained that what Buddhists call *shinnyo* (awakening of the Buddhahood within) is no different than the artistic state of Beauty. He then further shares his conviction that both he and his friend tread different paths as artists, but are heading toward the same final destination.

Tanizaki suggests through the exchange of these two artists that the desire to capture and perpetuate so-called eternal life is the ultimate goal of the artists. Furthermore, there is no difference between the East and the West in regards to this artistic objective. The only difference between the two lies in the means to achieve that goal; that is, which hidden ladder artists representing each tradition use in order to get closer to the moon unreachable to the layman. In the exchange that preceded this, Minami discussed the difference in artistic traditions between the East and the West, identifying here the difference in their understanding of the locus of Beauty. He argued that while the aesthetic sensibility of the East is nourished by artists' immersion in the

natural world, that of the West is cultivated within human society, with its Beauty more freely malleable compared to the static Beauty of the East. Therefore, in addition to the difference in the locus of Beauty, he argued that there is a tradition in the West to "constantly recreate Beauty," while in the East, the ideal lies not so much in constructing new Beauty as in reaching the same state of mind as the great poets of the ancient times (69).

This part of the discussion reveals some troubling stereotypes that obscures the variety of ways Beauty manifested in the East and the West, involving both the natural landscape and social settings. It further ignores various modern and "subjective" inflections imprinted on what seems like a static traditional taste for Beauty, which this study has brought attention to. But what matters in the particular context of the present analysis, is where Tanizaki directed his senses of longing and belonging to as his eternal home, and how that source of transcendence is reflected in his works. By juxtaposing two young Japanese artists with opposing tastes for Beauty, Tanizaki suggests that one's aesthetic disposition is not fettered by one's cultural background or by its tradition, implying the primacy of individual epistemology based on unmediated cognitive intuition. This is clearly demonstrated in the position Hattori takes. Minami argued that the tradition of Eastern philosophy naturally seeped into one's identity all the way to the spine, citing the noted scholar of English literature Natume Sōseki (1867-1916) as an example. He argued that Sōseki was much fonder of Chinese poetry and painting and lived by the credo of "following heaven and departing from the self" (*sokuten kyoshi*) late in life, despite his tremendous cultural upbringing in English literature (69). Contrary to this, Hattori slowly opened up his mind and insisted that he is more attracted to humans than nature:

> Unlike you, I like "humans" more. I like those evil and wretched things that "humans" harbor inside. I don't know how I can put it into words, but I have a feeling that there is something eternal that you just described in the evilness and meanness that we humans possess. I want to grasp it. But the sooner I get close enough and try to catch it, that eternal thing fades away, and all I'm left with is the temptation to commit evil and shameful deeds. […] If it is a devil that has the eternal in hand, I'd sell my soul and seize it from it. If I succeed in it, I can create and add to the world new Beauty, even if it's just one, that is left unnoticed by humans (Tanizaki 1981, 7:77).

In this passage, Hattori put some effort to describe the irresistible charm he feels from the depth of human interior. Unlike Minami, who argued that the Eastern notion of Beauty is like the omnipresent moon and has its presence known to people, Hattori explained that what he feels from inside humans is still unclear in nature to him. It is evident here that Hattori's artistic ambition is to discern and represent the echo of the eternal coming from within, and to "create" a whole new Beauty that embodies his aesthetic taste. As his lack of proper description evinces, Hattori gives no further elaboration on what that "eternal" meant for him. But it can be argued that this undeniable sensation Hattori felt first-hand as pure experience is what set him off on the aesthetic journey, which overlaps with the path Tanizaki trod himself. Let us continue to trace his footsteps to explore how he came to terms with the inexplicable pleasure that dragged him to the abyss of vice.

In the collection of articles entitled "Record of Loquacity" (Jōzetsu-roku, 1927), serialized in the journal *Reformation* (*Kaizō*), Tanizaki wrote another essay on the Eastern philosophy. There he described that among all the works he saw as a child, it was one Western piece of art that left him the strongest impression. He wrote that it was the image of the Virgin Mary hung on the wall in the retreat room of his house. Placed in a fine frame and looking dim in appearance, he wrote that her image pressed him with the "indescribable impressions of nobility, fear, and beauty" (Tanizaki 1982, 20:86). He then recalled that at that time he was too young to figure out what it was about the image that brought him such feelings. Still, he recalled that he felt vaguely that there may be something he could call the "eternal woman" in the image, adding that he was struck by the revelation of the "truth" in the painting (86). From very early on, Tanizaki's notion of the eternal was associated with the figure of a woman, who assumed the mixed air of grace and terror of the goddess. While his propensity for favoring such a dominant woman is widely recognized in the studies of his literature, its relation to the notion of the eternal deserves further attention.

The most comprehensive explanation of the "eternal woman" can be found in the essay "Love and Lust" (Ren'ai to shikijō, 1931), which was published in the magazine *Women's Review* (*Fujin kōron*). In this essay, Tanizaki suggested that the source of his boundless longing for the "eternal woman" relates to a man's universal desire to seek in

women something transcendental and magnificent. He touched on instances from both the West and Japan to illustrate the enduring and common desire men have in subordinating themselves to the women of this special character. According to Tanizaki, the "eternal woman" refers to a woman who has the disposition of something "sublime, permanent, and solemn" (Tanizaki 1982, 20:250). As with his earlier identification with the image of Virgin Mary, she is an abstract entity that refers to no particular individual, functioning more as a collective symbol of the woman that a man longs to lose himself over. He argued that it was in the court literature of the Heian period that portrayed women as someone greater and more dignified than men, as seen in the way Genji revered and longed for Lady Fujitsubo. In the West, he argued, such mindset was much stronger and was most clearly demonstrated in the spirit of chivalry, where to be a man was synonymous with to revere women. In the Heian culture, on the other hand, men showed loyalty and reverence to women through deeds of devotion that "ennoble[d] men's human character and uplift[ed] their spirit," suggesting that the act of self-sacrifice comes with reciprocal benefit (253).

Tanizaki's description suggests that what drives a man's passion for love is the desire to be carried away by the terrorizing charm a woman possess, such that he loses himself in the act of self-sacrifice. Seeing it as the true delight of love, he implied that the individual character of a woman itself is of secondary importance. In his understanding, what man seeks in love is fulfill the innate human desire to worship, and to have his egotism diminished in order to rise higher to become one with the honorable woman he longs for. Seeing this as the fundamental human psychology behind the pleasure of romantic relationships, he suggests the existence of the demand for the presence and perpetuation of the "eternal woman" in human society, and justifies the artificial creation of such a woman.

Tanizaki disclosed an artistic ambition that parallels that of Hattori, recalling that what propelled him was to create the new Beauty in his age by reincarnating the "eternal woman." He lamented that under the Tokugawa rule, women became looked down on and literature based on the merchant taste became base. While the introduction of Western literature in the Meiji period prompted changes in the public's attitude toward romantic love and sexual desire, and the society yearned for the birth of the self-

awakened woman, he observed that there still was a gap between people's ideal and reality. Tanizaki's ambition was to fill this gap to realize the society's dream, with his particular interest in constructing Beauty primarily in the form of physical perfection. "To let women build a sense of spiritual superiority" he argued, "one must certainly prepare the body first," and that "just as there is a thing called 'sublime spirit' I believe there is an equally significant thing called 'sublime body'" (255).

The modernness of Tanizaki's aesthetic pursuit of Beauty lies in his projection of the desire onto the materiality of the female body, supplanting the strictly spiritual form of transcendence that men of the past attained through their reverence of women. Materiality is the new substitute that fills the void once occupied by the imaginary goddess of the magnificent character, and it continues to feed and satisfy the unceasing demand man has for being awe-stricken and suspending ego. It is worth noting, however, that this desire for transcendence itself is driven by self-interest, with men justifying any means available to bring the self to the state of bare nature. This is where the egotism of modern men takes on a malicious intent, where they implicitly dominate women—while pretending to be dominated by women—by physically transforming them to their advantage, which is the common narrative developed in Tanizaki's fiction. From his very first Modernist fiction "The Tattooer" and *Naomi* to the later traditional works including "The Story of Shunkin" (Shunkinshō, 1933), he explored the formidable strength of human nature and the pleasure of being dominated that in many cases drove men to eccentricity.

Tanizaki's debut work "The Tattooer" (1910) sent a fresh electric shock through the literary circle, when Naturalism was still at its height. The noted writer Nagai Kafū (1879-1959) described it as free from all existing conventions and artistic theories of Meiji literature. He exalted that the mainspring of the work as coming from Tanizaki's own "mystical impulse stemming from the depth of his inner life" (Nagai 1981, 1:227). Kafū named three prominent characteristics of Tanizaki's work: his focus on the mystical beauty (*shinpi yūgen*) of the physical terror; his evocation of urban atmosphere; and his perfection of the sentence. Kafū saw in his work the hallmarks of Baudelaire and Poe, who equally explored human psychology through the lens of the mystical beauty of flesh. The story opens up with the narrator describing the time the story is set. It is the age

"when men honored the noble virtue of frivolity" and did all kinds of things to make themselves beautiful, as "everywhere beauty and strength were one" (Tanizaki 1963, 160). By treating people's passion for beauty as frivolity, Tanizaki implicitly invoked the tenet of art for art's sake in his opening, establishing the formula that beauty is impractical, anti-rational, and yet is still something people invested in and lived for. As the story unfolds, the plot reveals how the frivolity of beauty possesses an infallible allure that entraps humans, with some going so far as to seek its pleasure at the cost of their life.

The story revolves around the young talented tattooer named Seikichi, who takes a secret pleasure in inflicting pain on people's bodies through his tattooing. He had also long cherished the desire to apply his needle to the skin of a beautiful woman to create a masterpiece. The chance finally comes after five years of waiting, when he finds a suitable young geisha and convinces her to accep his plea to nourish her beauty with his skills. Timid and reserved, the geisha was at first reluctant to agree to Seikichi. But she changes her mind after looking at two picture scrolls Seikichi showed to her, both of which depicted male "victims" lying in agony or dead at the feet of a beautiful princess, looking all triumphant. Seikichi tells her that the images of the princesses are the geisha herself, and that "her blood flows in your veins," and the geisha slowly comes to realize that "she had found something long hidden in the darkness of her own heart," admitting that she discovered her "secret self" (165-66). After the exchange, Seikichi embarks on tattooing her back, to bring out her true "self" in its fullness:

> He felt his spirit dissolve into the charcoal-black ink that stained her skin. Each drop of Ryukyu cinnabar that he mixed with alcohol and thrust in was a drop of his lifeblood. He saw in his pigments the hues of his own passions. […] Even to insert a single drop of color was no easy task. At every thrust of his needle Seikichi gave a heavy sight and felt as if he had stabbed his own heart. Little by Little the tattoo marks began to take on the form of a huge black-widow spider (167).

By tracing the process through which a masterpiece comes into being, the story reveals at the metalevel what fundamental elements constitute Beauty of true art. It reveals that artistic creation is contingent on the proper self-discovery. One must first dig up the truer self masked in the unconscious realm. This self or ego is not tinged with the personal

color of individuals, but is rather a determined one passed down genetically that runs in one's bloodstream. As Hashimoto Yoshiichirō suggests, Tanizaki was likely to have been exposed to the study of Freudian psychoanalysis by this time, weaving into the story his understanding of the operation of ego (Hashimoto 1967, 78). The "self" of the geisha can be understood as the unconscious desire of a woman to dominate men with her femininity, which interlocks with Seikichi's ego to have his masculinity victimized. Once the reciprocal relationship is established—once they reveal their human nature in its purest form—Seikichi sets out to capture it in his tattooing, to eternalize that revelation of nature in art. Seikichi becomes one with the geisha, imparting his soul into her body through the ink to give his art a lasting life.

The story suggests that the great works of art contains in themselves something as eternal as nature. It is the only qualification that allows masterpieces to be passed down for generations—apparently for their universal relevancy to humanity and the lasting truths they carry. Hence, Seikichi's masterpiece, grounded in the permanency of nature itself, will endure the test of time. He assures the geisha that her Beauty will continue to ensnare all men like a spider, giving them the utmost pleasure mixed with a delightful agony, intoxicated by her Beauty.

That said, Seikichi's masterpiece is not guaranteed a lasting life of permanence. The geisha's body itself is mortal. No matter what artificial tools she or Seikichi may use, neither her physical beauty nor a life can resist the erosion of time. While the image of the sacred goddess or the Virgin Mary will remain forever the same in memory, its substitute in human form will eventually lose physical attraction. In the end, the materiality of Beauty is insecurely fragile and fleeting, and it bears the risk of engendering spiritual orphans. Tanizaki was fully aware of the hollowness that his artistic ambition would eventually face, when he described through Hattori that the eternal thing fades away when he is just about to catch it, as we saw earlier. The only means to combat this crisis may be to keep creating new Beauty incessantly, and to ensure that the woman constructed artificially radiates an invincible aura for as long as she can. This is possible only with the aid of material goods that help feed and refurbish the physical beauty of a woman, which is what Tanizaki explored in *Naomi* (1925) against the backdrop of explosive consumer culture. This would eventually reach nihilism at some point,

however, as no Beauty trapped in a physical body can transcend time and obtain an eternal life.

As an artistic endeavor to find and reconstruct a timeless, permanently immutable realm, it comes as no surprise that literary Modernism in the latter period moved on to explore the primacy of spirit over the materiality of body. While both Yokomitsu's and Tanizaki's notions of Beauty were premised on the potential of materiality—of its artificiality and the ease of replacement and renovation to perpetuate the eternal life of Beauty, the irony is that such crafted Beauty was by no means immortal and was bound to the fleeting moment of the now. Furthermore, Beauty conceived in materialist terms implicitly supported the structure of capitalism, one of the very factors that eroded the natural bonds of organic community and engendered social unevenness and class conflict. It was the capitalist economy that encouraged endless production and consumption to perpetuate social prosperity, and the demand for the ever-transforming Beauty of cityscape and the appearance of woman aligned its constant desire for "the new" with that of the capitalist psychology. As I will show below, the latter half of literary Modernism strove to overcome this dilemma. To dodge worshipping at the shrine of false gods and overcome the issue of impermanence of a material life, one must turn to something spiritual and metaphysical, which Kawabata pursued in his rebellion against modernity.

**Beauty and Fascism: Kawabata and the Desire for Eternal Soul**

In the latter period, the quest of Modernism for the eternal home of natural community strongly echoed official state discourse. Before I examine Kawabata's works, I will first sketch out the historical background of the 1930s-40s to highlight the ways in which he engaged with the mainstream discourses surrounding the "native home" (*kokyō*) and "Japanese spirit." I will then illustrate the distinctive epistemological position he exercised in seeking his vision of *kokyō*, the source of transcendence, in the natural world of humans and nonhumans. I argue that this offered writers an alternative way to imagine the timeless community different from the official state narrative, which equally sought to restore communal solidarity based on the transcendental notion of ethnic heritage.

From around the early 1930s, there emerged a discourse surrounding the notion

of "native home" in literary circles. In a series of essays entitled "On Art" (Gei nitsuite, 1933) published in *Reformation*, Tanizaki for example wrote that what contemporary society needed was a kind of literature that gives "relief and faith," calling it the "'literature able to find spiritual home'" (*kokoro no kokyō wo miidasu bungaku*) (Tanizaki 1982, 20:444). He insisted that there was increasing demand for such literature in this time, implicitly criticizing a Marxist literature that had tirelessly utilized literature to indoctrinate class consciousness and to stir motivation for political struggle. Arguing that the role of literature lies not only in agitating people's feelings and aggravating social conditions, he called out for the creation of works that touched on the tranquil place every person has in their heart, naming the examples found in the traditions of Zen and the philosophies of Buddhism and Confucianism.

The critic Kobayashi Hideo (1902-1983) immediately responded to this in the essay "Literature of the Lost Home" (Kokyō wo ushinatta bungaku, 1933), which he published in *Bungei shunjū*. Born in the modernizing world of Tokyo, Kobayashi wrote that he was doubtful that, before he could even talk about the spiritual home of literature, he had any place he could call his native home. For Kobayashi, modernization in Japan was synonymous with Westernization, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for his generation to distinguish the characteristics of one's native culture apart from those of the West. With the contemporary Japan deeply saturated with the influences of the West, he argued that it was pointless to turn back to the national or the Eastern spirit any more. He rather positively evaluated Japan's ability to understand and take in the intellectual knowledge of Western writing, which he described as what the country gained for its loss of cultural singularity (Kobayashi 1995, 53–54).

The sense of cultural homelessness that Kobayashi expressed stemmed in large part from the material transformation of the modern Tokyo. In fact, the living surroundings play a crucial role in the formation of self-identity, if we follow the epistemological discourse on the "sensation" that Modernist writers have variously emphasized. It posited that our sense of self is mediated and shaped by the external reality, as it is the natural phenomena surrounding us that ascertain our existence and gives us the epistemological criteria necessary to judge who we are. But what strikes us as bizarre is that Kobayashi, who grew up accustomed to the hybrid cultural environment

of Tokyo, expressed "an unsettled feeling," indicating his sense of alienation from his own birthplace (48). His essay reveals an intriguing dilemma that underlies the issues surrounding the discourse of native home and the national spirit of this time. We can observe that Kobayashi expresses, whether consciously or unconsciously, that his modern subjectivity built upon the absorption of modern (Western) intellect is in direct conflict with what we might call his inner intuition. The tension of the two raises a critical question regarding the role intuition played in the modern subjectivity, as it relates to the larger political and cultural movements of this era over the efforts to restore communal solidarity based on the purity of spirit against intellect.

The overriding question of the period can be found in the peculiar psychological perversion Kobayashi's essay revealed. Namely, if it is not the actual birthplace in which one was born and raised that gives the sense of belonging, where could one find the native home and peace of mind? If one's intuition reacts less amiably to the material surroundings rooted in the intellect of Western civilization, is intuition a property ruled by racially or ethnically specific sentiment? Furthermore, if Kobayashi had a yearning for an "authentic" native home unknown to himself, who and what were the elements that possibly constituted that community? The trajectory of the latter period of the Modernist movement revolved around these questions antithetical to reason, characterized by the tendency to privilege intuition and discredit external reality. As it became an increasingly common practice to pit the Japanese spirit against Western intellect, the realm of intuition became a contested ground for both nationalists and aesthetes in claiming the authenticity of their experience. As implied in Tanizaki's call for the literature seeking a "spiritual home," the permeation of foreign influences and the level of domestic social rupture was so prevalent that by this time, it can be said that intuition or one's "heart" (*kokoro*) was the only region in which one could find the source of communal harmony. The urgent agenda propelling the Modernist movement was to reconstruct this native home reserved in the deepest part of one's memory, and to invoke the illusion of communal unity that was losing ground in the actual reality.

In relation to this, the latter period of Modernism witnessed a dangerous ideological resonance between politics and aesthetics over their common interest in transcendence. Since the Meiji period, "politics and literature" had been longstanding

enemies, with writers defending art's autonomy and gatekeeping the realms of intuition and imagination against intellect. Artists susceptible to natural inspiration had been celebrated as talented genius, and they had long been engaging in exploring the transcendental community that could parallel the imagined community of the nation-state. However, the boundary between the two became increasingly obscure at this point, as the official political discourse started to tap into the subterranean realm of intuition in attempts to invigorate ethnic spirit.

One could name the Japan Romantic School (1935-38) led by Yasuda Yojurō (1910-81), whose group neatly combined aesthetics and politics to support the national goals. The uneasy feeling Kobayashi expressed was carried over to the core issue guiding the literary discourse of this school, which revolved around the popular rhetoric of the Western intellect versus Japanese blood. As Kevin Doak's discussion of Yasuda's essay "Spirit of Meiji" (Meiji no seishin, 1937) has shown, the school aspired to inherit the legacy of the Meiji Romantics and follow its path to engage in politics through art. Yasuda strove to undertake the incomplete Meiji project left behind by writers such as Kitamura Tōkoku and Takayama Chogyū, who turned to literary art to unify people under its popular form of nationalism against state nationalism, conducting what I have called "politics of aesthetics" (Doak 1994, xv). But what eventually set the school apart from the Meiji Romantics, as Doak rightly points out, was their eventual loss of the independent boundary of art, once Yasuda and the other members set their source of transcendence in "ethnicity" (xvii-xix). By rejecting the analytical approach to knowledge in favor of intuition, the members of the school artificially constructed what would appear purely Japanese, coalescing aesthetics and politics proper to support Japan's imperialism.

While the case of the Japan Romantic School illustrates how literature functioned in the service of state nationalism, it is one example out of many other possibilities that writers of the period searched for transcendence. My assertion is that the Modernist taste for Beauty was by no means singularly framed by the narrow ethnic lens. The meaning of the "native home," which referred to one's immutable memory locked in the unknown part of heart, differed among writers and schools; and there existed a group of aesthetes who continued to enact the "politics of aesthetics" by way of rejecting the epistemic truth

of the Japan Romantic School based on ethnicity. I emphasize this because there is a strong tendency in the scholarly studies of Modernism to uncritically frame the political implication of aesthetics in the context of fascist efforts.

In fact, it takes little effort to find and enumerate instances of typical fascist language, sentiment, or images in the aesthetic discourses on Beauty of any modern period. This is because Beauty by itself encompasses attributes closely akin to fascism. Take, for example, the definition of fascism that Alan Tansman has provided. Explaining that fascism is a reaction to the threat of modernity in its political forms, he wrote:

> Fascism was, then, an ideology for molding and controlling the masses to nationalize them—or to nationalize them to mold and control them—in the name of a myth of nature—of a "natural" nation with no history but is timeless, like myth, made of individuals connected through bonds of nature. In place of history, fascism emphasized nature; in place of politics, it evoked beauty (Tansman 2009, 7).

One only needs to replace "fascism" with "Beauty" to highlight the definition of the latter. It is worth noting the inevitable dilemma that the proponents of Beauty faced at this time, when politics started to adopt the cloak of Beauty and started to claim it as its own. In other words, whatever pure aesthetic desire for transcendence artists may have expressed, it was bound to be utilized for collective movements in politics. The point is, this fascist logic has cemented the ways in which literary historians analyze Modernist works from a single political viewpoint. For example, apolitical works such as Kawabata's *Snow Country* have been subject to fascist interpretation, while the aesthetic politics of transcendence inherent in Beauty in itself has been rarely questioned.[91] While one may be tempted to employ a fascist narrative in interpreting the key representations we find in Modernist fiction, such as the sublime scene and the trope of self-annihilation, I argue that it is equally important to understand them from the aesthetic context of Beauty. The reexamination means to give subjectivity to art in its own right. As I try to

[91] See for example three representative works: Cornyetz, Nina. 2009. "Fascist Aesthetics and the Politics of Representation in Kawabata Yasunari." In *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, edited by Alan Tansman, 321–54. Durham: Duke University Press.; the section entitled "Snow Country: Kawabata and the Overcoming of Modernity" in Starrs, Roy. 2011. *Modernism and Japanese Culture*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 152-171.; and Chapter 3 "Objects of the Sublime in Literary Writing" in Tansman, Alan. 2009. *The Aesthetics of Japanese Fascism*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

show below, it helps us see how politics of aesthetics Kawabata carried out even strove to overcome the modern issue of ethnic nationalism, as his notion of Beauty and its eternal home was not demarcated by ethnic or national boundary. To avoid indiscriminately mixing the two separate realms, overshadowing the continuing struggle between "politics and literature," it is crucial to scrutinize the very locus of transcendence itself. That is, to identify what object or entity stood for Beauty in the works of individual writers.

Kawabata Yasunari's *Snow Country* (1935-47) deserves attention in the context of our ongoing discussion, as it is inarguably the epitome of the apolitical novel written during this time. Invoking various nostalgic images of pre-industrial landscape rich in natural beauty, folklore, and traditional female figures, the story represents the quintessence of an imaginary native home that was vanishing from urban centers. While the fictional setting of the story shares the mainstream sentiment of yearning for the stable memory of the home, the story reveals that Kawabata's spiritual home was more than just the rural setting imaginable in materialist terms. His was a fantastic world where the boundary between humans and nonhumans is obscure, where the human protagonist interacts with spirits of nature masked in female human body, and where spirits possess immortal life and transcend death. Theses female inhabitants are selfless and self-sacrificing characters, whose purity of souls adds to the sterile beauty of snowy landscape set in a remote countryside.

To consider the theoretical context in which *Snow Country* was written, one could point out the notion of the transmigration of souls as the underlying worldview of the story. As we may recall in the manifesto of the New Sensationalist School, Kawabata set the exploration of the eternal soul as the objective of his literary endeavor, boldly proposing this as the way to bring salvation to humanity in place of religion. *Snow Country* can be best understood as one of the products of this ambitious project, where he pursued the source of transcendence in the immortality of souls. The idea posits that the soul takes on various forms of life through the endless cycle of reincarnation, and it denies the notion of self as non-essential, seeing the soul as the lasting essence of nature instead.

The eternal soul is by no means an idea that Kawabata applied in *Snow Country* alone. It is a motif that recurs throughout his literary oeuvre, including his experimental

works integrating the influence of Western Modernism, such as “Crystal Fantasies” (Suishō gensō, 1931), which thematized the psychological alienation between an embryologist husband and his wife. It is possible to assume that the eternal soul became his life-long theme after the Great Kanto Earthquake, as it was from around this period that he started to write on the idea, further coinciding with the launch of *The Age of Literary Art*. As his manifesto revealed, Kawabata’s overriding concern was how to overcome the fate of death. His stance to the question is proposed in the post-earthquake fiction entitled “A Light Swinging in the Sky” (Sora ni ugoku hi, 1924), where two men engage in a long dialogue on life and death against the backdrop of burnt-down Tokyo as it underwent reconstruction. Overlooking the vastly empty city crowded with makeshift barracks, the man named Kanehara tells the narrator that the idea of the transmigration of souls will save and give consolation to many people. Humans will be reborn into animals and plants and might even said to be identical to them. He calls his fictive dreamland a “monistic yet plural world; and an animistic yet monotheistic world” (Kawabata 1969, 1:104).

We may well say that Kawabata’s ideal for transcendence is traditional in its appearance. But he did not invoke that myth without any positivist groundings to vindicate his deepest intuition—a hunch that invokes in him something as nostalgic as the feeling for the native home in the natural world. In fact, he had a scientific rationale to prove the validity of his intuition. In an interesting way, Kawabata paralleled the Meiji Romantic Kitamura Tōkoku, who similarly insisted on the immortality of souls through his integration of the new knowledge of natural science. As discussed in Chapter II, Tōkoku’s channel of knowledge was the transcendental philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82), who learned from modern physics and chemistry the idea that that all matter in the universe is made up of the same boundless electrical force. Following Emerson, Tōkoku used that formula to see self and the natural world as one and the same, envisioning the rebuilding of the vanishing bond between humans and the world of nature. Kawabata follows this pattern, although he adds to it the doctrine of the cycle of birth and death among the organic community.

These aspects of the eternal soul are illustrated in the fiction entitled “Lyric Poem” (Jojōka, 1932), which postwar writer Mishima Yukio (1925-1970) described as

the “crucial text” disclosing Kawabata himself in allegory (Mishima 2003, 27:321). It is composed of the monologue of the narrator, who speaks about her thoughts on the nature of death and the afterworld both in the East and West. She calls the idea of the transmigration of souls “the most beautiful love lyric that man has ever composed” (Kawabata Yasunari 1971, 295). While Buddhism pities the agony of the successive incarnations and teaches to cut its permanent chain and enter the void of nirvana, she says that it is rather a splendid “fairy tale” rich in suggestion, capable of extending sympathy to all living things (295). The narrator maintains that this belief embodies the essential idea of the soul of the East, but points out that there are plentiful instances in the West, in the Greek myths and in Goethe’s works, that parallel the idea found in the ancient texts of India. Furthermore, she reproaches those opinions that ridicule the belief as a primitive myth of the ancients:

> Isn’t it true, however, that the more scientists inquire into the composition of matter, the more they realize that there is one basic element flowing through all of nature. The myth that the smell of objects decomposing in this world reconstitutes those same objects in the next is no more than a poem symbolic of this scientific theory. If energy and the basic elements of matter are eternal, then why should one think otherwise of the energy of the soul, which even a woman as young and unlearned as myself has already had so much experience of? May we not say that the word “soul” is nothing more than one of the many names for that energy that flows through all things in the universe (295)?

The narrator’s monologue reveals the ambivalent nature of the eternal soul as the source of transcendence. On one hand, it is artificial, a well-composed ancient fiction that accounts for the monistic world of creatures possessing the same eternal soul. And yet, it is not entirely groundless. Scientists have proven the basic electric currents running through the matter of the universe, picturing the world as a mass of many disparate things containing the same physic energy. In exercising his intuition, what Kawabata needed was such external knowledge, the universally known context in which he framed his intuition that was otherwise indescribable. It can be said that contrary to the prevailing image of Kawabata as the champion of the traditional aesthetic sensibility, he was more cosmopolitan in inspiration and more science-informed than is known, and he deconstructed the boundary of Eastern mysticism from the global and scientific

perspectives. The idea central to his aesthetic quest for Beauty was then to discover the "energy" of eternal souls immanent in self and in the external world, which brings the sublime moment of self-transcendence.

This objective frames the narrative plot of *Snow Country*. Shimamura is a wealthy dilettante from Tokyo quite incapable of love, who meets Komako, a geisha, at an isolated hot-spring mountain in a remote countryside. The story revolves around their fleeting affair involving another important female character, Yōko, who Shimamura becomes drawn to as time progresses. The story closes almost suddenly one night under the open sky with the famous final spectacular scene, where the magnificent milky way pours down into Shimamura, which coincided with Yōko's death in a fire accident.

In the opening scene after the train carrying Shimamura from Tokyo entered the snow country past a tunnel, the story gives an epiphanic revelation that he just stepped into the other side of the world. In one scene, Shimamura becomes startled by the image of Yōko's face, a stranger who was sitting across from him, reflected in the window of the car:

> In the depths of the mirror the evening landscape moved by, the mirror and the reflected figures like motion pictures superimposed one on the other. The figures and the background were unrelated, and yet the figures, transparent and intangible, and the background, dim in the gathering darkness, melted together into a sort of symbolic world not of this world. Particularly when a light out in the mountains shone in the center of the girl's face, Shimamura felt his chest rise at the inexpressible beauty of it (Kawabata 1956, 9).

In this oft-discussed passage, Kawabata employs typical Modernist techniques of superimposition and a series of cinematic scenes chained like a stream. The reflected image of Yōko is superimposed onto the various moving landscapes of the outside world, and the two are losing rigid boundaries as if to suggest that they are identical entities. It can be read allegorically that Yōko's incorporeal figure reflected in the mirror freely associates itself with the attributes of the natural world and vice versa, implying that she is a selfless spirit incarnate that takes on various physical appearances seamlessly like a river. Furthermore, the "light" shining in Yōko's face is the most telling description. It symbolically hints at the energy of the eternal soul projected onto Yōko's "transparent

and intangible" figure illuminated in the window. Shimamura is struck by its "inexpressible beauty," and is taken by it until the landscape fades away. The passage suggests that his time in the snow country unfolds in this symbolic world—one that is devoid of "self" but abounds in the pure energy of the eternal soul, whose true Beauty Shimamura has yet to see.

At the mountain village, the relationship Shimamura develops between Komako and later Yōko revolves around the tension between body and spirit symbolically attributed to each character.[92] Shimamura is drawn physically to Komako, but also for her purity of selfless soul. She lacks self-interest and has sacrificed herself for her sick fiancé Yukio, who is under Yōko's care while she works to financially support him. Shimamura learns from Komako's unrewarding yet resolved ways of living the pure innocence that he lacks. For example, he calls her years-long practices of keeping a diary and every novel she has read "a wasted effort" (41). Despite this, while he implicitly reveals that he values utility and mocks her, he cannot help but feel something "strangely touching" about her (43). Her devotion to what is least useful still purifies his and her soul, all the more for her attitude that expects no return of interest. These attributes of Komako allude to the general characteristics of Beauty, of its lack of utilitarian purpose and interest; and its unintended effect of ennobling human character.

As Shimamura keeps his pilgrimage in the symbolic world of Beauty, however, he comes to realize that Beauty is conditional. In his third visit to the snow country, he gradually starts to see the erosion of time in this static world, revealed in the decay of Komako's physical beauty. In parallels to this, Shimamura becomes increasingly attracted to Yōko, who has hitherto remained as a shadow counterpart of Komako and kept watching them afar with her piercing eyes. Having started to feel overwhelmingly intimidated by Komako's unbounded passion toward him, Shimamura decides to leave the place for good. His determination is the prelude to the final climax, where Shimamura, unable to build a spiritual bond with Komako, achieves the ultimate form of

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[92] In the original Japanese texts, their names are rendered 駒子(Komako) and 葉子 (Yōko) respectively. Each represents an animal 馬 (horse) and a plant 葉 (leaf). Komako is attributed the role of having a physical relationship with Shimamura, who takes note of the decay of her body as the story moves forward, while Yōko is given a role that symbolizes purity and the immutable steadiness of spirit, which resists the erosion of time.

unification through spirit. The final scene symbolizing the rebirth of the soul unfolds under the radiant light of the Milky Way, when Shimamura, together with Komako, notices that the cocoon-warehouse has caught on fire, producing a roaring flame. The scene develops with multiple transformations occurring at the same time, involving Komako, Yōko, and the Milky Way separately. The Milky Way spread its bright light all over the space just near one's head and "wrap[ped] the night earth in its naked embrace," making Shimamura feel a "terrible voluptuousness" in it (165). The Milky Ways is portrayed as if it has taken on a female persona with a life of its own. It allures and terrorizes Shimamura, like a real woman, almost swallowing him with her far-reaching light. For Kokmako's part, she starts to run toward the dark mountain on which the Milky Way was falling, and as her head becomes bathed in light, her face starts to lose distinct features. As for Yōko, she was one of the casualties caught in the fire at the warehouse, and was thrown from the balcony to the ground, looking like a "figure as a phantasm from an unreal world" (173). Having seen the tragic scene, however, Shimamura notes that he did not see "death" in her; he rather "felt she had undergone some shift, some metamorphosis" (174). His intuition triggers an instant flashback of his first encounter with Yōko, when he had seen that mountain light shine in Yōko's face on a train window. It brings him a rising feeling in his chest again, and in no time, the "Milky Way flowed down inside him with a roar" (175).

One could inarguably say that the sublime spectacle of the final scene is heightened by the explosive sparks of light covering heaven and earth. The red particles of flame rising from the warehouse spread up into the Milky Way and mingle with its bright light, creating an awe-inspiring representation of a single cosmic energy. Amid this ritualistic setting, the ceremony of transmigration takes place. Komako and Yōko are stripped of their personalized bodily characteristics and come to reveal their truer nature as spirit, both coming to look like empty dolls in appearance. It is Yōko, who embodies spirit, that undergoes the ritual of death and rebirth. Her death animates the Milky Way, as if her spirit soared up and was reborn into it. It is this very moment when Shimamura intuits Yōko's reincarnation, a moment alerted by intuition, that he discovers Beauty and attains transcendence. He discovers in the eternal soul of Yōko the true nature immanent in himself. Struck by the pure Beauty and the eternal truth it awakened, he transcends self

and unifies with the Milky way, building a "spiritual" bond that he failed with Komako, the mortal.

Shimamura's inability to love Komako suggests his deep sense of alienation and longing for a pure spiritual bond that will not decay in time, but has a universal and the lasting value that transcends time. His desire for transcendence reflects the isolation of modern individuals like Kawabata himself; and his response to the issues of the transient life and the loss of eternal home in *Snow Country* was to erase the boundaries within and outside the human world, rather than narrowing them down to identify self in terms of one's ethnicity alone. As this analysis has revealed, the work is rich in languages and images typical of fascist narratives. Those nostalgic images of the rural and selfless women are easily susceptible to enlistment for political purposes under the aestheticized notion of tradition. But the text, which abounds in symbols and allegories, leaves so much room for multiple interpretations. In the end, resisting any single interpretation that is bound to historical moment of the "now," individual readers must frame and make sense of the narrative, according to their own subjectivity. Similarly, it is the subjectivity of individual readers that discovers Beauty in the text, as Beauty is contingent on the unification of subject and object that is bonded through common taste.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated various epistemological perspectives on Beauty that co-existed in the works of Modernism. The common aesthetic agenda of literary Modernism was to pursue the eternally immutable source of transcendence, and the writers discussed in this chapter—Yokomitsu, Tanizaki, and Kawabata—respectively had different understandings of the lasting essence of nature in their quest for the spiritual home of humanity. Their disparate views of Beauty are testimony that individual aesthetic taste and intuition played a crucial role in eliciting the sublime moment of self-transcendence, the experience that was based on spontaneity of feeling as opposed to guided instruction. Alongside the "politics of aesthetics" of these writers, there existed more openly political efforts of proletarian writers and nationalist writers of the Japan Romantic School. They similarly negated the notion of the self and sought the source of transcendence by turning to the notions of class identity and ethnicity respectively. The

co-existence of diverse tastes and competing ideological viewpoints regarding what counted as truthful and essential in the formation of natural community reveals the degrees of social rupture and conflict during this period and reflects the multivalent trajectories of the Modernist movement. This diversity of the sources of transcendence by itself testifies that it was extremely difficult to unite the nation under any single or monolithic notion of nature, which the state attempted to enforce by invoking the notion of imperial subjects and legitimized self-sacrifice.

This chapter has argued that the longstanding tension between "politics and literature" was carried over to the Modernist period, but no analysis can judge whether or not literature succeeded in giving readers the sublime moment of transcendence. For, just as each artist had his own aesthetic taste and spontaneous reaction to Beauty, so does each individual reader. In the final analysis, aesthetic taste determines whether or not one is moved by the eternal Beauty that artists attempted to weave into literary texts, and whether they discover "the self" in these texts. No matter how strong artists of any faction may aspire to propagate the truthfulness of their aesthetic vision of human nature, it is individual readers' aesthetic disposition that determines the value of each work. That being said, the fact that Tanizaki's and Kawabata's works are canonized and have been read globally to this day is significant. Their masterpieces carry in them something that hit home to a broader audience, transcending time and national and ethnic boundaries. It is possible to call the element that grabs the heart of many readers "eternal Beauty." It is what these writers searched for to give a permanent life to their piece of art—the essence that is inherent in human nature across history. Eternal Beauty is the place where individuals can find the self in the imaginary worlds of others. It was where they can cultivate the ability to sympathize with others through the common humanity they share and obtain the pleasure of becoming one with others.

# CHAPTER VI
# CONCLUSION

It can be said that one of the defining characteristics of modernity was the growth of individualism and the spread of social division, which kept on expanding ad infinitum with the passage of time. It was no coincidence that the discourse of Beauty, which arose in the 1870s from the newly designated boundary of the fine arts, was the product of modernity and was the rallying point for Japanese writers to react to issues of "national" crisis.

Beauty's aesthetic "politics" was inscribed in its seemingly passive agenda, "purposiveness without a purpose." As this study has shown, it was the premise of immanent Beauty that accorded art the potential to evoke transcendental experience, which in other words was a means to cultivate one' ability to build natural bonds with others. For the writers central to this study, Nature was what triggered the pleasurable feeling of self-annihilation that ensued from apprehension of Beauty. The appreciation of Nature does not make money, nor does it make you a politician, but it pleases the heart because Nature exists on the loftiest plane of timelessness and remains indifferent to all the petty things of the world. Nature is hence the sources of goodness and truth, and is Beautiful.

But did Beauty only refer to Nature in the absolute, and nothing else? The writers central to this study certainly believed that it did. But here I want to acknowledge that while my analysis has traced the lingering, if not the irrefutably dominant, discourse on Beauty that propelled the trajectory of modern literature, not all writers subscribed to the belief that Nature equals Beauty. Allow me to illustrate this by touching on the case of one prominent writer, whose work did not align with the prevailing practice of sacralizing Nature.

For this purpose, let me turn all the way back to Natsume Sōseki, with whose art treaties in "Grass Pillow" (1906) I began this study. As I noted in my Introduction, this work is rich in suggestion that Sōseki was engaged in an aesthetic experiment. As he himself confirmed, the main aim of this work was to leave readers with a "beautiful impression" and nothing else—and this suggests, of course, that "Grass Pillow" evinced

Sōseki's intellectual confrontation with the issue of the locus of Beauty. It is the painter-protagonist, who undertakes Sōseki's literary enterprise in the fictional world and sets out on a journey to discover Beauty. The painter-protagonist takes a trip to the mountain village of Nakoi removed from the human world—much like Shimamura, an art critic from Tokyo, in Kawabata's *Snow Country* travelled to a remote mountain village to seek spiritual purification. Their journey to the other side is an artistic allegory that Beauty can be found only in the transcendent realm that lies beyond the boundary of the social realities.

The painter-protagonist is well versed in the artistic traditions of both the West and the East, and as he walks along the mountain path toward the hot spring inn, he implies to the audience by showcasing his knowledge on art's philosophy that he is in search of Beauty that best fulfills his aesthetic goal. Determined to grasp it during his experimental journey in Nakoi, the painter-protagonist sets up a rule that he forces himself to follow in this realm:

> No, I shall aim to observe the people I meet from a lofty and transcendent perspective, and do my best to prevent any spark of human feeling from springing up between us. Thus, however animatedly they may move hither and yon, they won't find it easy to make the leap across to my heart; I will stand watching as before a picture, as they rush about inside it waving their arms. I can gaze with a calm and unflinching eye from the safe distance of three feet back. To express it another way: being free of self-interested motives, I will be able to devote all my energy to observing their actions from the point of view of Art. With no other thought in mind, I will be in a fine position to pass lofty judgment on the presence or absence of beauty in all I view. . . . (Natsume 2008, 40).

In this passage, the painter-protagonist established the rule of *hininjō* (non-human feeling 非人情), which is often mistakenly understood as the method of observing things objectively. Rather, this rule precluding the intervention of "human feeling" refers to the aesthetic premise of "purposiveness without purpose," which is to say, liberation from "self-interested" motives." It is evident in this context that Sōseki is here experimenting with the Western aesthetic theory oof Beauty, whose interest is neither to mundanely record events as they unfold before one's eyes, nor to construct a beautifully designed

plot. The painter-protagonist is only interested in the "flash" of a moment when the pleasure of Beauty sparks and engulfs his mind.[93] Just like his contemporaries, Sōseki invoked a literary theory that operated within the aesthetic framework of Beauty.

Despite this, what set Sōseki apart from the group of writers, who similarly pursued the transcendent Beauty was his distinctive take on the fundamental principle of disinterestedness. It is worth recalling here that the discourse of Beauty was author-centered, meaning that it was a theoretical guideline used for authors upon composing artistic works. Writers explored Beauty with disinterested attitude and presented it in their work, anticipating that Beauty rendered in symbolic representation would elicit the same transcendental experience in the readers. By contrast, Sōseki in "Grass Pillow" reframed the notion of "disinterestedness" so that it is audience-centered, meaning that it is the audience's relationship to art that is fundamentally "disinterested." In the passage cited here, Sōseki reveals why he was compelled to modify the premise:

> Love may be beautiful, filial piety may be a splendid thing, loyalty and patriotism may all be very fine. But when you yourself are in one of these positions, you find yourself sucked into the maelstrom of the situation's complex pros and cons—blind to any beauty or fineness, you cannot perceive where the poetry of the situation may lie. To grasp this, you must put yourself in the disinterested position of an outside observer, who has the leisurely perspective to be able to comprehend it. A play is interesting, a novel is appealing, precisely because you are a third-person observer of the drama. The person whose interest is engaged by a play or novel has left self-interest temporarily behind. For the space of time that he reads or watches, he is himself a poet. And yet there's no escaping human feelings in the usual play or novel. The players suffer, rage, flail about, and weep, and the observer will find himself identifying with the experience, and suffering, raging, flailing, and weeping with them. The value of the experience may lie in the fact that there is nothing here of greedy self-interest, but unfortunately the other sentiments are more than commonly activated. Therein lies my problem with it (34-35).

As the painter-protagonist calls his problem, while leisurely activities like a play and a novel naturally do not involve any conflict of interest, but the representation of human

[93] This rule recalls the practice of traditional poetic composition. It explains why Sōseki called this work a "haiku-novel," as Thomas Rimer notes. See Rimer, J. Thomas. 2014. *Modern Japanese Fiction and Its Traditions: An Introduction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 39.

emotions therein nonetheless stimulates a considerable reaction and agitation in the audience. Humans are peculiarly compassionate beings: while we know that the artistic realm is fictitious and mere mimesis, we cannot help but be emotionally pulled into the world of imagination. The audience is naturally disposed to sympathize with fictional characters, such that, virtually, they experience the feelings of the characters as their own. If this is a part of the universal human experience that pertains to the realm of art, there is ample promise in the field of literature in that it cultivates the human moral disposition to show empathy for others.

This is what the painter-protagonist realizes, as he fails to discover transcendent Beauty in the mountain village of Nakoi. During his stay there, his quest for Beauty was first projected onto the beauty of the natural world, but soon moved onto a beautiful female figure named Nami, the daughter of the establishment. He observes her enigmatic aura from a distance in his aesthetic experiment. But while being drawn to her enigmatic aura and her "aesthetically satisfying" behavior, his mind is never moved to the extent that he is struck in an indescribable pleasure (206). Instead, he keeps on conceptualizing her seductive behavior by comparing it to well-known scenes found in Western and Eastern artworks, implying that his intellectual maneuver is functioning much more strongly than the outburst of uncontainable pleasure.

Hence, the painter-protagonist eventually leaves the "non-human world" of Beauty without succeeding in his aesthetic experiment. His much-desired moment of spiritual awakening actually comes in the very final moment of his trip, at the train station, a liminal space that connects the non-human world to the real world of cruel civilization. As the painter-protagonist prepares himself to board, he observes Nami, her father, and her nephew see off her brother Kyūkichi, who is leaving as a soldier for Manchuria. "The serpent of civilization" carrying Kyūkichi, who stands wordlessly gazing out at them, roared to take him to a world far distant, "where men labor amid the reek of gunpowder, and slither and fall on a red slick, while the sky thunders ceaselessly above" (231-32).

> Then as the last third-class carriage is passing me, another face appears at the window. Gazing disconsolately out is the bearded visage of the wild mountain monk, under his brown felt hat. His eyes and Nami's suddenly

> find each other. The chugging train is picking up speed, and in another instant the wild face is gone. Standing there in a daze, Nami continues to stare after it, and astonishingly, her face is flooded with an emotion that I have never until this moment witnessed there—pitying love [*aware* 憐れ]. "That's it! That's it! That's what I need for the picture!" I murmur, patting her on the shoulder. At last, with this moment, the canvas within my own heart has found its full and final form (232-33).

In this final scene, Nami catches a last glimpse of her former husband, who is also destined to return to this world dead. Until this point, the painter-protagonist only knew the side of Nami that, to him, looked as if she was leading an "aesthetic life" (*biteki seikatsu*)—a life in lofty tranquility without any taint of hassle (231).[94] In the mountain village, there was no trace of mundane and earthly suffering that Nami evidenced here. She was, so to speak, a living work of art, embodying the transcendent state of Beauty that lacked something warmly humane. The last scene reveals that what brought the painter-protagonist the purest form of pleasure was Nami's transformation: the overflow of Nami's=Beauty's compassion to her former husband, whose life is fettered by the desire of modern civilization.

In "Grass Pillow," Sōseki devised his own approach to Beauty by situating himself at the midpoint between the transcendent realm of art and the earthly world of real society. Beauty, to him, consisted the transcendental experience of building empathy with others, who were anchored firmly in the battleground of the human world. The culmination of Sōseki's aesthetic experiment is notably demonstrated in the trilogy he published a few years later, starting with *Sanshirō* (*Sanshirō*, 1908), *And Then* (*Sorekara*,1909), and *The Gate* (Mon, 1910). These works respectively portray male protagonists, who pursue happiness and struggle to own lives of their own in confrontation with the norms of society—albeit none too successfully in the end.

It can be generally said that Sōseki's head-on plunge into the human world in his artistic activity is what brought him a unique position as a writer-critic of modern civilization. While he maintained a relatively peripheral relation to Japan's mainstream literary movements, his literary endeavors were very much a part of and the

[94] The text in English translation puts it "artistic life" but I changed it to "aesthetic life," following the Japanese original term, "*biteki seikatsu*" (美的生活).

consequences of his participation in the larger cultural discourse concerning Beauty. If we adopt Sōseki's viewpoint, then look again at the authors we have studied here, whose notions of Beauty occupied the other end of the spectrum, we have a better vantage point to notice and criticize the downside of their veneration of the transcendent realm of Beauty=Nature.

Needless to say, while the pursuit of Beauty anchored in Nature does offer the promise of uniting people based on the universal idea of Nature, it does little to serve as a catalyst in confronting the sources of social conflict and emotional distress that permeate the human world. Writers who embrace this aesthetic philosophy simply accept the imperfections of the human world, disengaging themselves from the issues that plague the social status quo and instead enticing people to take refuge in Nature. This socially emasculated attitude is precisely the reason why the group of writers that this study has shed light on have been subject to criticism for their lack of social engagement. But as I hope my analysis of the discourse of Beauty has shown, it is more than likely that these writers were well aware of their seeming disinterestedness, and purposefully so, for they had no absolute answer for what the ultimate experience or benefit art should bring to people. The value of a work of art, in their view, was what individual recipients determined it to be with their own taste for Beauty and longing for a sense of belonging to a particular kind of community. To pursue transcendental experience through Nature places human subjects in an organic continuum constituting the unity of the cosmic community. To seek Beauty in this framework is to cultivate moral sympathy for the whole surrounding universe beyond the compassion we have for human beings.

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